



# Healthy Woman

News from the Office of Women's Health

Summer 2008

ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH • ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH, GOVERNOR • DAMON T. ARNOLD, M.D., M.P.H., DIRECTOR

## WOMEN'S HEALTH INITIATIVE GRANTS AWARDED

The Illinois Department of Public Health, Office of Women's Health, recently awarded more than \$1.2 million in grants to 60 non-profit organizations, local health departments, hospitals and schools for women's health programs that focus on cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis, menopause and other issues facing women.

Women's Health Initiative Grants, which are funded through state general revenue funds, provide money for seven model programs: 1) Heart Smart for Women, a 12-week community-based program designed to change behavior while promoting the benefits of exercise and better nutrition; 2) Heart Smart for Teens, a nine-week curriculum geared toward school-age girls; 3) Life Smart for Women, a 10-week comprehensive education curriculum covering a variety of women's health topics; 4) Building Better Bones, which provides women with education, risk assessment and bone density screening for osteoporosis; 5) Understanding Menopause, a program to help women understand perimenopause and menopause and related health issues; 6) Jump Girl Jump, a structured four-session jump rope and nutrition program for young girls designed to create awareness of bone health, physical activity and the importance of calcium intake; and 7) Osteoporosis for Teens, a two-session osteoporosis program targeting high school girls that focuses on learning about what osteoporosis is and teaching ways to prevent it.

## TICKET FOR THE CURE GRANTS ANNOUNCED

More than \$1.1 million in Ticket for the Cure community grants have been awarded to 52 local health departments and community-based organizations to build capacity, provide breast cancer education and outreach and/or to offer supportive services for those who have breast cancer and their families.

Capacity building grants will assist grassroots organizations with the development of programs and services or offer funding to more established groups in the preliminary stages of a new and innovative ideas. Community Education and Outreach grants will allow groups to conduct educational workshops focusing on breast cancer or peer outreach programs to inform people about the risks of breast cancer, treatment options, and/or follow-up services. Supportive Services grants include, but are not limited to, assistance with prosthetics, transportation, housing (mortgage or rent, utilities, etc.) or childcare.

Launched in January 2006, Ticket for the Cure is the nation's first lottery ticket dedicated to helping fund breast cancer early detection, education, research, and patient services throughout the state.

## ILLINOIS' WISEWOMAN PROGRAM RECEIVES NATIONAL FUNDING

Illinois' Well-Integrated Screening and Evaluation for Women Across the Nation (WISEWOMAN) Program was recently awarded more than \$800,000 by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The application submitted by the Illinois Department of Public Health, Office of Women's Health, was chosen in the first nationally competitive non-research application

in which all 68 states, tribes and territories were allowed to compete.

This selection was made as a result of five successful years of intensive research work by the Illinois WISEWOMAN staff and their program sites. Now that the research period has drawn to a close, the funding awarded by CDC will go toward the implementation of a lifestyle intervention program in designated areas

throughout the state, with a goal of serving at least 1,100 women.

The Illinois WISEWOMAN Program includes an extensive face-to-face screening for cardiovascular disease risk factors, assessment of the results by medical providers, and the possibility of enrollment in classes to improve lifestyle choices. Each class focuses on elements of nutrition and physical activity

aimed at reducing the incidence of cardiovascular disease among women in Illinois, along with addressing psycho-social and other health topics.

The funding will allow the Illinois WISEWOMAN Program to continue to deliver its first-rate curriculum to more participants, ensuring a healthier and happier future for women across Illinois.

# STROKE: AN OVERVIEW

A stroke, sometimes called a “brain attack,” occurs when the blood flow to the brain is either blocked by a clot or bursts. When that happens, cells in the affected area of the brain cannot get the blood and oxygen they need, so they die, affecting the functions controlled by that part of the brain. This may cause a person to lose control of their speech, movement or memory.

There are two types of stroke: ischemic and hemorrhagic. About 80 percent of strokes are ischemic. An ischemic stroke is the result of the interruption of the flow of blood to the brain by a blood clot or by a narrowing of the arteries caused by a buildup of plaque (a mixture of fatty substances) and blood clots inside the artery walls. About 20 percent of strokes are hemorrhagic, which occurs when an artery

in the brain bursts causing uncontrolled bleeding into or around the brain. As well as interrupting the normal flow of blood within the brain, the uncontrolled bleeding “floods” and kills brain cells. High blood pressure increases the risk of hemorrhagic stroke.

A transient ischemic attack (TIA), or a “mini-stroke,” starts just like a stroke but

then clears up within 24 hours, leaving no apparent symptoms or deficits. A TIA is a warning that the person is at risk for a more serious stroke. Having other risk factors increases a person’s chances of a recurrent stroke if they have had a TIA. For most TIAs, the symptoms go away within an hour. However, there is no way to tell whether symptoms will be a TIA or a more serious stroke that can lead to death or disability. The sudden onset of the symptoms of a stroke should signal an emergency. Patients and witnesses should not wait to see if symptoms go away. More than one-third of those who have a TIA will have a stroke in the future.

As the brain controls everything we say, do and think, a stroke can have a wide variety of effects. A stroke can affect personality, emotions, behavior and the ability –

- To move and coordinate movement;
- To feel touch, temperature, pain and movement;
- To see or to interpret what you see; and
- To think, remember, understand, plan, reason or problem-solve.

## RISK FACTORS

Some risk factors for stroke are beyond a person’s control. Things like a person’s age, gender, ethnicity/race or family history can influence the degree of risk for stroke.

A person of any age can have a stroke. But, stroke risk increases with age. For every 10 years after the age of 55,

## ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH GOVERNOR

The week of May 11 was National Women’s Health week, and I strongly encouraged women to make their health a top priority by taking simple steps to live a longer and healthier life.

Coronary heart disease is the number one killer of American women. A women’s risk of getting heart disease depends on many factors. While some of these risk factors can’t be controlled, others can be addressed to save women’s lives.

Simple steps like being physically active and making healthy food choices can make a real difference. We all face choices every day about what we eat and what we do. National Women’s Health week focuses our attention but the healthy choices need to extend long after that week is over and become a part of our every day lives.

My administration has championed women’s health, and the recent expansion of Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program is just one way I worked to ensure that women get preventative care and educational tools to stay healthy.

I continue to support the Illinois Department of Public Health’s Office of Women’s Health and its three specific cardiovascular programs: Heart Smart for Women, Heart Smart for Teens and the Illinois WISEWOMAN Program. Please help spread the word to anyone you think could benefit from these programs. For details and information about these programs, including how to enroll in IBCCP, please call the IDPH Women’s Health Line at 888-522-1282 or check out the state’s one-stop health care portal at [www.health.illinois.gov](http://www.health.illinois.gov).

Sincerely,



Rod Blagojevich



the risk of stroke doubles, and two-thirds of all strokes occur in people older than 65.

Stroke risk doubles for a woman if someone in her immediate family has had a stroke. However, appropriate medical management of certain diseases and conditions can cut your risk. All persons can reduce their chances of having a stroke by taking these steps:

- Prevent and/or control high blood pressure or hypertension. There are often no symptoms, but high blood pressure is easily checked (it should be less than 120/80). It can be controlled with lifestyle changes and with medications when needed. Lifestyle changes that can lower your blood pressure include eating a healthy diet low in salt, fat and cholesterol; maintaining a healthy weight; and exercising.
- Prevent and/or control diabetes. People with diabetes have two to four times the risk of stroke compared to people without diabetes. Further, having diabetes can worsen the outcome of stroke. Steps to reduce the risk for diabetes include weight loss and regular physical activity.
- Treat atrial fibrillation. It's an irregular beating of the upper chambers, or atria, of the heart. It can cause clots that can lead to stroke. A doctor can prescribe medicines to help reduce the chance of clots.
- Prevent and control blood cholesterol levels. High blood cholesterol is a major risk factor for heart disease, which can increase the risk for stroke. Preventing and treating high blood cholesterol include eating a diet low in saturated fat and cholesterol and higher in fiber, keeping a healthy weight and getting regular exercise. All adults should have their cholesterol levels checked once every five years, and more often if it is found to be high. If it is high, your doctor can prescribe medicines to help lower it.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight raises your risk for stroke. Eat a healthy diet and exercise at a moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes most days of the week.
- Don't smoke. Smoking almost doubles a person's risk for ischemic stroke, independently of other risk factors.

- Limit alcohol intake. Generally, excessive alcohol use can lead to an increase in blood pressure, which increases the risk for stroke. If you drink alcohol, limit it to no more than one drink a day.

### WOMEN AND STROKE

Strokes have tripled in recent years among middle-aged women in the United States.

Risks unique to women:

- Taking birth control pills or using the patch – while generally safe for young, healthy women, birth control pills and the patch can raise the risk of stroke for some women, especially women older than 35; women with high blood pressure, diabetes, or high cholesterol; and women who smoke. Talk with your doctor if you have questions about the pill. If you are taking birth control pills or using the patch, watch for signs of trouble, including:
  - Eye problems such as blurred or double vision
  - Pain in the upper body or arm
  - Bad headaches
  - Problems breathing
  - Spitting up blood
  - Swelling or pain in the leg
  - Yellowing of the skin or eyes
  - Breast lumps
  - Unusual heavy vaginal bleeding
- Being pregnant – stroke risk increases during a normal pregnancy due to natural changes in the body such as increased blood pressure and stress on the heart
- Using Hormone Replacement Therapy – a combined hormone therapy of progestin and estrogen, to relieve menopausal symptoms
- Having a thick waist and high triglyceride level – post-menopausal women with a waist size larger than 35.2 inches and a triglyceride level higher than 128 milligrams per liter may have a five-fold increased risk for stroke. Women's waistlines are nearly 2 inches bigger than they were a decade earlier, and that bulge corresponds with the increase in strokes, according to researchers. In addition, women's average body mass index, a commonly used measure of obesity, also had risen. They also had higher blood sugar levels.

- Being a migraine headache sufferer – migraines can increase a women's stroke risk three to six times, and most Americans who suffer migraines are women

Recent reports indicate that women are also at a greater risk of stroke from far less well-known causes, such as chiropractic neck adjustments, getting their hair washed at a salon or riding a roller coaster. While incidents of stroke from these causes are rare, they have been reported.

### SYMPTOMS

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing out of one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Women may have unique symptoms, including:

- Sudden face and arm or leg pain
- Sudden hiccups
- Sudden nausea
- Sudden tiredness
- Sudden chest pain
- Sudden shortness of breath
- Sudden pounding or racing heartbeat

Call 911 immediately if you have any of the symptoms or if you see someone else experiencing these warning signs. Treatment is more effective if given quickly. Every minute counts.

### STATISTICS

- Stroke is the third leading cause of death in Illinois and the United States. In 2005, the most recent year for complete statistics, 6,232 people, or 6 percent of all deaths in the state, were from stroke. More than 160,000 people die each year from stroke in the United States.
- On average, every three to four minutes someone dies of stroke. As much as 80 percent of strokes are preventable through making better lifestyle changes, according to the National Stroke Association.

## TREATMENT

Strokes caused by blood clots can be treated with clot-busting drugs such as tissue plasminogen activator (TPA). TPA must be given within three hours of the start of a stroke to work, and tests must be done first. This is why it is so important for a person having a stroke to get to a hospital fast. Other medicines are used to treat and to prevent stroke. Anticoagulants, such as warfarin, and antiplatelet agents, such as aspirin, block the blood's ability to clot and can help prevent a stroke in patients with high risk, such as a person who has atrial fibrillation.

Surgery is sometimes used to treat or prevent stroke. Carotid endarterectomy is a surgery to remove fatty deposits clogging the carotid artery in the neck, which could lead to a stroke. For hemorrhagic stroke, a doctor may perform surgery to place a metal clip at the base of an aneurysm (a thin or weak spot in an artery that balloons out and can burst) or remove abnormal blood vessels.

## REHABILITATION

Rehabilitation is a very important part of recovery for many stroke survivors. The effects of stroke may mean that you must change, relearn or redefine how you live. Stroke rehabilitation is designed to help you return to independent living.

Rehabilitation does not reverse the effects of a stroke. Its goals are to build your strength, capability and confidence so you can continue your daily activities despite the effects of your stroke. Rehabilitation services may include:

- Physical therapy to restore movement, balance and coordination.
- Occupational therapy to relearn basic skills such as bathing and dressing.
- Speech therapy to relearn how to talk.

## SOURCES

Illinois Department of Public Health  
Office of Women's Health  
888-522-1282  
Illinois Heart Disease and Stroke  
Prevention Program  
217-782-3300  
[www.idph.state.il.us](http://www.idph.state.il.us)

American Heart Association  
800-242-8721  
[www.american-heart.org](http://www.american-heart.org)

National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute  
301-592-8573  
[www.nhlbi.nih.gov/index.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/index.htm)

National Institute of Neurological Disorders  
and Stroke  
800-352-9424  
[www.ninds.nih.gov/](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/)

National Stroke Association  
800-787-6537  
[www.stroke.org](http://www.stroke.org)

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
800-311-3435  
[www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

## WOMEN'S HEALTH WEEK CELEBRATED

National Women's Health Week empowers women across the county to get healthy by taking action. The nationwide initiative, coordinated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Women's Health, encourages women to make their health a top priority and take simple steps for a longer, healthier and happier life.

This year's observance, themed "Get Inspired, Get Healthy," was held during the week of May 11-17, when families, communities, business, government, health organizations and other groups worked together to educate women about steps they can take to improve their physical and mental health and prevent disease.

As part of the 2008 observance, the Illinois Department of Public Health, Office of Women's Health, awarded \$31,000 to 24 local health departments to support community health awareness events or walking campaigns. Screenings included blood pressure, blood glucose, body mass index (BMI), cholesterol, stroke and bone density.

These events, hosted by local health departments, reached approximately 2,800 women.

## PINK POTLUCKS INCREASE AWARENESS

The Pink Potluck campaign is an effort to inspire women to come together to learn what they can do to get healthy, like making sure they get routine breast and cervical cancer screenings, are physically active and eat a healthy diet.

Pink Potlucks are an opportunity for women to talk about the importance of early detection and to learn about how all uninsured women are eligible for free screenings and low-cost treatment through the recently expanded Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program.

Just like a regular potluck, everyone brings a healthy dish or dessert to share and the state provides information about getting screened for breast and cervical cancer. Hosting a Pink Potluck is not only a way to spread the word about this life-saving program, it's also an opportunity for women to come together to discuss other health issues, such as cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and diabetes.

For more information on hosting a Pink Potluck or to get information on free breast and cervical cancer screenings and low-cost treatment, log onto <http://cancerscreening.illinois.gov/>.

## *EXPANSION MAKES CANCER SCREENINGS ATTAINABLE FOR MORE WOMEN*

In October 2007, Gov. Rod R. Blagojevich expanded the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program (IBCCP) to allow all uninsured women, regardless of income, access to free breast and cervical cancer screenings. IBCCP offers free pelvic exams and Pap tests for uninsured women between 35 and 64 in addition to mammograms and breast exams for uninsured women 40 through 64. Younger women with symptoms also are considered for the program on a case-by-case basis. Low-cost treatment is available for women who are found to have cancer or pre-cervical cancerous conditions.

This expansion has allowed even more women to take charge of their health by having potentially life-saving screenings. According to the American Cancer Society, when detected early, the five-year survival rate for breast cancer is 98 percent. Death from cervical cancer is nearly preventable with regular screenings.

Information on IBCCP can be found on the Illinois Department of Public Health's Web site at [www.idph.state.il.us](http://www.idph.state.il.us), as well as [www.cancerscreening.illinois.gov](http://www.cancerscreening.illinois.gov) or by calling the Women's Health-Line at 888-522-1282.

**SAVE THE DATE**

**10<sup>th</sup> Annual Women's Health Conference**

**Nov. 18 and 19, 2008**

**Oak Brook Hills**  **Marriott Resort**

## *NINE NEW LEAD AGENCIES ADDED TO HELP INCREASE ACCESS TO IBCCP*

The expansion of the Illinois Breast and Cervical Cancer Program created the need for additional health agencies to provide cancer screenings and treatment options for Illinois women without insurance.

The nine new lead health agencies added in 2008 brings the total of lead agencies to 36. Eight of the new lead agencies will serve residents in the Chicago area, and include:

- The PCC Community Wellness Center, Oak Park
- Chicago Family Health Center, Chicago
- Howard Brown Health Center, Chicago
- Saints Mary and Elizabeth Medical Center, Chicago
- Aunt Martha's Youth Services Center Inc., Chicago Heights
- Erie Family Health Center Inc., Chicago
- Asian Human Services Family Health Center, Chicago
- Michael Reese Health Trust Research and Education Foundation of the Michael Reese Medical Staff, Chicago

The ninth new lead agency is the Sangamon County Department of Public Health in Springfield, which serves Sangamon and Menard counties.

The new lead agencies serve the important role of allowing greater access to IBCCP for uninsured women of Illinois.

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### *UPDATED BOOKLET NOW AVAILABLE*

A revised version of "Your Right to Know," a booklet outlining breast cancer diagnosis, staging and treatment options, is now available in English and Spanish. A detailed look at each of these issues helps women to make informed decisions. This free publication can be ordered by contacting the Women's Health-Line at 888-522-1282.





## WOMEN'S HEALTH CONFERENCE A SUCCESS

On Nov. 14-15, 2007, more than 400 women's health advocates gathered at the Doubletree Hotel Chicago - Oakbrook for the ninth annual Women's Health Conference. The two-day conference, sponsored by the Illinois Department of Public Health, covered a vast array of topics including obesity, health care disparities, integrative medicine, cervical cancer, cardiovascular disease, hormones, oral health and contraception. Participants included local health department staff, health professionals and community agencies.

The featured speaker was Marci Shimoff, one of the best-selling nonfiction authors of all time. She is the woman's face of the biggest self-help book phenomenon in history, "Chicken Soup for the Soul." Her six best-selling titles in the series have met with stunning success, selling more than 13 million copies worldwide in 33 languages. Shimoff also is featured in the movie, "The Secret."

During her presentation, Shimoff gave an overview of why low self-esteem has become a national epidemic, and how it affects our personal fulfillment, our family harmony and our job performance. She also outlined powerful steps to develop greater self-esteem and increase effectiveness in all areas of life. Despite the seriousness of the topic, Shimoff had the audience laughing and feeling good.

Plans are underway for the 10<sup>th</sup> annual Women's Health Conference, scheduled for Nov. 18 and 19, 2008, at the Oak Brook Hills Marriott Resort. Online registration is available at [www.ipha.com](http://www.ipha.com) or [www.idph.state.il.us/about/womenshealth/events.htm](http://www.idph.state.il.us/about/womenshealth/events.htm) Please call the Office of Women's Health at 217-524-6088, if you would like to be included on the conference mailing list.



Marci Shimoff demonstrates on a volunteer the power of suggestion.



Women's Health-Line  
888-522-1282

Healthy Woman newsletter is published semiannually by the Illinois Department of Public Health. Story ideas, suggestions and comments are welcome and should be forwarded to Tammy Leonard, Illinois Department of Public Health, Office of Women's Health, 535 W. Jefferson St., First Floor, Springfield, IL, 62761; or call 217-524-6088.

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## EVENTS CALENDAR:

- Aug. 6** – Training for Life Smart for Women grantees (invitation only), Illinois State University Campus, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Aug. 19 and 20** – Training for Heart Smart for Women grantees (invitation only), Springfield Hilton, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (19<sup>th</sup>) and 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. (20<sup>th</sup>)
- October** – National Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- Oct. 17** – National Mammography Day
- Oct. 20** - World Osteoporosis Day
- Nov. 18 and 19** – Women's Health Conference, Oak Brook Hills Marriott Resort

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