It's Health Checkup Day for WA Women

Local News

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OLYMPIA, Wash. - This is National Women's Checkup Day, a reminder that preventing health problems is a better, and less expensive, strategy than waiting until they become problems. For Washington women, one of the most pressing concerns is obesity: The rate of obesity in the state has doubled in the past 12 years.

State Health Officer Dr. Maxine Hayes says many women of all ages still are not getting regular exercise and eating healthy, low-fat diets, with the results showing up in statewide health statistics.

"Those are the reasons why we are having heart problems and high blood pressure, stroke and diabetes, in women in our state. We can't afford to be unhealthy - just can't afford it."

Hayes says another health-related priority in Washington is the need to create safer, exercise-friendly neighborhoods, where people of all ages can walk and bike without worrying about crime.

The goal of National Women's Checkup Day is to get women to receive or schedule at least one checkup this month.

Today is also the start of National Women's Health Week. Hayes says research shows that women are the health-care decision-makers in most households. However, she adds, costs and the recession have combined to put many families behind in terms of preventive care.

"A lot of women were deferring health examinations - not only for themselves, but for family members - because they couldn't afford them. However, with the promise of full implementation of health care reform, there is a lot of hope on the horizon that soon this will not be a barrier."

Hayes adds that health care reform will require insurance companies to cover some types of preventive care they currently are not required to insure.

The theme of Women's Health Week this year is "It's Your Time." Hayes says she hopes Washington women take it seriously and put themselves, and their health, first.

"It's okay to love ourselves and to take care of ourselves - and not have any other reason, except for us! We're just so oriented toward making sure everybody else is taken care of, and there's a price to pay for that."

Free women's health screenings, seminars and other events are planned this week in many Washington communities; they are listed online at www.womenshealth.gov.