

Exercise, diet key to good health

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The Partnership for a Healthy Durham has been writing monthly articles about “access to care” in Durham. What many of us don’t often consider is that health is much more than having access to services. Not all, but many health problems in the City of Medicine can be improved and sometimes “cured” by the daily choices we make. If Durham truly is going to be a healthy community, we all have to take individual and collective responsibility to get involved. Of course, making health choices is not always easy.

Meet Pat. Pat finds it hard to find the time and the energy to exercise. She knows she should, but when she gets home from work, there is dinner to get for her husband and 3 children, ball practice for her son, the church event coming up. By the time all of this is done, she is tired. When she thinks about what her family eats, she really wants less expensive, healthy food for the family and would love to find a good weight loss program that she could afford.

Our lives are busy these days with the pressures of work, family and community commitments. There is little time for regular physical activity and it is easier to just keep eating the kinds of foods we know, the foods our families have always enjoyed. The nutrition information every day from TV, magazines, newspapers and food advertisements is confusing. Reports of new health studies often have contradictory messages, leaving many of us confused and wondering if what we eat and how we exercise really does matter.

What we know for sure is that eating a balanced, nutritious diet (such as one rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and low fat foods), and maintaining a healthy weight, will reduce your risk for the top two causes of death in Durham County: heart disease and cancer. There are many ways to achieve these health goals. Sometimes it can be hard to find the most convenient and appropriate measures to suit our individuals needs. People in Durham are fortunate to have a wealth of resources to help us eat healthy and exercise. Thanks to years of local investment into parks, recreational facilities, safe public spaces, and economic development initiatives, many of these resources are free or at reasonable cost to Durham residents.

The Obesity and Chronic Disease Committee of the Partnership for a Healthy Durham is assembling a free resource directory to help residents find low cost or free exercise and nutrition resources in Durham. This voluntary coalition of Durham organizations is creating a web-based map, as well as a printed brochure, with information about where Durham residents can play, walk, run, bike, dance, and stretch. The locations include parks, school playgrounds, running/walking tracks as well as programs and services, both private and public.

Even if you know about healthy food, it’s sometimes hard to find a place to get foods that meets your tastes and fits within your budget. The map will help Durham residents find nutrition resources, including restaurants awarded the Winner’s Circle, produce stands, farmer’s markets, and weight reduction programs and groups.

NC Prevention Partners created the Winner’s Circle Healthy Dining Program, which uses a symbol (a purple star with a gold fork) to identify dishes at restaurants that are below an established limit on the amount of fat, salt or sugar in a restaurant dish. Low fat, low salt, or low sugar foods help prevent chronic diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure. Farmer’s markets provide fresh fruits and vegetables in season. Farmer’s markets abound across Durham, and offer fresh, healthy food, starting with strawberries in the spring and ending with squash in the fall. Eating fruits and vegetables, instead of high fat, high sugar, high salt food, helps your body function better to maintain good health.

Where a person works and how active or sedentary their job is also plays an important factor. Even if a person’s work is not physically demanding, many large businesses in Durham have invested in their workforce by sponsoring health promotion programs. Some of these programs focus on employees at

higher risk for chronic diseases like heart disease and diabetes. Several are also expanding into ways to encourage all their employees to eat healthy foods and be more physically active. Companies are recognizing that healthy employees are better workers; and they also anticipate this investment will have a positive impact on their health insurance premiums.

The Committee hopes to have the web-based map and a paper brochure available to Durham residents in late summer. The groups will keep these resources up-to-date so Durham residents have the tools they need to be healthy and live long, active lives.

Clip and save

Durham's Parks and Recreation Department has over 60 parks, several trails and greenways, four recreation centers, athletic leagues, pools, classes, and more. Call 560-4355 or see their program guide "Play More" at

http://www.durhamnc.gov/departments/parks/pdf/play_more.pdf

Durham Farmer's Market downtown (400 block of Morris St) opens on April 7th. In the meantime, they have a winter market on first and third Saturday mornings at the Central Park School for Children. During the summers, they also have Thursday markets at Durham Regional Hospital.

www.durhamfarmersmarket.com.

The **Durham County Health Department** has programs in nutrition and wellness. The Nutrition Division provides individual counseling and group education to adults and children on nutrition, physical activity and food safety. Call 560-7791. The Health Education Division offers programs on physical activity and chronic disease prevention. Call 560-7660. Nutritional counseling fees are on a sliding scale fee based on income and family size; other programs are free.

Some school's tracks are open for public use after school hours. These include:

Githens Middle School (4800 Old Chapel Hill Rd)
Brogden Middle School (1001 Leon St)
Hillside High School (3727 Fayetteville St)
Shepard Middle School (2401 Dakota St)
Northern High School (117 Tom Wilkinson Dr)
Riverside High School (3218 Rose of Sharon Rd)
Lowe's Grove (4418 S. Alston Ave)

In addition to many private for-profit organizations, there are three **YMCAs** in Durham. They offer numerous fitness programs, as well as summer camps, after-schools, and other programs. Scholarships are available for many programs.

Downtown Durham YMCA
215 Morgan St.
667-9622

American Tobacco Historic District
410 Blackwell St.
956-9602
Lakewood
2119 Chapel Hill Rd.
493-4502

There are several **Winners' Circle restaurants** in Durham, which have identified healthy choices on the menus at restaurants. To see a list of participating restaurants, go to http://www.durham-nc.com/pdf/winners_circle.pdf or call 560-7697.

