



Guest column: Health care reform act promotes making educated decisions

By Jane Root • October 14, 2010



We all have busy lives and hectic schedules and face the constant challenge of finding enough time to accomplish everything we want to do. This includes finding the time to make good choices about taking care of ourselves.

A 2007 Brown County community [health](#) survey found that 64 percent of our residents are overweight. In addition, only 21 percent eat the recommended servings of vegetables each day, and fewer than half get the recommended physical activity each week.

While provisions in the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act will provide tools and educational information to make informed, healthy decisions, it's ultimately up to us as individuals to take the [responsible](#) step into wellness.

What the act will do

- We'll hear more next year about requirements for chain restaurants to put calorie counts on menu boards. Imagine the [power](#) of knowing the calorie count of each option.
- In 2011, a national, science-based health campaign and disease prevention Internet site will be rolled out. The [website](#) will provide a wealth of health information that can guide us to make the right decisions.
- There is a provision in the act that reduces the cost of recommended immunizations for all ages by lowering out-of-pocket costs for families. As a nurse, I can't emphasize enough the importance of immunizations for overall health and wellness.

What individuals should do

- Know your numbers. Know your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar counts. Understand what numbers are right for you and what you need to do to improve or maintain them.
- Start making healthy decisions. Use the reform provisions to help make the best decisions for you and your [family](#). This includes learning about the effects of smoking, excessive alcohol consumption and guidelines for nutrition and exercise.
- Make [routine](#) visits to your health care provider. Find the time to take care of yourself.

What communities can do

- Communities can come together to create and support partnerships that promote wellness and prevention. For example, the Green Bay Press-Gazette has launched "Greater Green Bay: Where Kids Count," an initiative designed to foster a community-wide environment in which families can raise the healthiest children in America. Initiatives like this deserve our support and participation. Alone, any one can be an effective tool. Together with other efforts, their success is practically assured.

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