Healthy and here to help

How to keep your heart healthy

Read more about what we’re doing online
Catawba County WIC has been reaching out to more potential recipients through an increased community presence, more coordinated referrals and by answering questions and meeting the needs of a diverse community. New efforts include developing materials to explain the program, its benefits, and how it can be accessed easily by the community.

WIC (Women, Infants and Children) is a supplemental healthy food program funded by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for infants and children up to age 5 and pregnant, postpartum and breastfeeding women. The Catawba County WIC office serves more than 4,000 participants each month.

**WIC aims for easy access.**

» The WIC office works with participants to eliminate transportation and appointment issues.

» Clients can schedule an appointment over the phone, or can walk-in for a same-day appointment.

» WIC offers bilingual staff (Spanish and Hmong)

» Clients can appoint a proxy (other authorized person) to certify their child or pick up WIC checks if the client can’t.

**WIC in the community**

WIC works with farmer’s markets to help increase participant access to provide fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables. In addition, WIC runs the Catawba County Public Health Farmers Market.

The estimated value of one year’s worth of WIC healthy food checks for a family of one woman with a 4-month-old baby getting formula, and a 3-year-old child is $3,200.
Residents might be eligible — and not know it.

» You are automatically eligible for WIC if you have a child enrolled in the Head Start, Early Head Start, N.C. Pre-K or Parents as Teachers programs.
» U.S. citizenship is not required for eligibility
» If you participate in another assistance program (Medicaid or Food and Nutrition Services/SNAP), you are automatically income-eligible for WIC.
» Children are eligible from birth to age 5, and women who are pregnant, postpartum or breastfeeding are eligible, depending on income and other eligibility requirements.
» Mothers, fathers, grandparents and other guardians can obtain WIC for children.

Breastfeeding mothers are eligible to participate in WIC longer than non-breastfeeding mothers. Women who breastfeed receive an enhanced nutritional package offers the greatest quantity and variety of foods. Breastfeeding peer counselors provide breastfeeding support, even outside of normal business hours, including nights, weekends and holidays. Breastfeeding peer counselors also offer breast pumps for eligible participants to make breastfeeding more convenient.

What can you do? Tell people about WIC! Tell parents, grandparents, neighbors and community groups about the benefits of WIC and let them know to schedule an appointment by calling (828) 695-5884.
PUBLIC HEALTH HAPPENINGS

FACILITATING COMMUNITY CHANGE

HEPATITIS C: A group of community organizations convened in January to address Hepatitis C in Catawba County. The group’s purpose is to create a systematic approach to address the needs of Hepatitis C patients, avoid duplication of services and ensure seamless coordination of care. It takes a community approach.

Greater Hickory Cooperative Christian Ministry, Gaston Family Health Services (Catawba Family Care), Fairgrove Primary Health (Ryan White Clinic) and ALFA (AIDS Leadership Foothills Alliance), along with Catawba County Public Health and others, began the process of creating a cohesive, collaborative system for testing and treating Hepatitis C patients.

The group plans to meet again in March to continue on the path of better coordination of care for these patients.

EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS ON AGENDA

The area’s LOCAL INFORMATION TEAM (LIT TEAM), led by Catawba County Public Health’s Health Promotions staff, met for the first time in a year to enhance relationships among communicators who could be called on in the case of a public health emergency in Catawba County.

Attendees included representatives from school systems, hospital systems, emergency management personnel, and agencies that are responsible for caring for the area’s most vulnerable residents.

The LIT Team decided to continue meeting semi-annually and will focus on training and partnership building. A work group was also developed to plan future training and meeting events. That group will meet in February.

RADON TEST RESULTS COMING IN

As part of NATIONAL RADON MONTH, Catawba County Public Health, in conjunction with the North Carolina Radon Program, provided 50 free radon test kits to Catawba County residents during the month of January.

Radon is the odorless, colorless gas that is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. Exposure to radon in the home is responsible for an estimated 20,000 lung cancer deaths each year, according to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. Radon gas occurs naturally from the breakdown of uranium in rocks and soil. Radon gas can seep through the cracks in buildings, and high levels can lead to severe health problems, the state says.

The kits were given out as part of National Radon Month activities. Roughly 20 percent of kits have been returned and analyzed in two weeks, and more are expected to come in this month. This year’s return rate is better than expected, with last year’s final rate slightly above 20 percent.

One in every three houses with results so far have shown levels above the Environmental Protection Agency’s 4 pCi/L level for taking action to vent radiation out of the home.

STRATEGIST JOINS TEAM

LIA CLINTON joined Catawba County Public Health in late January as the Chief Public Health Strategist. In this new position, Clinton will direct progress toward meeting goals set out in the Strategic Plan, which will be released in the coming weeks. Clinton will also lead the Health Promotion team.

“I look forward to helping move the mission of Catawba County Public Health forward through facilitating adoption and follow through on the strategic plan, and I am excited about working with Public Health staff and the community to bring about a healthier Catawba County,” said Clinton.

Clinton came to Catawba County from New Hanover County Health Department, where she led the Health Promotion team. Clinton attended Mississippi State University, where she earned her bachelor’s degree in communication and a master’s degree in health promotion. She is a Certified Health Education Specialist, a Child Passenger Safety Technician and holds an American Heart Association BLS Instructor Certification. She has additional training in project management, strategic planning, diabetes and lifestyle coaching, and Eat Smart Move More Weigh Less Instructor Training.

INTERN JOINS HEALTH PROMOTIONS

EMILY LEE joined the Health Promotions team as an intern for the spring semester and will be working on the State of the County Health report and working in conjunction with WIC to screen candidates for an upcoming diabetes project.

Lee is currently attending the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and is majoring in public health education with a concentration in community health. She expects to graduate in May.
February is unquestionably a month for hearts. With Valentine’s Day on February 14 and National Heart Month running all month, it’s a time to think about what makes a heart healthy. It might not sound very romantic, but maintaining a healthy diet and physical activity helps keep blood flowing efficiently through your heart.

Heart health is especially important in our community, as heart disease is the second-leading cause of death in Catawba County, according to the 2015 Community Health Assessment.

When it comes to heart health, small changes can make a big difference. Set and meet goals to help keep your heart healthy. Before embarking on your heart health journey, talk to your doctor and schedule testing, if needed.

There are seven main ways to help your heart stay healthy, according to the American Heart Association’s Go Red for Women campaign and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Million Hearts campaign:

» Add more exercise to your daily routine. Adults should start with at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity five times a week. Children need 60 minutes a day every day to get them off to a healthy start.

» Increase the amount of healthy cholesterol (HDL) you consume, while reducing the bad cholesterol (LDL). If your doctor recommends medication to lower your cholesterol, take it as prescribed. Switch to eating more whole grains, fish, fruits and vegetables and less fried foods, fewer animal products high in saturated fat and fewer processed foods.

» Eat more heart-friendly meals by cooking at home with reduced sodium (salt).

» Monitor your blood pressure and take medication if it is prescribed to you by your doctor. High blood pressure is a major contributor to heart disease because of the strain it places on the heart and blood vessels.

» If you smoke, take steps to quit. Your physician can advise you on what methods might be best for you. Smoking damages your circulatory system and puts you at risk for coronary artery disease. Smoking also damages your lungs, making it harder to get the physical activity you need. Smoking can reduce your good cholesterol as well.

» Reduce your blood sugar by cutting back on simple sugars, such as those found in soda, candy and sugary desserts. Elevated blood sugars can result in Type II diabetes, which is a risk factor for developing heart disease.

» Lose weight. If you have too much fat, especially around your waist, you’re at higher risk for risk factors such as high blood pressure, diabetes and high cholesterol.

For people interested in having healthier hearts, setting goals is essential. For advice on setting your heart health goals, go to http://firststeps.hearthelp.org.nz/home/the-future/my-future-plan/goal-setting/ or https://millionhearts.hhs.gov/files/HIS_My_Health_Progress.pdf for resources and more.