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Women reminded to take care of themselves so they can take care of others

Stanton- In the fast-paced world we live in, women often take a backseat to their families, their jobs, and other commitments. A woman's desire to take care of those around her often leaves her with little time to relax, enjoy hobbies or even schedule medical appointments. The Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) would like to remind women that while it is in their nature to take care of others, they also need to remember to take care of themselves and make their own health a top priority.

There are simple steps a woman can take to improve her physical and mental health and lower the risk of certain diseases, to ensure she will be able to continue to take care of those around her. Those steps include:

- **Get adequate physical activity:** Women should get at least 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, 1 hour and 15 minutes of vigorous physical activity, or a combination of both, each week. For more information, visit the Michigan Steps Up! website at www.michigan.gov/surgeongeneral.
- **Eat a nutritious diet:** To help prevent heart disease, stroke, and other diseases, eat plenty of:
 - Fruits and vegetables
 - Grains (at least half should be whole grains, such as whole wheat, oatmeal, and brown rice)
 - Fat-free or low-fat milk, cheese, yogurt, and other milk products
 - Fish, skinless poultry, lean red meats, dry beans, eggs, and nuts
 - Polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats

You should also limit the amount of food you eat that contain saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, sodium, and added sugars. For more information on how to eat healthy, visit www.choosemyplate.gov.

- **Visit a health care professional to receive regular checkups, preventative screenings, and immunizations:** Women are encouraged to visit their healthcare professional for regular checkups as they are vital to the early detection of heart disease, diabetes, cancer, mental health illnesses, sexually transmitted infections, and more. Screening tests, such as mammograms and Pap tests, can detect diseases early, when they are easier to treat. Be sure to contact your healthcare provider to schedule necessary checkups and get important screenings and immunizations today!

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2- Women reminded to take care of themselves

- **Avoid risky behaviors, such as smoking:** Nearly one in five American women smokes, an alarming fact, given the dangers that smoking poses to a woman's health. It's best not to start smoking, but if you do, don't give up on quitting. Being smoke-free will help you live longer and feel your best. Help is available! Call the Michigan Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-784-8669 for free phone coaching (callers may qualify for free nicotine patches), 1-888-367-6557 to see if Medicaid programs are available, or the Michigan Medicare Assistance Program at 1-800-803-7174.
- **Pay attention to mental health, including getting enough sleep and managing stress:** Good mental health is an important part of a woman's overall health. All women feel worried, anxious, or sad from time to time. Traumatic events, such as dealing with a loved one's serious illness or death, or the loss of a job can affect the mind and body. On the other hand, many of the things that bring great joy, such as a promotion or having a baby, can also cause stress. Changes in physical health can also affect mental health, such as changing hormone levels due to a woman's monthly period. Also, a woman's mental health is at greater risk for problems like depression during puberty, after having a baby, and in the years just before menopause.

But a true mental health disorder makes it hard for a woman to function normally. While most mental health disorders do not have a precise cause, they result from a combination of life events, brain chemicals, genes, hormones, and illness. These illnesses can be treated successfully so that you can get back to enjoying life.

Women who follow these steps to a healthy lifestyle will be better equipped to enjoy all that life has to offer as well as tackle life's stressors. Don't forget that you can't take care of others if you don't take care of yourself!

Mid-Michigan District Health Department serves the residents of Clinton, Gratiot and Montcalm Counties.

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