WISEWOMAN
Update
January 2008
~ Making Healthier Choices for a Healthier Life ~

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Save the Date

What: Motivational Interviewing Training

When: April 29-30, 2008

Where: Quality Inn - Houghton Lake, MI

Who: WISEWOMAN Lifestyle Counselors, Coordinators, and any other staff who work with clients

Cost of Training: FREE

Cost of Hotel Room: FREE (1 complimentary hotel room for each WISEWOMAN county)

Cost of Food: FREE (Breakfast, Lunch and Snacks are provided)

Stay tuned. More information to follow in the coming weeks.

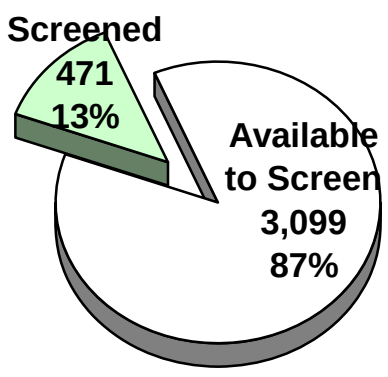
Go Red For Women Mythbuster

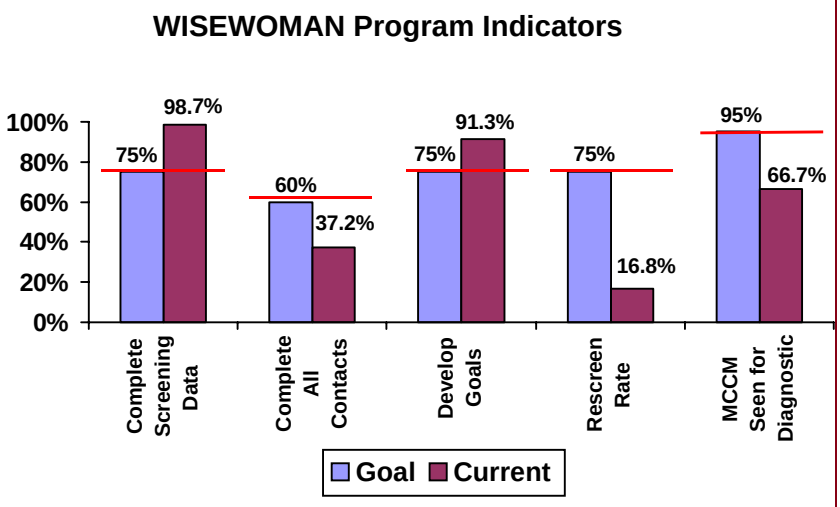
Myth: There's no time to exercise when family is in town for the holidays

The Real Deal: Any physical activity moves you toward a healthy heart. Even if your regular routine is disrupted by a house full of guests, you should still try to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day. Try to find activities that everyone can do. Get the gang to take a walk around the neighborhood and look at the lights. Play some ball with the kids. Anything that has you moving and gets your heart pumping counts toward your goal!

Stats At-A-Glance for FY08

FY 08 Caseload Goal = 3,570





Getting to Know Your Thyroid

~ By Robin Waliki, RN, BSN
District Health Department #10

According to the Cleveland Clinic, about 20 million Americans currently have some form of thyroid disease. Men and women of any age and race can develop a thyroid condition, however, women are much more likely to be affected. At age 28, I became one of those women when I was diagnosed with Hashimoto's Thyroiditis and thyroid cancer. January is "Thyroid Awareness Month," which is the perfect time to help educate women about thyroid issues.

Located in the lower neck, the thyroid is a small butterfly-shaped gland that produces hormones that help control the body's metabolism. The work of the thyroid is monitored by the pituitary gland in the brain, which uses thyroid-stimulating hormone to let the thyroid know what to do. If there are any interruptions in this process, the body can use energy too fast or too slow, which can affect the body in many ways.

When thyroid hormone levels are too low, the body uses energy slower than it should. This is called "hypothyroidism." Some of the major causes of hypothyroidism are: thyroiditis (post-partum, Hashimoto's, etc), surgical removal of thyroid tissue, previous exposure to radioactive iodine (I-131), congenital hypothyroidism, medicines, iodine deficiency (rare in the USA, since iodine is added to our salt!), or pituitary gland disorders. Common symptoms of hypothyroidism include: fatigue, heavy menstrual periods, constipation, forgetfulness, weight gain, dry skin/hair, hoarse voice, and intolerance to cold. Hypothyroidism is usually treated with medication that normalizes the level of thyroid hormone in the blood.

When thyroid hormone levels are too high, the body uses energy faster than it should. This is called "hyperthyroidism." Hyperthyroidism may be caused by: Grave's disease, thyroid nodules, thyroiditis, or excessive iodine (from medications). Common symptoms of hyperthyroidism include: irritability, nervousness, scant menstrual periods, frequent bowel movements, weight loss, sleep disturbances, enlarged thyroid gland, vision problems, increased pulse rate, excess sweating, and heat intolerance. Hyperthyroidism can be treated with medication, surgery, or radioactive iodine.

Diagnosing thyroid disorders involves looking at symptoms as well as tests. There are several hormones that can be measured in the blood, such as thyroid stimulating hormone (TSH), thyroxine (T4), and triiodothyronine (T3). In addition, the blood can be tested for thyroid antibodies to check for thyroiditis. Non-blood tests can also be performed, such as ultrasound of the thyroid to check for enlargement or nodules. Nodules are very common, and can be normal (benign), toxic (producing too much hormone), or malignant (cancer). Radioactive iodine uptake testing involves swallowing a small amount of radioactive iodine and then having the thyroid scanned to see how much was absorbed, thus checking the function of the gland.

Unfortunately, there isn't a consensus on when to screen people for thyroid problems. Some professional groups recommend screening men and women over age 35 with the TSH blood test. Other experts would like to see all women of reproductive age be screened. This could be useful, since hypothyroidism can be linked to some miscarriages and congenital disorders. However, some professional groups, including the American College of Family Physicians, recommend screening only older women and people with risk factors such as autoimmune disease or family history of thyroid disease.

More people and their doctors are apparently aware of and checking for thyroid problems. As a result, the American Cancer Society is reporting an increased incidence of thyroid cancer in the United States. This trend has been ongoing for several decades, and part of it may be attributed to better medical imaging and increased numbers of people having ultrasound of the thyroid. Hopefully this will lead to cancer being detected early.

When counseling a WISEWOMAN client who has symptoms that sound thyroid-related, the most important skill is listening. The somewhat-vague symptoms of thyroid disorders can lead to many dissatisfying interactions with health care providers before a diagnosis is made. The woman may be feeling overweight, depressed, fatigued, and frustrated—and help may be needed just to point her in the direction to find help or testing.

The happy ending for me: In 1999, I had a complete thyroidectomy and a large dose of I-131 to treat my Hashimoto's (a hereditary autoimmune thyroiditis) and papillary carcinoma of the thyroid. I take Synthroid daily, see my endocrinologist every six months for labs and an exam, and remain cancer-free!

For further information on thyroid issues:
http://www.thyroidawareness.com (American Association of Clinical Endocrinologists)
- has links to find a specialist in your area
http://www.thyroid.org (American Thyroid Association)
- really good fact sheets and FAQ's

Safe Workouts for Cold Weather Months

With temperatures plummeting this time of year, many of us tend to hibernate inside our homes. Even though it is cold outside, our bodies still need to be active. All that is required for Winter-time workouts is some planning and employing all safety precautions. If you prefer to workout outside, keep the following tips in mind:

- **Get warm first**. A proper warm-up is critical. Cold temperatures can make your muscles tight, and, therefore, they are more prone to injuries. So it's important to get them warmed-up prior to engaging in intense physical activity.

- **Insulate your body**. The best approach to dressing for outdoor exercise is with layers. Layering provides the most effective heating method, plus it allows you to remove the top layer if you get too hot. The layer closest to your skin should allow moisture to be wicked away. The top layer should be both wind and water-resistant.

- **No sweat**. Don't assume that you have to sweat in order to get a good workout. You should avoid sweating that causes the layer closest to your skin to get wet and cause you to be chilled. Instead you can monitor your intensity through a heart rate monitor.

- **Don't strip when you get inside**. While you may be tempted to immediately remove your layers when returning inside, give your body time to adjust. Post exercise hypothermia is possible. This happens when your body rapidly loses its heating stores.

- **Drink up**. It's just as important to stay hydrated when exercising in winter as it is in summer, even though you may not feel as thirsty.

- **Lighten up**. If possible, it's best to exercise outdoors during daylight hours. But with shortened days that can be difficult to do. If you exercise outdoors when it is dark, wear reflective materials to ensure that you can be seen.

If the thought of getting outside to exercise makes you dive under the covers, instead choose one of the many indoor workout options. Below are just a few of the many choices.

- **Walk in an indoor location, like a mall**. If you need extra motivation to get yourself to the mall, join a walking group. This will help you stay accountable to someone other than yourself.

- **Join a health club**. This will allow you a large variety of physical activities to choose from every week.

- **Create a home gym**. This doesn't have to be expensive. You can easily set-up a great workout routine with just a set of dumbbells, an exercise ball, and a jump rope.

- **If you have stairs where you live or close by, spend as little as 20 minutes at a time climbing up and down the stairs for a very intense and efficient workout**.

- **Get wet**. Find a local indoor pool you can use. Try swimming, water aerobics, or even just walking or running laps in the water.

- **Visit a library**. Usually local libraries offer exercise videos you can check-out for free. Pick-up a new one to try out every time you return the previous one.

By staying fit during the winter, you'll be able to avoid gaining weight and avoid losing strength and stamina caused by inactivity.

Exercising in the Cold

The biggest concern for exercising in the cold is hypothermia or too much heat loss. When you exercise in a cold environment you must consider one primary factor: how much heat will your body lose during exercise?

Heat loss is controlled in two ways:
1. Insulation, consisting of body fat plus clothing.
2. Environmental factors, including temperature, wind, and whether you're exercising in the air or in the water. Each of these factors plays a role in the body's ability to maintain a comfortable temperature during exercise.

Insulation
Although many people aspire to have a lean figure, people with a little more body fat are better insulated and will lose less heat. Clothing adds to the insulation barrier and is clearly the most important element in performance and comfort while exercising in the cold. One study showed that heat loss from the head alone was 50 percent at the freezing mark, and by simply wearing a helmet, subjects were able to stay outside indefinitely.

Clothing is generally a good insulator because it has the ability to trap air, a poor conductor of heat. If the air trapped by the clothing cannot conduct the heat away from the body, temperature will be maintained. Unlike air, however, water is a rapid conductor of heat and even in the coldest of temperatures, people will sweat and risk significant heat loss. With this in mind, you will want to choose clothing that can trap air but allow sweat to pass through, away from the body.

By wearing clothing in layers, you have the ability to change the amount of insulation that is needed. While many new products can provide such a layered barrier, it is important to avoid heavy cotton sweats or tightly woven material that will absorb and retain water. Because these materials cannot provide a layer of dry air near the skin, they can increase the amount of heat your body loses as you exercise.

Keeping the hands and feet warm is a common concern when exercising in the cold. Lower temperatures cause blood to be shunted away from the hands and feet to the center of the body to keep the internal organs warm and protected. Superficial warming of the hands will return blood flow to prevent tissue damage. Blood flow will not return to the feet unless the temperature in the torso is normal or slightly higher. So to keep your feet warm you must also keep the rest of your body warm at all times.

Check the Weather
Always check the air temperature and wind chill factor before exercising in the cold. Danger exists for individuals with exposed skin when the wind chill factor falls below minus 20º F. That can be achieved by any combination of temperatures below 20º F with a wind of 40 mph and temperatures below minus 20ºF with no wind.

If you are exercising near the danger zone for skin exposure, it is also advisable to warm the air being inhaled by wearing a scarf or mask over your nose and mouth.

Rules for Exercising in the Cold

- Check the temperature and wind conditions before you go out and do not exercise if conditions are dangerous.
- Keep your head, hands, and feet warm.
- Dress in layers that can provide a trapped layer of dry air near the skin (avoid cotton sweats and other similar materials).
- Warm the air you are breathing if temperatures are below your comfort level (usually around 0º F).

Activate….Don't Hibernate!

The winter months bring cold weather and shorter days. For many people this means less time for activity. If you make activity a priority and plan ahead, you can still get your 30 minutes of moderate physical activity each day.

Be Active During the Day

- Walk at lunch or during work breaks. If it is cold outside, walk inside the building – up and down a few flights of stairs or around the inside perimeter of the building.
- The same is true for cold weekends. Find places to walk indoors like malls or museums.
- At home you can be active indoors. Start your spring cleaning early! Mopping floors, cleaning windows, and organizing closets will keep you active and you'll have less to do indoors when spring arrives and you would rather be outside.

Plan Active Weekends

- There are many warm and sunny days in the winter. Use these days to get outside and enjoy the season.
- You are never too old to go outside and make a snowman! Many people enjoy getting outside in the daylight, especially during the winter when we are indoors during most of the daylight hours.
- Consider shoveling your driveway or walkways instead of using a snow blower. Start out small by shoveling a walkway or steps. Be cautious when shoveling wet snow.

Be Prepared

- Wear a hat, mittens, and sturdy boots with a good tread. A winter hat helps your body conserve its heat and keeps you warm. Dress in layers (long johns, long sleeve shirt, fleece, or sweater vest, water/wind proof outer layer).
- Avoid cotton for the first layer…it tends to get wet when you sweat and then will make you feel cold. Wool or synthetics are better for first layers. As you get active you can take off layers and stay comfortable. Then when you finish your activity and start to cool down, you can put the layers back on to keep you warm.

Nighttime is the Right Time for Exercise Safety

Days may be getting shorter, but that doesn't mean your outdoor exercise routine has to. Please follow these nighttime safety precautions when exercising:

- **Lighten up**. Carry a flashlight and wear reflective clothing and shoes so that you're visible to motorists. If you're riding a bike, be sure it has lights.
- **Listen up**. When you're outside at night, personal music devices are a distraction you don't need. Leave the headphones at home; you want to be able to hear approaching cars, dogs, and people.
- **Double up**. If you're able to work out with a friend, that's great – there's safety in numbers. If not, make sure a loved one knows exactly where you are and when you expect to be home.
- **Wise up**. The most important rule of nighttime safety is to use your common sense! Exercise in well-lit areas; stay alert to your surroundings; and don't exercise any time or any place where you don't feel completely safe.

Did You Know…

The average American adult watches between 28-32 hours of TV per week! How much do you watch? Track your TV habits for a week as you may be surprised by how much you watch. Consider converting a half-hour per day of TV time to activity time.