

SEXUAL HEALTH MATTERS

Sexual health matters - to all of us, whether we talk about it openly or not. Sexual and reproductive health is a core aspect of our identity and an important part of health and well being throughout the life cycle. It is so important to each of us that there is a week dedicated to reminding us about this aspect of our lives.

Sexual and Reproductive Health Awareness Week starts February 12th. It is an annual health promotion event with a focus on increasing national attention on the importance of sexual health issues.

The goal of having an awareness week is to encourage people across the nation to consider the importance of maintaining reproductive health and talking about healthy decision making with the people they care about. As well as promote the services and support available within each community for sexual health issues for all ages, abilities, orientations, identities and cultures.

Sexual health requires a positive and respectful approach to sexuality and sexual relationships. We need to create a sexually healthy new generation full of individuals and communities that are comfortable speaking about and expressing their sexuality.

Healthy sexuality requires a positive and respectful approach for healthy sexual development and sexual experience. It includes our attitudes about sexuality, our ability to understand and accept our own sexuality, to make healthy choices and respect the choices of others. These are essential aspects of who we are and how we interact with our world. We also need to create a sexually healthy new generation full of individuals and communities that are comfortable speaking about and expressing their sexuality.

An important aspect of sexual health is to have regular screening of your reproductive organs. They include breast, cervical and prostate screening. The tests you need depend on your age, your sex, your family history and whether you have risk factors for certain diseases. Screening tests may help find diseases or conditions early when they are easier to treat.

Prostate screening should be discussed with your health care provider, as prostate cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in men. One in seven men will develop prostate cancer during his lifetime and the risk of developing prostate cancer increases after age 60. It is also good to know, that the survival rates are the highest for those who have prostate cancer compared to many other cancers.

As men age, the prostate may get bigger. A bigger prostate may block the flow of urine from the bladder and cause problems with sexual function. This is called benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH). BPH is not cancer, but treatment for BPH may be needed. These symptoms may be like symptoms of prostate cancer and should be checked. They include:

- Problems passing urine, such as pain, difficulty starting or stopping the stream, or dribbling
- Low back pain
- Pain with ejaculation

It is important that each of us are aware of our own bodies so if changes occur that don't seem normal you get it checked by your family physician or nurse practitioner.

Some general tips to stay healthy:

Follow Canada's Food Guide for Healthy Eating and Physical Activity
Protect yourself from the sun – use sunscreen and wear protective clothing
Stay smoke free and avoid second-hand smoke
Tell your health care provider when your health changes
Have regular Screening for cancer as you age as part of your overall health and wellness

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For more information, please visit www.westernhealth.nl.ca