April 2nd – 8th is Public Health Week

Norristown, PA (March 28, 2012) – Since 1995, communities across the country have celebrated National Public Health Week every April to help protect and improve our nation’s health. Through this year’s theme, “A Healthier America Begins Today: Join the Movement,” the Montgomery County Health Department encourages its community to take preventive measures and help improve their lives. Lifelong health starts with prevention.

Quick Facts from the American Public Health Association:
• There are approximately 19 million new cases of sexually transmitted infections in the United States each year with almost half occurring in young people ages 15-24.
• Every day, almost 30 people in the United States die in motor vehicle crashes that involve an alcohol impaired driver.
• Cigarette smoking, which is the most common form of tobacco use, causes approximately 443,000 deaths and costs about $96 billion in medical costs in the United States each year.
• The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends vaccinations from birth through adulthood to provide a lifetime of protection against many diseases and infections, such as influenza, pneumococcal disease, human papillomavirus, and hepatitis A and B.
• Fewer than 15 percent of adults and 10 percent of adolescents eat the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables each day.

Sometimes the smallest change can make the biggest difference.
Each year, chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes are responsible for millions of premature deaths and cause Americans to miss 2.5 billion days of work, resulting in lost productivity totaling more than $1 trillion. Eating healthy and engaging in regular physical activity are ways people can stay healthy. Making a few simple changes to your daily routine over a short period of time is all that is needed.

Try these 4 simple steps to a healthier lifestyle:

1. **Change your diet** – A very simple and easy step to take. Start by cutting out more of the fatty foods that you already know you shouldn’t be eating. Replace these with fresh fruit and vegetables in your everyday cooking. Then gradually cut down on the starchy stuff, like potatoes, bread, rice, and pasta. Within just a few weeks you will start to notice that you fell more energetic! Visit [www.myplate.org](http://www.myplate.org) for more information about food group recommendations and portion size.

2. **Exercise** – Regular physical activity helps improve your overall health and fitness and reduces your risk for many
chronic diseases. Adults need 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity (i.e. brisk walking) every week and muscle-strengthening activities on 2 or more days a week that work all major muscle groups (legs, hips, back, abdomen, chest, shoulders, and arms). The body will burn off those extra calories and the blood will circulate around the body carrying vital oxygen where it is needed.

Doing activity that requires moderate effort is safe for most people. But if a chronic health condition exists, such as heart disease, arthritis, diabetes, or other symptoms, be sure to talk with your doctor about the types and amounts of physical activity that are right for you.

3. Cut down on alcohol and eliminate tobacco – By reducing your alcohol intake and eliminating tobacco use your internal organs will start to work more efficiently. In turn, your entire body will feel healthier. According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, if you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation, which is defined as no more than 1 drink per day for women and no more than 2 drinks per day for men.

Compared with nonsmokers, smoking is estimated to increase the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke by 2 to 4 times. For quitting support and resources: 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669); TTY 1-800-332-8615.

4. Rethink your drink – Probably the easiest step to take when wanting to achieve a healthier lifestyle is to drink more water. Water is essential for all systems in the body. It will not only make you feel better, it will improve the appearance of your skin and help your body’s systems work better. Try having a glass of water instead of coffee or tea at least twice a day. The body needs water to repair damaged tissues and remain hydrated. Adults should consume eight 8oz glasses of fluid each day and avoid sugary drinks.

Spring is here and the days are warming quickly. Take this opportunity to start walking, biking, or hiking to better health. Make a date or make it a family affair and get everyone moving. Small steps will go a long way towards preventing chronic disease.