A Message from
the DHSS Secretary

Women are many things to their families and communities: the mother, the worker, the wife, the volunteer, the single parent, the leader. Women are nurturers, taking care of everyone and making sure things get done, often putting themselves at the bottom of a very long “to do” list.

We shove from our minds the thoughts of what would happen to our families if we weren’t around to care for them anymore, and yet this is exactly what we risk when we don’t take care of ourselves.

National Women’s Health Week is May 13-19, 2012, a time to remind all women that they have to find time for themselves.

This is your time. Use it to arrange health screenings recommended for women in your age group, set up a daily exercise routine, create healthier meal recipes that you and your family can enjoy. Use this week to take care of you so that you can continue to be strong and healthy for yourself and your family.

Use this week for you—it is your time!

Links to resources have been provided in the gold shaded column on the left.

Heart Disease: Not What You Thought

Delaware has very high rates of heart disease, the leading cause of death in women. Would you recognize the signs of this disease? It’s tricky—heart disease may not announce itself with chest pain or discomfort; the pain could occur in the back between the shoulder blades, and be easily dismissed as a muscular ache or other mild issue.

It is important women know the signs of heart disease:

- Feeling scared or nervous
- New or worse headaches
- An ache in the chest
- Chest feeling “heavy” or “tight”
- A burning feeling in the chest
- Pain between shoulders
- Pain or tightness in the chest that spreads to the jaw, neck, shoulders, ear, or the inside of the arms
- Belly pain above the belly button

If you or someone you love is experiencing any of the above signs, see your doctor right away. If you or someone else is having a heart attack, call 9-1-1 immediately. Quick action can save lives.

For more information on heart disease and its prevention, please go to: http://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/
Besides the negative emotional effects of being overweight, women also face serious health risks when overweight or obese. Being overweight or obese can increase your risk of:

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- Type 2 diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Breathing problems
- Arthritis
- Gallbladder disease
- Some kinds of cancer

Even a moderate weight loss can help lower the health risks. For help geared specifically to you, get a personalized nutrition and physical activity plan at:

https://www.choosemyplate.gov/SuperTracker/default.aspx

Mood swings: A gentle way to describe what a woman might feel during menopause. For some women, these “mood swings” are like emotional volcanoes; rumbling beneath her surface until a shift in her daily life shakes it all loose and BOOM. When they will erupt or what damage might result isn’t predictable, but it’s sure that these mood swings can be very unpleasant. And contrary to popular assumption, mood swings and other symptoms of menopause are not “all in her head” but the body’s very real response to a major physical shift, the time leading up to a woman’s last period.

During this time a woman will have changes in her estrogen and progesterone levels, female hormones made in the ovaries. These changes may lead to a myriad of uncomfortable symptoms which can last for months or years after a woman’s period stops. Some symptoms include:

- Irregular periods.
- Hot flashes.
- Mood swings.
- Trouble sleeping.
- Trouble remembering or focusing.
- Changing feelings about sex.
- Joint and muscle aches.
- Vaginal and urinary problems.
- Weight gain, especially around torso.
- Osteoporosis.

These symptoms are challenging, to be sure. But there are steps we can take that can reduce discomfort, such as stress relieving techniques, eating healthy, not smoking, and getting regular exercise.

For extreme symptoms, see your doctor. And hang in there!

Learn more at http://www.womenshealth.gov/menopause/symptom-relief-treatment/index.cfm


Fuel your body with solid nutrition.
- Take care of your growing bones.
- Avoid junk like drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.
- Feel good by staying fit.
- Learn about a healthy weight and know your body mass index.
- Visit your doctor regularly and keep up to date on your vaccinations.
- Wear your backpack correctly to avoid pain and posture issues.
- Learn about protecting your hearing from earbuds and other risks.
- Learn how high heels and tight shoes can really cramp your style.
- When stress strikes, find healthy ways to cope.

It’s easier to take care of your body if you understand how it works. Check out a cool tool that shows you what’s going on inside when you eat lunch, take a breath, and even have a thought.

For more info: http://www.girlshealth.gov/body/knowbody/index.cfm

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