

News Flash: Women Have Different Health Needs Than Men

September 27 2023 8:57 AM



OSF HEALTHCARE - Did you know there's a special health and fitness day for women?

It makes total sense, specifically because there are biological differences between men and women – and women have different health needs than men.

A healthy diet, daily exercise, and regular doctor visits are essential for maintaining your health, which is true regardless of gender. However, what constitutes a healthy

diet, how much exercise, and the type of exercise a person should get can be different for men and women.

So, naturally, there are health issues that are unique to women.

Wednesday, September 27, is the 14th Annual National Women's Health and Fitness Day. National Women's Health and Fitness Day is observed annually on the last Wednesday of September, and it's a time to promote the importance of health and fitness for women of all ages.

Therefore, what are some of the differences between men and women when it comes to health?

From a simplistic nutrition standpoint, women typically need fewer calories than men. Women shouldn't feel the need to match the men beer for beer and burger for burger.

Heart attacks affect women differently than they affect men. While men and women can both suffer from a heart attack, the symptoms of a heart attack can be quite different between genders. It's important for women to recognize that there is a difference, and to know the symptoms.

Women's heart attack symptoms can be much more subtle and far less distinct than the vice-like chest tightening and shooting pains down one arm that are associated with heart attacks in men.

Many women don't even realize that they're having a heart attack, because they might not recognize the symptoms, or might not associate those symptoms with something as severe as a heart attack.

Here are symptoms that women should be conscious of:

- Sweating
- Nausea or vomiting
- Trouble breathing or shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Pain in the arms, neck, jaw, or abdomen
- Constant or recurring chest pain

Most of these symptoms can be mistaken for the flu, illness, or even just some harmless discomfort. The fact that these symptoms might not necessarily indicate something as

serious as a heart attack makes them even more dangerous. They can occur during sleep or rest, and women often suffer heart damage because they were unable to identify the symptoms of their heart attack.

Both men and women can get breast cancer, but women need a mammogram every year after the age of 40, while men usually have one only when their doctor recommends one.

Reproductive health is different for men and women because the genders have different organs. Women should also plan on having a Pap smear every year.

Finally, overall, no matter, get more exercise in your day, whether you're a man or a woman.

So how should any adult female celebrate National Women's Health and Fitness Day? Why not go ahead and make an appointment for your annual "well woman" visit? That's an annual visit with your doctor to talk about your health, your lifestyle, and your concerns.

It's recommended that adult females schedule and conduct a well woman visit. A "well woman" visit will encompass a variety of services including, but not limited to:

- **Vital sign check:** including weight, blood pressure and body mass index (BMI)
- **Breast exam:** clinically indicated for women over 40 annually; this includes visual and manual exams of both breasts, underarms and the area underneath the clavicle for changes or abnormalities
- **Pelvic exam:** includes examination of the external genitalia; speculum exam of the vagina and cervix and internal exam of the uterus, cervix and adnexa (biannual)
- **Cancer screening:** learn more about breast, cervical, and other types of gynecological cancers
- **Sexually transmitted infections (STI) screening:** chlamydia, gonorrhea, and genital herpes
- **Health maintenance:** learn what prevention measures are recommended; screenings and immunizations based on age and other risk factors
- **Health lifestyle counseling:** counseling and risk factor reduction interventions to minimize health risks
- **Preconception counseling:** if you're planning to become pregnant, it's recommended to speak with a woman's health care provider to discuss any risk factors

OSF Saint Anthony's Health Center has a medical staff roster of eight (8) providers available for female residents in the Riverbend region to address women's health and fitness concerns – they include:

(practicing at OSF Medical Group – Primary Care, #2 Saint Anthony’s Way, Alton, 618-462-2222)

- Shawn Fry, MD, Family Medicine
- Deena Brown, APRN, Family Medicine | Gynecology
- Lisa Fritcher, PA, Family Medicine
- Roxanne Strohbeck, APRN, Family Medicine

(practicing at OSF Medical Group – Primary Care, 6702 Godfrey Road, Godfrey, 618-467-1520)

- Sherry Simmons, MD, Family Medicine
- Bethany Huelskoetter, APRN, Family Medicine

(practicing at OSF Medical Group – Gynecology, #2 Saint Anthony’s Way, Alton, 618-462-2226)

- Dennis Sands, MD, OB/GYN
- Deena Brown, APRN, Family Medicine | Gynecology

Learn more about women’s health care services at OSF Saint Anthony’s by visiting www.osfsaintanthonys.org.