

I. Background

This section of the resource guide provides background information on the *Pick Your Path to Health* campaign. Use it to help you target and organize your program to follow the specific health themes and messages of the campaign. This information can also be used to support any outreach or media activities you may pursue.

Overview of *Pick Your Path to Health*

This section provides details on the campaign and the monthly health themes and action steps for each targeted population.

Overview of *Pick Your Path to Health* Community-Based Programs

This section provides a rationale for community-based programs and explores the role of the program coach.

Overview of Women's Health

This fact sheet is a synopsis of the status of women's health following the leading health problems of American women.

Healthy People 2010

This fact sheet provides a summary of *Healthy People 2010*, including what it is, its goals and focus areas, and the Leading Health Indicators.

List of *Pick Your Path to Health* Partners and the Office on Women's Health Affiliates

This is a list of current *Pick Your Path to Health* partners and Office on Women's Health affiliates, including the Regional Women's Health Coordinators, the National Centers of Excellence in Women's Health, the National Community Centers of Excellence in Women's Health, and the Minority Women's Health Panel of Experts.

Overview of *Pick Your Path to Health*

Pick Your Path to Health, an initiative of the Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health, was developed to help women adopt healthy behaviors into their everyday lives. Previous health campaigns aimed at women have emphasized long-term goals, such as losing weight or quitting smoking. *Pick Your Path to Health* recognizes the multiple demands women have on their time and energy, and therefore suggests simple and practical action steps that women can incorporate on a daily basis in an effort to ease the path to better health.

Pick Your Path to Health encourages health awareness among all women and specifically focuses on health issues as they relate to African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, American Indian and Alaska Native women, Latinas, women who live in rural areas, and women with disabilities—all who are at a higher risk for many diseases.

Women's Health Issues

Pick Your Path to Health's monthly themes are adopted from the 10 leading health indicators for the Nation, identified in *Healthy People 2010*—the Government's comprehensive set of health objectives aimed at reducing the existing health disparities between minority and white women over the first decade of the new century. The 2004 monthly themes of the *Pick Your Path to Health* campaign are:

January—Spirituality	July—Drug Abuse
February—Weight Management	August—Health Care Access
March—Physical Activity	September—Prevention
April—Alcohol Use	October—Violence Prevention
May—Mental Health	November—Tobacco Use
June—Responsible Sexual Behavior	December—Family

Culturally Appropriate Materials

The campaign delivers workable health messages through central themes and action steps. These easy-to-incorporate health messages are found throughout the campaign's materials, including 12-month pocket planners, health articles, posters, a community action kit, a Web site with interactive health calendars, an electronic newsletter, and a listserv—a weekly e-mail message offering women's health tips based on the campaign's monthly themes.

The pocket planners are an integral component of the campaign, providing health messages and action steps specifically tailored to each of the six groups. The planners emphasize the importance of making small changes to improve women's health and offer general health information and a comprehensive list of women's health resources.

Dedicated Partners

The campaign is supported by more than 100 community and media partners that help deliver campaign messages to communities and women across the nation.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for African American Women

January—Spirituality: Find the strength within.

- Every day, think of something you are grateful for.
- Focus on the strengths, not the faults, of others.
- Write in your calendar one positive thing about each day.
- Think of something you have done to help someone.
- Gather a collection of your favorite inspirational words or natural wonders.

February—Weight Management: Vital for long-term wellness.

- Set practical short-term and long-term weight goals.
- Keep a bottle of water with you all day and refill often.
- When eating out, select foods that are steamed, broiled, baked, or grilled.
- Select a mix of colorful fruits and vegetables each day.
- Have low-fat, low-sugar snacks on hand to combat hunger and prevent overeating.

March—Physical Activity: Stay active. Live longer.

- Put on your favorite music and dance.
- If possible, take the stairs to use a restroom on a different floor.
- Take a walk during your mid-morning, lunch, and mid-afternoon breaks.
- Climb stairs either inside or outdoors for a sure-fire aerobic treat.
- Encourage your family and friends to support and join you in your activities.

April—Alcohol Use: Know your limits.

- If you can't wait to have your first alcoholic drink of the day, consider getting counseling.
- Substitute non-alcoholic versions of drinks.
- Don't drink and drive, or ride in a car if the driver has been drinking.
- Don't be pressured to drink more alcoholic beverages than you should.
- Learn the warning signs of alcoholism.

May—Mental Health: Lower your stress.

- Soak worries away in a warm bath. Light a candle and add scented bath products.
- Take a nap. Put aside your worries and regain strength.
- Love yourself unconditionally. Forgive yourself and move forward.
- When things get overwhelming, take a moment to breathe deeply and meditate.
- If you feel sad all the time, call the National Mental Health Information Center at 1-800-789-2647.

June—Responsible Sexual Behavior: Think before you act.

- Don't be pressured into having sex—it does not have to be a part of dating.
- If you choose to become sexually active, know your partner's sexual history and get tested for STDs, including HIV. Ask your partner to do the same.
- Seek advice from your health care provider about responsible sexual behavior.
- Seek counseling if you or someone you know has been sexually abused.
- Teach your children to respect their bodies and protect their health.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for African American Women

July—Drug Abuse: Use and you lose.

- Take medications only as directed by your doctor or pharmacist.
- Talk to your children, family, and friends about drugs.
- Don't experiment with drugs. One experience can get you hooked!
- Set a good example. Your children will follow your behavior, not just your explanation.
- To learn the warning signs of drug addiction, visit <http://www.drugabuse.gov>.

August—Health Care Access: Your health matters.

- Before your medical appointment, make a list of questions you want to ask your doctor.
- Look for health information and screenings in your community.
- Call 1-877-KIDS-NOW to learn about free or low-cost health insurance for your family.
- If you feel that your doctor is not taking your concerns seriously, get a second opinion.
- Learn your rights as a patient from your health care provider or local health clinics.

September—Prevention: It's better than a cure.

- Talk to your doctor about what vaccinations you and your family need.
- Keep a complete record of your immunizations.
- Always wear your seatbelt when in a moving vehicle.
- Get a flu shot once a year to help protect yourself against the flu.
- Wash your hands often, especially when you are near others who are sick.

October—Violence Prevention: Empower yourself.

- Avoid walking alone at night. Ask a friend to walk you home or to your car.
- Protect yourself. Sign up for a self-defense class, such as karate or Tae Kwon Do.
- Don't accept abuse. Get help from friends, a health care provider, or local women's shelter.
- Never accept a drink from a stranger or leave your drink unattended.
- Role play with children about potentially dangerous situations and practice ways to respond.

November—Tobacco Use: Smoking—costly to your LIFE and your wallet.

- Pick a "quit" date and stick to it.
- As you quit, set aside the money you saved and buy yourself something special.
- Identify situations when you are most likely to smoke and try to cut back.
- Help a family member or friend quit smoking.
- Talk with your children about the dangers of smoking.

December—Family: Get support from those who care.

- Call a relative you haven't spoken to in a while just to catch up.
- Turn off the television. Talk, play games, or read together instead.
- Create new family traditions and rituals that make being together more special.
- Let go of old gripes. Focus on the present and the future, not the past.
- Stay involved in your children's education. Join the PTA.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for Asian and Pacific Islander Women

January—Spirituality: Find the strength within.

- Take a class in a subject that interests you, such as dance or art.
- Always keep a positive attitude.
- Keep a journal. Write down how you feel every day.
- Begin or end your day with a 5-minute meditation.
- Take part in your community's volunteer work—it can enrich your life as well as your heart.

February—Weight Management: Vital for long-term wellness.

- Have breakfast every day. Try topping your cereal with fruit.
- Select a mix of colorful vegetables each day to get the nutrients your body needs.
- Switch from whole milk to 1 or 2 percent or skim milk.
- Use nonstick pans or cooking spray rather than oil or butter.
- Celebrate the lunar calendar New Year with a healthy and balanced diet.

March—Physical Activity: Stay active. Live longer.

- Choose a new sport or activity, and be physically active at least five times a week.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Walk down the hall instead of using the phone or e-mail.
- Get up and move around during TV commercial breaks.
- Go for a walk with your family or friends after dinner at least twice each week.

April—Alcohol Use: Know your limits.

- Find a designated driver. Don't ride with someone who has been drinking.
- Consult your health care provider if a family member drinks a lot at home.
- Learn the warning signs of alcoholism.
- Don't be pressured to drink more than you should.
- To learn more about alcohol or drug problems, visit <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>.

May—Mental Health: Lower your stress.

- Break large tasks into smaller ones. Set priorities and do what you can.
- Refresh your body and mind with a relaxing activity, such as a massage or walk.
- Learn to play. Find pastimes, such as gardening, to escape from the pressures of life.
- Start your day with a smile. Tune into positive messages.
- If you feel depressed, call the National Mental Health Information Center at 1-800-789-2647.

June—Responsible Sexual Behavior: Think before you act.

- Don't be pressured into having sex—it does not have to be a part of dating.
- If you choose to become sexually active, know your partner's sexual history and get tested for STDs, including HIV. Ask your partner to do the same.
- Seek advice from your health care provider about responsible sexual behavior.
- Seek counseling if you or someone you know has been sexually abused.
- Teach your children to respect their bodies and protect their health.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for Asian and Pacific Islander Women

July—Drug Abuse: Use and you lose.

- Take prescription drugs only as directed by your physician.
- Trust your instincts. If you think a family member is using drugs, don't look the other way.
- Using drugs harms you and the ones who love you—don't start.
- Don't experiment—you can become addicted even the first time.
- Watch out for symptoms of drug abuse. To learn more, visit <http://www.drugabuse.gov>.

August—Health Care Access: Your health matters.

- Schedule your routine health checkup today.
- If you don't understand what your doctor is saying, speak up.
- When making a medical appointment, ask about availability of translation services.
- Attend free health screenings offered by your community health centers.
- Look for health information and screening opportunities in your neighborhood.

September—Prevention: It's better than a cure.

- Talk to your doctor about what vaccinations you and your family need.
- Consult your doctor about anemia, and consider taking iron supplements.
- Talk to your doctor about your risk for diabetes.
- Have your blood pressure and cholesterol checked to help reduce the risk of heart disease.
- Make sure you and your family get flu shots before flu season begins.

October—Violence Prevention: Empower yourself.

- Protect yourself. Sign up for a self-defense class, such as karate or Tae Kwon Do.
- If you find yourself in an abusive relationship, seek help.
- Develop a safety plan to be used in emergencies.
- Don't ignore violence around you or wait for it to go away.
- Visit <http://www.atask.org> for information in your language about domestic violence.

November—Tobacco Use: Smoking—costly to your LIFE and your wallet.

- Identify situations when you are most likely to smoke and try to cut back.
- Refuse to be a victim of second-hand smoking—make your home smoke-free.
- Educate your child on the harmful effects of smoking.
- Don't give up. If you go back to smoking, pick another quit date and get family support.
- When you quit, throw away all of your cigarettes, lighters, matches, and ashtrays.

December—Family: Get support from those who care.

- Make dinnertime a time to hear about your family's day.
- Make Sunday a "Family and Friends Day," and plan a fun group activity.
- Learn to show love for your family in small ways.
- Listen to your partner's concerns. Your support matters.
- Explore your heritage. Connect with your family by celebrating your shared past.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for American Indian and Alaska Native Women

January

Man Moon - Solitude

- Dig out an old fear and throw it away; contemplate a healthier approach to life.
- Help those around you who need it—clear the snow from their path, or fix a loose step.
- Teach your children to respect their bodies and their spirit, it will keep them safe.
- Keep your heart strong, take a walk with a friend.
- Make a hearty “Surprise” soup with leftover turkey bones, and freeze some for later.

February

Wind Big Moon - Introspection

- Fill your spirit with beautiful memories of times past, and share them with someone special.
- Promise yourself to eat less fat this week. Include plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Get some neighbor kids and adults together for a round dance in the park or in the snow.
- Rekindle that sense of pride—start a journal about your family.
- Relax—close your eyes and sit quietly. Listen to your heartbeat drum.

March

Ash Moon - Understanding

- When you go walking, breathe in Mother Earth. Think of balance.
- Start seedlings of your favorite vegetables in a sunny window for this year’s garden.
- Look at life through your kids’ eyes. Treat them as the precious gifts they are.
- Share the health. Gather your friends for a potluck of traditional foods.
- Practice understanding with a frustrated coworker. Be supportive and an active listener.

April

Planting Moon - Regeneration

- All life is starting up again. You can grow again too, this time from the inside out.
- Spread the chores around to each family member.
- Take your muscles out for a stretch—go bicycling with a friend.
- Talk to your health counselor about safe relations.
- Give thanks for our Elders. Through them, the Circle is unbroken.

May

Corn Planting Moon - Acceptance

- Step out from the shadow of those in your way and follow your own path.
- Walk in courage, honesty, humility, and generosity. These are the warriors’ paths.
- Try out a new fruit salad recipe.
- Skip rope for a healthy heart. Don’t know how? Ask your children to teach you.
- Sit with an Elder in the sunshine. Let her teach you respect for yourself and all things.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for American Indian and Alaska Native Women

June

Corn Tassel Coming Out Moon - Listening

- If what your date wants sounds wrong, it's wrong and let your heart say "No."
- Practice active listening with your children. Their simple words hide intricate meaning.
- Think fresh air and exercise. Take the family berry picking.
- Save the family from accidents. Check your house for loose boards and sharp nails.
- Healing Circles are places to listen, to be heard, and to be healed. Find one and live.

July

Sun House Moon - Passion

- Engage your passionate side, volunteer at the local friendship center or Elder home.
- Attend your tribal Pow Wow. Renew old ties and make new ones.
- Honor the ancestors with a traditional meal. You'll be honoring yourself, too.
- Celebrate the love in your house with a giveaway.
- If you choose intimacy with the right person, both of you will appreciate being tested for STDs and HIV first.

August

Lake Moon - Change

- Life is lived in the space between events. Is your life where you want it to be?
- Make one change for heart health. Try baking instead of frying.
- Educate others about your culture—volunteer to tell stories at your local school.
- Make sure you and your family's immunizations are up-to-date. Visit your doctor.
- Make a change from sugared drinks to non-sugared. Your teeth will thank you.

September

Corn Ripe Moon - Awareness

- Find a quiet, green place and pray to the four directions.
- Take time to savor your food. What you eat can prevent obesity and diabetes.
- Open your eyes and ears to signs of abuse, if you feel someone near is suffering, there are counselors who can help.
- Take an Elder out for appointments and shopping.
- Try catching the kids doing something good. Let them know you noticed in a special way.

October

Leaves Falling Moon - Respect

- Take time to thank each person who helps you through your day.
- Visit your relatives. Let them know how much you appreciate them.
- Find a place to jog or power walk. Start out slowly and work your way up.
- Start a routine of regular family meetings, and involve healthy food.
- Think about starting a healing circle if domestic violence is an issue in your community.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for American Indian and Alaska Native Women

November

Corn Depositing Moon - Mortality

- To be mortal is to embrace each day's purpose. Are you thinking too far ahead?
- Visit the place where your ancestors rest. Take the kids and tell them ancestor stories.
- Concentrate on all that you have; make two lists: "I need" and "I want." Which one is longer?
- Live each day as if it were your last one. Then you'll be ready when the last one comes.
- To make mistakes is to be truly alive. To learn from them is to gain real wisdom.

December

Night Fire Moon - Suffering

- From suffering learn compassion. Heal yourself and others with compassion.
- Think about preventing illness and suffering by embracing better ways to live.
- Pain is your body's way of telling you to seek help. Find the right place to get good medical care.
- If you could turn back time, what lifestyle changes would you make to prevent suffering?
- Be a friend that makes a difference; make sure she doesn't drink and drive.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for Latinas

January—Spirituality: Find the strength within.

- Keep your spirit free from gossip and rumor.
- Celebrate your traditions.
- Go for walks with your friends or family.
- Write down your thoughts in a journal.
- Learn to truly love yourself!

February—Weight Management: Vital for long-term wellness.

- Find nutritious meals at ethnic restaurants.
- Fill a bowl with fruits and eat them throughout the week.
- Write down everything you eat for a week.
- Stay away from pills that promise to help you lose weight.
- Try not to skip meals.

March—Physical Activity: Stay active. Live longer.

- Make a year-long exercise plan.
- Ease into an exercise routine.
- Seek motivation to stay physically active.
- Invite your children to join you when exercising.
- If you sit at work all day, get up and walk around often.

April—Alcohol Use: Know your limits.

- Try not to drink excessively during holidays.
- For an alcohol-free party, add carbonated water to fruit drinks.
- Don't ride in a car if the driver has been drinking.
- Give support to a loved one trying to give up alcohol.
- For help with alcohol problems, call 1-800-662-4357.

Enero—Espiritualidad: Halle la fuerza dentro de sí misma.

- Mantenga su espíritu libre de chismes y rumores.
- Celebre sus tradiciones.
- Vaya de paseo con sus amigos o familiares.
- Anote sus pensamientos en un diario.
- ¡Aprenda a amarse a sí misma verdaderamente!

Febrero—Control del Peso: Vital para el bienestar de la salud a largo plazo.

- Descubra comidas nutritivas en los restaurantes étnicos.
- Llene un recipiente con frutas y cómalas durante la semana.
- Anote todo lo que come durante una semana.
- No tome píldoras que prometan ayudarle a adelgazar.
- Trate de no saltarse ninguna comida.

Marzo—Actividad Física: Manténgase activa. Viva más tiempo.

- Haga un plan de ejercicio para todo el año.
- Comience una rutina de ejercicio de forma gradual.
- Busque la motivación para mantenerse activa físicamente.
- Invite a sus niños a hacer ejercicio con usted.
- Si está sentada en el trabajo durante todo el día, levántese y camine con frecuencia.

Abril—Uso de Alcohol: Conozca sus límites.

- Trate de no beber en exceso durante los días festivos.
- Para una fiesta sin alcohol, añada agua gaseosa a los jugos.
- No viaje en automóvil si el conductor ha estado tomando bebidas alcohólicas.
- Muestre su apoyo a un ser querido que esté tratando de dejar el alcohol.
- Para ayuda con problemas de alcohol, llame al 1-800-662-4357.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for Latinas

May—Mental Health: Lower your stress.

- Talk to someone you trust if you feel sad often.
- Every once in a while, do something fun for yourself.
- Stay active indoors. Stretch or dance to feel energized.
- Schedule fun “dates” with your friends.
- Make a list of your family’s activities and set priorities.

June—Responsible Sexual Behavior: Think before you act.

- Don't be pressured into having sex if that's not what you want.
- If you choose to become sexually active, know your partner's sexual history. Get tested for STDs and ask your partner to do the same.
- Ask your doctor about responsible sexual behavior.
- Seek counseling if you or someone you know has been sexually abused.
- Teach your children to respect their bodies and protect their health.

July—Drug Abuse: Use and you lose.

- To learn more about drug addiction, visit <http://www.drugabuse.gov>.
- Talk to your children often about not experimenting with drugs.
- Finish all medications as prescribed and stay on schedule.
- Ask your doctor for help if you think you are addicted to medications.
- Consult your doctor before taking any natural remedies.

Mayo—Salud Mental: Reduzca el estrés.

- Hable con alguien de confianza si se siente triste a menudo.
- De vez en cuando, trate de hacer algo divertido para usted misma.
- Manténgase activa dentro de la casa. Baile o estire sus músculos para llenarse de energía.
- Use este calendario para marcar las fechas de salir a divertirse con sus amigas.
- Haga una lista de las actividades de su familia y dé prioridad a las mismas.

Junio—Comportamiento Sexual Responsable: Piense antes de actuar.

- No se sienta presionada en tener relaciones sexuales si no lo desea.
- Si decide estar sexualmente activa, conozca los antecedentes sexuales de su pareja. Háganse ambos la prueba de enfermedades transmitidas sexualmente.
- Pregunte a su médico sobre comportamiento sexual responsable.
- Busque consejería si usted o alguien que conoce ha sido víctima de abuso sexual.
- Enseñe a sus hijos a respetar sus cuerpos y a proteger su salud.

Julio—Abuso de Drogas: La adicción le llevará a la perdición.

- Para más información sobre la adicción de drogas visite <http://www.drugabuse.gov>.
- Hable con sus hijos con frecuencia sobre la idea de no experimentar con drogas.
- Acabe todos los medicamentos según lo recetado y tómelos de forma puntual.
- Pida ayuda a su médico si piensa que está adicta a alguna medicación.
- Consulte con su médico antes de tomar cualquier remedio natural.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for Latinas

August—Health Care Access: Your health matters.

- Always read the instructions attached to your prescriptions.
- Look for health information and services in your community.
- Call 1-877-KIDS-NOW to learn about free or low-cost health insurance.
- When moving, ask your doctor for a copy of your medical records.
- Ask for translation services if you think you need them.

September—Prevention: It's better than a cure.

- Stay informed about health issues. Visit <http://www.4woman.gov>.
- Make all appointments for annual checkups in advance.
- Post emergency telephone numbers on your refrigerator.
- Aim for 8 hours of sleep every day.
- Keep all medications out of children's reach.

October—Violence Prevention: Empower yourself.

- Learn your local police department's nonemergency phone number.
- Seek help if your partner's behavior is abusive.
- Take a self-defense class in your community.
- Don't let a volatile temper get out of hand—seek counseling.
- Develop a safety plan.

Agosto—Acceso a los Cuidados de la Salud: Su salud es importante.

- Busque información y servicios para la salud en su comunidad.
- Llame al 1-877-KIDS-NOW para más información sobre seguros de salud gratis o de bajo costo.
- Cuando vaya a mudarse a otro lugar, pida a su médico una copia de su expediente médico.
- Solicite servicios de traducción e interpretación si cree que los necesita.
- Lea siempre el folleto que viene adjunto a sus recetas.

Septiembre—Prevención: Es mejor prevenir que curar.

- Manténgase informada sobre los temas de salud. Visite <http://www.4woman.gov>.
- Haga todas las citas para los chequeos anuales con anticipación.
- Fije los números de teléfono de emergencia en su refrigerador.
- Trate de dormir ocho horas al día.
- Mantenga todos los medicamentos fuera del alcance de los niños.

Octubre—Prevención de la Violencia: Ármese de valor.

- Infórmese del número de teléfono directo de la policía local.
- Solicite ayuda si el comportamiento de su pareja es abusivo.
- Tome una clase de defensa personal en su comunidad.
- No permita que un temperamento volátil salga fuera de control—busque asesoramiento.
- Desarrolle un plan de seguridad.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for Latinas

November—Tobacco Use: Smoking—costly to your LIFE and your wallet.

- Have gum or mints available at home as an alternative to smoking.
- Invest the money you saved on cigarettes in exercise classes.
- Visit <http://www.4woman.gov/Quitsmoking> for help in quitting.
- Make sure your child's day care programs are smoke-free.
- Keep a list of activities you can do instead of smoking and do one.

December—Family: Get support from those who care.

- Plan a family cooking night so everyone can help.
- Read a book out loud with your family before going to bed.
- Connect with your family by celebrating your shared past.
- Plan a cleaning session with the entire family.
- Do volunteer work as a family.

Noviembre—Uso de Tabaco: Fumar—un alto costo para su VIDA y para su bolsillo.

- Tenga caramelos de menta o goma de mascar disponible en casa como alternative para no fumar.
- Invierta el dinero que ahorró en cigarrillos en clases de gimnasia.
- Visite <http://www.4woman.gov/Quitsmoking> para ayuda sobre cómo dejar de fumar.
- Asegúrese de que el uso de tabaco está prohibido en los programas de guardería de sus niños.
- Mantenga una lista de actividades que puede hacer en lugar de fumar y haga una de ellas.

Diciembre—Familia: Reciba apoyo de las personas que la quieren.

- Forme lazos de unión con su familia recordando los tiempos pasados compartidos.
- Planee una sesión de limpieza a fondo con toda la familia.
- Haga trabajo de voluntariado con toda la familia.
- Planee una noche para que la familia cocine junta de forma que todos puedan ayudar.
- Lea un libro en voz alta con su familia antes de acostarse.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for Women Living in Rural Areas

January—Spirituality: Find the strength within.

- Make a New Year's resolution that will improve the quality of your life, and stick to it!
- Focus on the strengths, not the faults, of others. Learn to be more tolerant.
- Write down three positive things about each day.
- Go outside on a clear night and look at the stars.
- Go for a hike and appreciate the natural beauty around you.

February—Weight Management: Vital for long-term wellness.

- Calories count! Keep track of how many calories you take in each day.
- Use alternatives to frying your food—try adding spices to your baked dishes.
- Choose whole grain foods more often, such as whole wheat breads, oatmeal, or brown rice.
- Instead of cake, have a piece of fruit.
- Eat before you get too hungry to avoid overeating or snacking on unhealthy foods.

March—Physical Activity: Stay active. Live longer.

- Aim for 20 minutes of aerobic activity each day, such as walking, jogging, or swimming.
- Get up and move around during TV commercial breaks.
- Instead of talking on the phone with a friend, make a date to walk and talk.
- Spring into the weekends—dance to your favorite music or start a garden.
- Stretch all of your major muscle groups before and after exercise to avoid injuries.

April—Alcohol and Drug Abuse: Destroys families, destroys lives.

- Know your limit. Alcohol doesn't solve problems, it can add to them.
- Volunteer to be the designated driver.
- Drink a glass of water for each alcoholic drink you have.
- Take prescription drugs only as directed by a physician or a pharmacist.
- Using drugs harms you and the ones who love you—don't start.

May—Mental Health: Lower your stress.

- Depression is more common than you think. Learn its warning signs.
- Let the warm weather and fresh air help you relax.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help if you feel overwhelmed.
- If you think you may be depressed, call 1-800-789-2647 for help.
- Call your state or county health department for mental health care programs.

June—Responsible Sexual Behavior: Think before you act.

- Don't be pressured into having sex—it does not have to be a part of dating.
- If you choose to become sexually active, know your partner's sexual history and get tested for STDs, including HIV. Ask your partner to do the same.
- Seek advice from your health care provider about responsible sexual behavior.
- Seek counseling if you or someone you know has been sexually abused.
- Teach your children to respect their bodies and protect their health.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for Women Living in Rural Areas

July—Heat Stress Prevention: Keep it cool.

- Drink at least 8 ounces of water every 20 minutes while working in the heat.
- If you have a mole that changes color or shape, tell your doctor immediately.
- Always wear protective clothing and sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 when outside.
- During hot weather, don't over-exert yourself or become too tired.
- Know the symptoms of a heat stroke: excessive sweating, fatigue, thirst, and confusion.

August—Health Care Access: Your health matters.

- Offer your neighbors a ride to medical appointments.
- Before your appointment, make a list of questions you want to ask your doctor.
- Call your local VA Hospital for information on transit buses for the elderly and disabled.
- Ask your doctor about free medications for persons with limited income.
- Look for free health information and screening tests in your community.

September—Prevention: It's better than a cure.

- Schedule regular health screenings at the same time each year to help you remember them.
- Wash your hands often, especially when you are near others who are sick.
- Ask an elderly family member about your family's health history.
- Talk to your doctor about what vaccinations you and your family need.
- Make sure you have a first-aid kit at home or in your car for emergencies.

October—Violence and Injury Prevention: Empower yourself.

- Make sure that outside lights are working. Check locks and entrances.
- Store flammable liquids and poisons in their proper location.
- Make sure that you're not alone when using dangerous equipment like chainsaws.
- Carry your keys as you walk through the parking lot.
- Check well water for bacteria, heavy metals, and pesticides every 6 months.

November—Tobacco Use: Smoking—costly to your LIFE and your wallet.

- Identify situations or times when you are more likely to smoke, and try to cut back.
- Chewing tobacco is as addictive and unhealthy as cigarettes. Don't allow either at home.
- Make a pact with yourself not to smoke or allow smoking around your children.
- Support and encourage a friend or family member who is trying to quit.
- Make a list of 10 things to do with your money instead of smoking.

December—Family: Get support from those who care.

- Make Sunday a "Family and Friends Day," and plan a fun group activity.
- Say something positive to your family every day.
- Make time to have fun and laugh with your family.
- Learn about your family members' interests.
- Mark on your calendar important dates for your friends and family. Call them on that day.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for Women with Disabilities

January—Spirituality: Find the strength within.

- List three things you would like to do to simplify your life.
- Connect with others—join a disability or faith organization, or an Internet-based chat group.
- Share your talents and become a mentor. Volunteer at your local school, library, or church.
- Begin or end your day with a 5-minute meditation.
- Find an accessible place of worship near you. Call the Accessible Congregations Campaign at 202-293-5960.

February—Weight Management: Important for long-term wellness.

- Check with your doctor before starting a weight management program to make sure it fits your medical needs.
- Identify your “ideal” weight with your doctor, and work towards reaching and/or maintaining that weight.
- Eat foods rich in calcium such as cheese, yogurt, and broccoli to reduce your risk of osteoporosis.
- Whenever possible, include physical activity in your daily life.
- Eat smaller, balanced meals and select at least five colorful fruits and vegetables to eat daily.

March—Physical Activity: Stay active. Live longer.

- Get started on a fitness plan that is right for you. Visit <http://www.rtcil.org> for more information.
- Try various types of physical activities—they provide different benefits.
- Find inexpensive ways to keep in shape, such as using household items for weight lifting.
- Find a disability-friendly gym or contact your local YWCA or parks and recreation center.
- Visit <http://www.ncpad.org> for more information on physical activity.

April—Alcohol and Drug Abuse: Destroys families, destroys lives.

- If you are concerned about your use of alcohol or drugs, talk with your physician.
- Ask your doctor about interactions between your medications, and between medications and alcohol.
- Don’t use alcohol or drugs to mask pain. Ask your doctor for alternative treatments.
- Consult your doctor if you are concerned about your increased use and dependence on prescription drugs.
- Call SAMHSA at 1-800-729-6686 for referrals to a community support group or treatment organization.

May—Mental Health: Lower your stress.

- Learn the symptoms of depression and get help if necessary.
- Schedule a 10-minute break every day to remove yourself from a stressful environment.
- Talk to a friend or professional about any problem—get a fresh point of view and possible solutions.
- Try one relaxing thing each day—take a bubble bath, read a chapter of a book, or listen to music.
- Focus on your own health needs; you know best what you can and cannot do.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for Women with Disabilities

June—Sexuality: Taking responsibility for your sexual health.

- Don't be pressured into having sex—it does not have to be a part of dating.
- If you choose to become sexually active, know your partner's sexual history and get tested for STDs, including HIV. Ask your partner to do the same.
- Seek advice from your health care provider about responsible sexual behavior.
- Seek counseling if you or someone you know has been sexually abused.
- Teach your children to respect their bodies and protect their health.

July—Self-esteem: You matter.

- Nurturing yourself is not selfish—it's okay to put yourself first.
- Focus on the things you can do.
- You deserve to be treated with respect.
- Do something that you have always wanted to do—take a class, travel, or meet new people.
- Contact your local Center for Independent Living to learn about independent living skills, accessibility, and legal issues.

August—Health Care Access: It's your right.

- Call the ADA Information Line at 1-800-514-0301 for information on accessible health care facilities.
- Notify your health care provider if you require any special assistance when making an appointment.
- Before your appointment, make a list of questions you want to ask your doctor.
- If you feel your doctor is not taking your concerns seriously, get a second opinion or consider changing doctors.
- Find out about your state's Medicaid waiver programs to help with medical expenses.

September—Prevention: It's better than a cure.

- Visit <http://www.4woman.gov> for a personalized chart on health screenings.
- Schedule regular screenings at the same time each year to make them easier to remember.
- Talk with your doctor about osteoporosis. You may need to be screened at a younger age than other women.
- Make your home easy to navigate and injury free.
- Make sure you have at least two evacuation routes in your home in case of fire or other emergency.

October—Violence Prevention: Empower yourself.

- Identify signs of domestic violence in your life.
- Refusal to provide care may be a form of abuse. Don't accept abuse!
- Don't ignore violence around you or wait for it to go away.
- Let someone else know if you feel something is not right about the way you are being treated.
- Always have a safety plan. For more information, visit <http://www.bcm.tmc.edu/crowd>.

Monthly Health Themes and Action Steps for Women with Disabilities

November—Tobacco Use: Smoking—costly to your LIFE and your wallet.

- Go to <http://www.smokefree.gov> for information and support to help you quit.
- Identify times of the day or situations when you are more likely to smoke and try to cut back.
- Every time you get a craving, wait at least 5 minutes before lighting up.
- When you quit, use the money you have saved to buy yourself something special.
- Support and encourage friends or family members who are trying to quit with acknowledgement of their efforts.

December—Healthy Relationships: Get support from those who care.

- Don't be afraid to ask for help or support if you need it.
- Express your feelings to a loved one—give a hug, offer a compliment, or send an e-mail.
- Share laughter with friends, caregivers, co-workers, and others whose company you enjoy.
- Designate a “Family and Friends Day,” and plan a fun group activity.
- Join a club or organization that matches your interests.

Overview of *Pick Your Path to Health* Community-Based Programs

Rationale for PYPTH in Community-Based Programs

The purpose of the *Pick Your Path to Health* (PYPTH) campaign is to empower, educate, and motivate women to improve their health. The best way to present information and encourage participation is to meet women where they are in their health journey and to address their health goals within the larger context of their lives. Community-based programs are the natural approach to carry out this mission.

Community-based programs are based directly in the community where they have connections to the cultural and ethnic ties of the surrounding area. Their approach to long-term health care and behavior change in the community is typically systematic and coordinated through education and participation within the community structure.

Because the programs are in the community, they are accessible by the people in the community. Issues such as lack of transportation, low income, or lack of health insurance, which can be important factors in whether a person will seek health care services, are often not an issue with community-based programs.

The Role of the Coach

A unique and important factor in the PYPTH community-based program is the role of the coach. The coach is a vital component in implementing the program. The coach serves as the link between the program and the participants, providing personal attention to the health goals of the participants, assisting the participants with setting reasonable and attainable objectives, and offering a framework of support by providing education materials, useful strategies, and an atmosphere of partnership and community.

Community-based programs can use the PYPTH's model of 12 health themes and practical action steps to create a tailored program or infuse the model into already existing programs. The PYPTH program is a flexible program meant to be tailored to the individual participant to help her with her specific health goals. Change starts with small, doable steps. Your program can help guide your participants through these steps to better health and make a real difference in the quality of their lives.

Overview of Women's Health

Small first steps can start a woman on the path to wellness. But her individual health risks will be determined to a certain extent by her lifestyle and background. While research is uncovering the role of biology, environment, cultural traditions and the interplay of these and other factors, some women's health issues are clear.

<p>Heart Disease is the number one killer of American women.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1999, more women died of heart disease and stroke compared to all forms of cancer. Several risk factors contribute to the likelihood of women getting heart disease, including smoking, high blood pressure (hypertension), high cholesterol, obesity, physical inactivity, and a family history of the disease. • African American women have the highest mortality rate from heart disease (284 per 100,000) of all American women. More than one-third (36 percent) of this population has high blood pressure, in contrast to 19 percent of white women. In addition, more than half of African American women have a higher rate of obesity than white women do.
<p>Cancer is the second leading cause of death among minority women.</p>	<p>Lung cancer, the leading cancer killer of women, is on the rise. This increase can be attributed primarily to the increase in smoking among women.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White women have the highest mortality rate from lung cancer (42 per 100,000) among all women. • African American women have the highest mortality rate from lung cancer (40 per 100,000) among all minority groups, and the highest death rate for all cancers combined compared to all women. <p>Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death among all American women.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • African American women have the highest rate of mortality from breast cancer of all population groups (34 per 100,000).
<p>Stroke is the third leading cause of death among minority women.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2001, 61 percent of those who died from stroke were females. • African American women have the highest death rate from stroke of all women, at 78 deaths per 100,000, in contrast to 57 for white women, and 48 for Asian American/Pacific Islander.

Overview of Women's Health

<p>Diabetes mellitus is the fourth leading cause of death for African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic women.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diabetes ranks among the top 10 causes of death for all women. • Diabetes was the fourth leading cause of death in 2000 among American Indian/Alaska Native women. • Older Mexican American women are the second most likely group to have diabetes. They have the highest incidence of this disease among Hispanic women. Almost one-third (30 percent) of these women suffer from the disorder. • Among African American women, diabetes was the fourth leading cause of death in 2000. African American women are more likely to be blinded, become amputees, develop end-stage renal impairment, and die from diabetes than white women.
<p>HIV/AIDS is a rapidly growing public health concern among women, particularly minority women.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2000, 80 percent of new AIDS cases in women occurred in African American and Hispanic females. African American women had the highest death rate of any group of American women. • Hispanic women are 3 times more likely to die from HIV/AIDS than are white women. HIV/AIDS is the fourth leading cause of death for Hispanic women between the ages of 25 and 44.
<p>Alcohol and other drug abuse are serious health concerns for all women.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women are less likely than men to use or abuse alcohol; however, death rates among female alcoholics are higher than their male counterparts. • Among American Indian/Alaska Native women, 2-3 percent consume at least 60 drinks within 30 days. They have the highest mortality rate related to alcoholism of all American women. • Among all American women, white women had the highest mortality rate (64 percent) in 1999 from drug-related causes. • Among minority populations, African American women have the highest mortality rate (26 percent) from drug-related causes.
<p>Mental health problems affect large numbers of women each year.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major depression and dysthymia (a less severe, more chronic form of depression) affect approximately twice as many women as men. An estimated 12 percent of women in the United States experience a major depression each year. • Hispanic women have the highest lifetime prevalence of depression (24 percent) of all women. Nearly twice as many Hispanic women reported being depressed (11 percent) as African American women (6 percent) and white women (5 percent).

Overview of Women's Health

<p>Mental health problems, continued.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than 90 percent of all cases of eating disorders occur in women. • In 2000, American Indian/Alaska Natives had the highest mortality rate from suicide, and Asian American/Pacific Islanders had the second highest mortality rate.
<p>Violence against women is a major public health problem in our country.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each year, approximately 4 million women are physically abused by their spouse or live-in partner. • Sixty-one percent of American Indian/Alaska Native women have been victims of physical assault. This group has the highest percentage of rapes (34 percent), a rate significantly higher than that found among white (18 percent) and African American women (19 percent). • Fifty-three percent of Hispanic and 52 percent of African American women are subject to physical assault at some point in their lifetime.
<p>Smoking is the single most preventable cause of death and disease in the United States.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Among women, the use of tobacco has been shown to increase the risk of cancer, heart and respiratory diseases, and reproductive disorders. • As of 1998, roughly 22 percent of all adult women reported smoking cigarettes. • In 1999, more than 165,000 women died prematurely from smoking-related diseases such as cancer and heart disease. • American Indian and Alaska Native women were the most likely to smoke cigarettes (37 percent) compared to all women. • Among all women, African American women had the third highest percentage of current smokers (20 percent), after white women (22 percent).
<p>Overweight and obese women are at increased risk for high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and other health problems.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 1999-2000, 62 percent of all women between 20 and 74 years of age were defined as overweight. • More than three quarters (78 percent) of African American women between the ages of 20 and 74 were classified as overweight in 1999-2000 as compared to over half (57 percent) of white women. • Among Hispanic women, Mexican American women have the highest rate of overweight (71 percent) and obesity (40 percent).

SOURCE: OWH, DHHS, *The Health of Minority Women, 2003.*

Pick Your Path to Health Partners & OWH Affiliates

Pick Your Path to Health Partners

Pick Your Path to Health is supported by over 100 national partners who help to spread campaign messages to communities and women across the nation. The list is broken down by region to facilitate your search for possible partners and resources that these organizations may have available.

Regional Women’s Health Coordinators

Ten Regional Women’s Health Coordinators in the United States coordinate activities to promote a greater focus on women’s health issues at the regional, state, and local levels. They advance the mission of the Office on Women’s Health by administering programs that improve the health of women in communities across the country and by coordinating activities and programs in health care service delivery, research, and public and health professional education.

National Centers of Excellence and Community Centers of Excellence in Women’s Health

The National Centers of Excellence in Women’s Health (CoEs) and the National Community Centers of Excellence (CCOEs) serve as demonstration models for the Nation to provide innovative, comprehensive, multidisciplinary, and integrated health care systems for women. The CoEs are housed in academic institutions and the CCOEs are housed in community health centers; both offer a variety of health services and outreach activities to improve women’s health.

Minority Women’s Health Panel of Experts

The Minority Women’s Health Panel of Experts—established by the Office on Women’s Health in 1997—is composed of physicians, clinicians, community advocates, and academicians working in communities and health settings around the country that serve racially and ethnically diverse women. Members of this panel may be available to serve as speakers at your *Pick Your Path to Health* events, and may be available to provide expertise in a variety of health-related and programmatic issues. If you would like to get in touch with a panel member, please contact Adrienne Smith at ASmith@OSOPHS.DHHS.GOV to facilitate communication activities.

Pick Your Path to Health Partners

Region I

(Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Vermont)

- Boston Black Woman's Health Initiative
- *Boston Chinese News*
- Boston University Medical Center
- Brown University/Women & Infants Hospital
- *Goodnews Connecticut Press*
- Griffin Hospital
- Harvard Medical School
- Northeastern Vermont Area Health Education Center

Region II

(New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands)

- *Heart & Soul*
- Iris House
- *La Salud Hispana*
- Memorial Hospital of Salem County
- National Women's Health Resource Center
- St. Barnabas Hospital and Healthcare System
- Today's Child Communications, Inc.
- University of Puerto Rico

Region III

(Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia)

- American College of Nurse-Midwives
- American Tai Chi Association
- *Asian Fortune*
- ASPIRA Association, Inc.
- Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses
- Center for Women Policy Studies
- Christiana Care Health System
- Cosmetic, Toiletry, and Fragrance Association (CFTA) Foundation
- DC Department of Health – Project WISH
- Delaware Valley Community Health, Inc.
- Family Violence Prevention Fund
- Gwen's Girls
- Hispanic Radio Network
- International Bottled Water Association
- Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.
- Magee-Womens Hospital
- MCP Hahnemann University (doing business as Drexel University)
- National Women's Health Network
- Naval Medical Center Portsmouth
- Oak Grove Baptist Church Women's Ministry
- *Pennsylvania Health & Fitness Magazine*
- Phoebe Women Network

Pick Your Path to Health Partners

Region III Continued

- Sisters Supporting Sisters, Inc.
- Society for Women's Health Research
- Spina Bifida Association of America
- VCU Institute for Women's Health
- Virginia Commonwealth University
- Women's Health Institute at Howard University
- Women's Research & Education Institute

Region IV

(Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee)

- Alabama Sisterfriends
- Angel's Healthy Women Today
- Association of Black Cardiologist, Inc.
- *The Atlanta Inquirer*
- *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*
- Benedict College
- CDC Office of Women's Health
- Georgia Department of Community Health – Office of Women's Health
- Jefferson Health System
- *The Journal of Wilmington, NC*
- Kentucky Rural Initiatives Corporation
- *La Noticia*
- Morton Plant Hospital
- North Carolina Primary Health Care Association's Statewide Partnership in Women's Health (SPWH)
- Southeast Mississippi Rural Health Initiative, Inc.
- University of Mississippi Medical Center
- Victorious Living Ministries, Inc.
- Vital 4 Life, Inc.
- Woman of Vision International Inc.

Region V

(Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin)

- Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
- Hennepin County Primary Care Department
- Here Now! Ministries
- *Hmong Times*
- Indiana University School of Medicine
- Lee County Health Department
- National Association of Hispanic Publications
- Native American Journalist Association
- NorthEast Ohio Neighborhood Health Services, Inc.
- Ogle County Health Department
- Ohio Reformatory for Women

Pick Your Path to Health Partners

Region V Continued

- REACH Project, Inc.
- Red Lake Comprehensive Health Services
- Spirit of Women
- University of Illinois at Chicago
- University of Michigan Health System
- University of Minnesota
- University of Wisconsin, Madison
- YWCA of Racine, Wisconsin

Region VI

(Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas)

- Nuviva Consulting – For Health & Wellness
- Santa Fe Women’s Health Community Center
- Security DBS, a division of Halliburton
- Tulane and Xavier Universities of Louisiana
- Women’s Health Services

Region VII

(Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska)

- Iowa Department of Public Health
- Kansas Department of Health and Environment
- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services
- Northeast Missouri Health Council, Inc.
- Swope Parkway Health Center

Region VIII

(Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming)

- The Circuit Women in Fitness
- Empowerment Program
- In Balance Fitness – Women’s Health & Fitness Center

Region IX

(Arizona, California, Hawaii, Nevada, Pacific Basin)

- *Asian American Times*
- Black Women For Wellness
- Courage Unlimited, Inc.®
- Kokua Kalihi Valley Comprehensive Family Services
- Mariposa Community Health Center
- National Asian Women’s Health Organization
- University of Arizona
- University of California, Los Angeles
- University of California, San Francisco
- The Way of the Heart: The Promotora Institute
- Women’s ONE-Stop Comprehensive Health Clinic at Hubert H. Humphrey

Pick Your Path to Health Partners

Region X

(Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington)

- The AIDS Ministry Ecumenical Network
- *El Hispanic News*
- *El Mundo*
- The Health & Learning Connection of Sacred Heart Medical Center, Eugene, Oregon
- *Northwest Asian Weekly*
- Oregon Health and Science University
- *Seattle Chinese Post*
- University of Washington, Seattle
- We Speak Loudly

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National Community Centers of Excellence in Women's Health

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