

Community Health Corner: Well Women

K-STATE
Research and Extension
Family and Consumer Sciences

FACT SHEET #1

2024 Annual Lesson Series

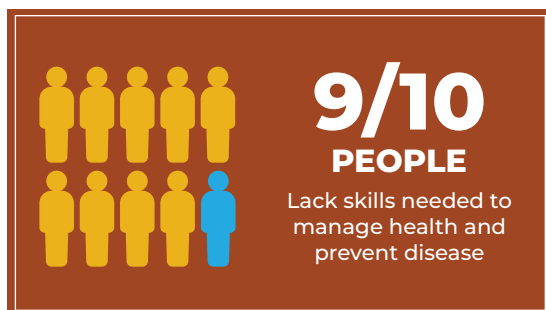


Women are Health Promoters for Families

Women are leaders of health for their families and communities. For example, mothers are often the first to recognize when their children are not feeling well and know the best ways to prevent family illnesses. Also, the majority of women have jobs. For those fortunate enough, those jobs have essential benefits like health insurance, family and sick leave, and wellness programs.

Women sometimes don't prioritize their own well-being and delay checkups that can prevent chronic conditions. That's why K-State Research and Extension, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and partners provide this five-issue fact sheet series.

Each fact sheet contains information about women's health, immunization, and how to improve health literacy. Health literacy means building skills like reading medicine labels and consent forms, understanding instructions given by health-care providers, understanding blood pressure readings, coping with stress, and seeking health for all. Women use health literacy skills to communicate health needs and make health decisions to ensure their well-being and that of their family.



Vaccination

How do vaccinations work, and why are they important?

Did you know that vaccines have been around for over 200 years? In 1796 the first vaccine was made to stop a disease called smallpox. Since then, scientists have worked hard to create new vaccines to keep people healthy and safe.

Vaccines work by tricking your body into thinking it has been exposed to a germ. To do this, scientists take a dead, weakened, or harmless part of a germ and introduce it into the body. Your body reacts to the harmless germ by alerting the immune system to an intruder. Then, your immune system sends fighter cells to attack the intruder. During the attack, your body learns to recognize the germ so the next time it enters your body, you do not get sick. This process is called **acquired immunity** www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vac-gen/immunity-types.htm.

When you get vaccinated, you not only help yourself, you protect everyone around you, especially those who have weakened immune systems. This

protection is called **herd immunity** www.ted.com/talks/romina_libster_the_power_of_herd_immunity. It occurs when the germ can't get to a vulnerable person because so many people around that person are vaccinated.

Vaccination works much like an umbrella that offers protection from getting wet in a rainstorm. Though you might get a bit of sprinkle here or there, an umbrella keeps you from getting drenched. A vaccination works similarly for protection against viruses. (Thanks to Justin Goodno, Barber County Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent, for sharing this analogy.)

Find a vaccine near you:

Search vaccines.gov

Text your ZIP code to 438829

Call 1-800-232-0233



Don't Ignore What Your Body is Saying to You

Communication is important to a positive patient-provider relationship. However, up to 81% of patients withhold details about their health from doctors because they don't want to be judged or feel uncomfortable or embarrassed (Gurmankin, et al., 2018).

Embarrassment, discomfort, or not knowing what to tell a healthcare provider may keep women from making an appointment in the first place, which can have serious health consequences.

With a few simple tips, uncomfortable conversation can be made easier.

Before a healthcare appointment

Before an appointment, write down concerns on paper or in your phone notes app. Organizing your thoughts in advance can help you remember important details during the appointment. Include notes and questions on:

All medicines, vitamins, and supplements you take. Include over-the-counter medicines and herbal supplements.

Should you keep taking medication? If your medication costs too much, ask about alternatives such as generics.

If you are having symptoms, write down when and where they appear, how long you have had symptoms, and if they have changed.

Are you due for any screening tests?

Are you due for wellness vaccinations like a shingles shot, tetanus shot, other boosters?

Make a list of your health history. New patients will need to share information about health problems, chronic conditions, blood pressure numbers, recent symptoms, surgeries, allergies, and sleep habits.

Consider rehearsing what you're going to say ahead of time. It can be less intimidating to share an uncomfortable issue if you've already heard yourself say the words aloud.

If you will need an interpreter for your appointment, let your doctor's office know ahead of time.

Kansas Department of Health and Environment has a pre-visit checklist at: www.kdhe.ks.gov/457/MCH-Integration-Toolkits.

Also, the American Academy of Family Physicians' offers a "Today's Visit form" (familydoctor.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Todaysvisitform.pdf) and more information at: familydoctor.org



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