

For more than 25 years, the American Public Health Association (APHA) has organized Public Health Week as a way to educate the public and policymakers about different public health issues. This year we celebrated Public Health Week April 1-7. The theme this year is “Protecting, Connecting, and Thriving: We are all Public Health.” Each day of Public Health Week focuses on a different topic. This year the topics were as follows:

Civic Engagement (Monday)-Civic engagement is the act of working alone or with other people to make changes in the community. Participating in town hall meetings and volunteer activities can influence local policies on community improvements such as walking paths and community gardens.

Healthy Neighborhoods (Tuesday)-A healthy neighborhood should provide access to safe and hazard free homes, transportation, quality education, places for physical activity such as parks and paths for walking or bike riding, adequate employment, and healthy food options. Unhealthy neighborhoods can lead to high rates of chronic disease, crime, and stress.

Climate Change (Wednesday)-Climate change is a long-term shift in temperatures and weather patterns. Sometimes the shifts are naturally occurring, but often they are attributed to the affects of burning fossil fuels that create gasses that warm up the environment. Ways you can make the climate healthier include planting trees; walking, biking, or using public transportation when it is an option; recycle; and clean up your neighborhood.

New Tools and Innovations (Thursday)-Changes in technology are creating a more equitable landscape for receiving and responding to health information. Wearable devices track physical activity, which can chronic health conditions. Vending machines are being designed to provide Narcan and fentanyl test strips that can reduce the chance of death from an overdose. Telehealth services provide access to medical care for those with mobility or transportation issues. Vaccinations prevent the spread of disease. Broadband internet provides access to information about health services.

Reproductive and Sexual Health (Friday)-Three of the most common cancers in the United States are breast, colorectal, and prostate. Ask your doctor about recommended screenings. Cases of sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea, chlamydia, and syphilis are on the rise. The best way to prevent these are with safe sex practices and education.

Emergency Preparedness (Saturday)-Unexpected events like floods, tornados, and winter storms can happen with little to no notice. Emergency preparedness means having a plan and supplies to keep you and your family safe. This can include having a designated meeting space and an emergency supply kit stocked with items such as flashlights, nonperishable food, extra clothes and medications, and first aid and personal hygiene items. The community can practice emergency preparedness with regular tests of emergency alerts and by providing education, training, and practice drills.

Future of Public Health (Sunday)-Everyone deserves access to the care and support needed for a healthier life. How can you make a difference in the future of public health? Advocate for policies that make community well-being a priority, join local organizations, and make health information accessible for everyone.

Use some of these tips, not just during Public Health Week, but every day to make your community safer, cleaner, and healthier.

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