

**B'MORE HEALTHY**

**A Health Promotion Campaign**

**Baltimore City Health Department  
Summer 2007**



## Summary

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The B'More Healthy Campaign kicks off in June 2007 with a list of 10 steps Baltimoreans can take to improve their own health and the health of their families.

The 10 steps define actions that are practical and achievable and that, if addressed, can greatly reduce the number of preventable deaths, illnesses and disabilities that Baltimoreans suffer every year.

The 10 steps are:

- 1) Have A Primary Care Doctor
- 2) Be Tobacco Free
- 3) Know Your HIV Status
- 4) Get Help For Depression and Mental Illness
- 5) Be Drug Free
- 6) Get Immunized
- 7) Plan Your Family
- 8) Protect Your Family
- 9) Exercise and Eat Well
- 10) Look Out For Your Neighbors

### **1. Have A Primary Care Doctor**

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Having a regular doctor or health care provider improves medical care, increases preventative services, reduces health disparities, and lowers medical costs.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

One barrier to having a doctor is the lack of health insurance. A 2005 survey by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 14% of adults in Baltimore City did not have any health care coverage.<sup>4</sup> A 2004 study found that 9% of kids under age 17 in Maryland did not have health insurance.<sup>5</sup> Lack of insurance is associated with not having a regular source of health care.<sup>6</sup>

Many who are uninsured qualify for outpatient coverage under the Primary Adult Care program. In addition, many more qualify for reduced rates at community health centers in the city. People seeking a referral to care for themselves or their children can call Baltimore HealthCare Access: 410-649-0512 (<http://www.bhca.org/MCHP.htm>).

The Health Department will assess progress in linking residents to care through survey results as available and by tracking referrals through Baltimore Healthcare Access, Inc.

## **2. Be Tobacco Free**

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Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States.<sup>7</sup> Smoking substantially increases the risk of death from heart disease, stroke, bronchitis, emphysema, and diabetes. Smoking also causes 87% of lung cancers and increases risk for other forms of cancer.<sup>8</sup> Approximately 30% of all cancer deaths each year are from lung cancer.<sup>9</sup> In addition, nonsmokers exposed to secondhand smoke at home or work have a 25 to 30% increased risk of developing heart disease and a 20 to 30% increased risk of developing lung cancer.<sup>10</sup> Children who live with smokers are more likely to have asthma and ear infections.<sup>11</sup>

According to the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 28.9% of adults in Baltimore City smoke, the highest rate in the state.<sup>12</sup> In 2005, 10.1% of Baltimore City students admitted to smoking while 8% said that they smoked 10 or more cigarettes per day.<sup>13</sup>

Baltimore City residents who are ready to quit can obtain a health counselor by calling 1-800-QUIT-NOW (1-800-784-8669) (<http://www.smokingstopshere.com/>). Free patches or gum are also available while funds last.

The Health Department will assess progress in reducing tobacco use through the evaluation of its tobacco control program, information on the number of people who call the 1-800-QUIT-NOW line, and surveys of the number of smokers in Baltimore as available.

## **3. Know Your HIV Status**

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HIV is a preventable and treatable disease. By knowing your status, you can protect yourself, your partners, and if you're pregnant, your baby.

The Centers for Disease Control estimate that 24-27% of people infected do not know that they have HIV.<sup>14</sup> In 2005, the Baltimore metropolitan area ranked second in new AIDS cases in the nation.<sup>15</sup> According to the Maryland AIDS Administration, in 2005 there were 15,119 Baltimoreans living who knew that they had HIV or AIDS.<sup>16</sup>

The Baltimore City Health Department and its community partners offer testing in a variety of community venues across the city. In addition, the city's health clinics offer Free Testing and Treatment at two locations all week long:

1515 W. North Ave: M-F (410-396-0176)

620 N. Caroline St: M-F (410-396-9410)

(<http://baltimorehealth.org/std.html>)

The Health Department will assess progress by evaluating the number of new HIV diagnoses made as well as the number of AIDS deaths. It is important to recognize that

increasing numbers of new diagnoses may signify better outreach for testing, not necessarily more HIV transmission.

#### **4. Get Help For Depression and Mental Illness**

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It is normal to feel sad sometimes. But if sadness lasts for more than two weeks, eating and sleeping patterns change, and excessive irritability or intrusive thoughts persist, then a potentially debilitating and dangerous depression may set in. Depression can be treated. Being depressed can exacerbate other health problems, including smoking, drug abuse, and obesity.<sup>17,18,19</sup>

People who feel that they or a family member might be depressed should call Baltimore Mental Health Systems: 410-837-2647 (<http://www.bmhsi.org/>). If someone is experiencing a crisis that could lead to harm for themselves or others, it is best to call Baltimore Crisis Response 24 hours a day at 410-433-5175 (<http://www.bcresponse.org/>).

The Health Department will assess progress by the number of referrals to treatment.

#### **5. Be Drug Free**

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Drug use breaks up families, increases a person's risk of being the victim of violence, and causes health problems in the heart, lungs, kidney, and liver. Injection drug use can transmit HIV, syphilis, hepatitis, and other serious diseases.

Over 20,000 people receive drug treatment in Baltimore City each year. On any given day, Baltimore has over 7,000 treatment slots for the uninsured, covering needs including detoxification, residential, transitional, outpatient treatment, and methadone maintenance. Buprenorphine, a new medication to treat opioid dependence, can reduce harm and improve lives of those addicted to heroin.

Baltimore Substance Abuse Systems 410-637-1900 (<http://www.bsasinc.org/>) takes calls from the public and arranges appointments for city residents in drug treatment.

The Health Department will assess progress by monitoring the number of calls and successful referrals to treatment as well as the number of fatal drug overdoses.

#### **6. Get Immunized**

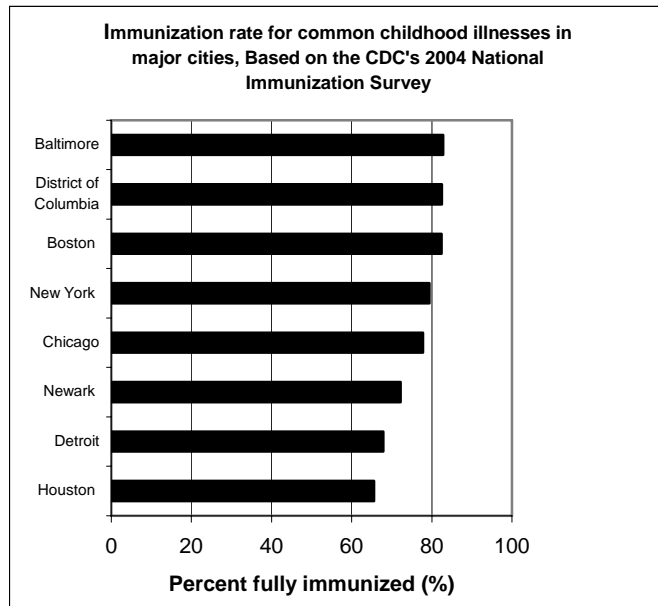
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Immunizations prevent illness in people of all ages. For adults over 50 or at high risk for flu, immunization with influenza vaccine can prevent hospitalization and even death.<sup>20</sup> For children, vaccinations for diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, influenza B, varicella (chicken pox), and pneumonia are safe and effective in keeping kids from getting sick and missing school.<sup>21</sup> Varicella and hepatitis B vaccinations are new requirements for school-aged children.<sup>22</sup>

To locate free immunization clinics for children, residents can call 410-396-4454

(<http://www.baltimorehealth.org/immunization.html>). During flu season, this number will also give information about opportunities to receive the flu vaccine.

Baltimore measures immunization rates through the Baltimore Immunization and Registry Program, and has increased immunization rates over 17% since 2001 to reach its current rate of 82.8%. The city is working to have 85% of children ages 19-35 months immunized against common childhood illnesses by 2010.



The Health Department will assess progress through its immunization registry and through periodic surveys of immunization coverage.

## 7. Plan Your Family

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Planning to have a child can ensure a healthy start in life. Medical care before, during, and after pregnancy reduces health risks for both babies and mothers.<sup>23,24</sup>

Low birth weight, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS), congenital malformations, and respiratory stress are the four leading causes of infant mortality in Baltimore City. In 2005, 6% of mothers received late or no prenatal care and 13.2% of babies had low birth weights.<sup>25</sup>

City residents can get free help in planning pregnancies, with birth control and education at several clinics run by the Health Department. These include:

1515 W. North Ave: TTh (410-396-0186)  
620 N. Caroline St: MWF (410-396-9401)  
(<http://www.baltimorehealth.org/familyplanning.html>)

For a referral to prenatal care, city residents can call Baltimore Healthcare Access, Inc. at 410-649-0512 (<http://www.bhca.org/MCHP.htm>).

The Health Department will assess progress by tracking vital statistics on births and referrals to care.

## 8. Protect Your Family

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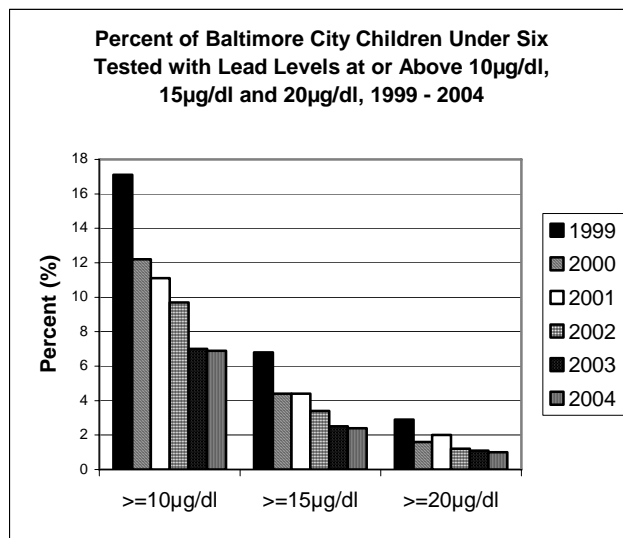
Healthy families are safe families. There is help available for three common threats -- lead poisoning, domestic violence, and child or elder neglect.

- Lead Poisoning

While the incidence of lead poisoning in Baltimore City has dropped substantially over the last decade, over 800 children have elevated blood lead levels every year.<sup>26,27</sup> Even low-levels of lead exposure can affect learning and behavior.

Families concerned about lead poisoning can call the city's lead poisoning program for assistance and referrals at 443-984-2460

(<http://www.baltimorehealth.org/lead.html>).



The Health Department will assess progress by yearly reviews of lead poisoning statistics.

- Domestic Violence

A national survey by the CDC found that 10% of women are victims of rape or attempted rape by a husband or intimate partner in their lifetime.<sup>28</sup> Getting help is the first step towards breaking a cycle of violence that could end in hospitalization or death.

A local domestic violence hotline is 410-889-7884 (<http://www.hruth.org>).

The Health Department will assess progress through surveys as available and phone call data as available.

- Child and elder abuse and neglect

Twelve children out of every thousand in the United States are reported to be victims of abuse or neglect.<sup>29</sup> In 2003, 16,688 Maryland children were victims of maltreatment.<sup>30</sup> The elderly are also a vulnerable population at risk for both abuse and neglect.<sup>31</sup> In 2004, over half a million reports of adult abuse or neglect were made nationally.<sup>32</sup>

The Department of Social Services includes Adult Protective Services and Child Protective Services. These can be accessed by calling 410-361-2235 ([www.dhr.state.md.us/baltocity.htm](http://www.dhr.state.md.us/baltocity.htm)).

The Health Department will work with the Department of Social Services to assess progress in reducing child and elder abuse and neglect.

## **9. Exercise and Eat Well**

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Exercising and eating well can dramatically reduce the risk of heart disease, the leading cause of death in Baltimore City.<sup>33</sup> People who maintain an active lifestyle and avoid being sedentary can lower their risk of developing heart disease by up to 50%.<sup>34</sup> Walking even one hour a week has been shown to reduce risk.<sup>35</sup>

In Baltimore, 30.8% of adults suffer from obesity and 73.5% don't eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables as recommended by the National Cancer Institute.<sup>36</sup> Nearly one in five Baltimoreans say they feel only in fair or poor health.<sup>37</sup> Simple changes, such as walking more and staying away from sugary drinks and fried foods, can have discernable effects.

Baltimore's award-winning Recreation and Parks Department has many activities available for people of all ages: 410-396-7900 (<http://www.ci.baltimore.md.us/government/recnparks/home.htm>).

The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program provides support for women and young children across the city. It can be reached at 410-396-9427 (<http://www.baltimorehealth.org/wic.html>).

The Health Department will assess progress in recreation in coordination with the Recreation and Parks Department. Obesity will be assessed through a variety of data sources, including measurement of children during WIC visits.

## **10. Look Out For Your Neighbors**

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There are many vulnerable residents of Baltimore City. Good neighbors can keep an eye on what is going on in their block, report suspicious activity, notify the city at 311 if they see rats, trash or other hazards, and look in on the elderly, especially on hot days.

Residents can report illegal drug activity by calling 410-666-DRUG (3784) (<http://www.baltimorepolice.org/>).

The city responds to requests for service for rats, trash and dead animals via 311 ([https://baltimore.customerservicerequest.org/web\\_intake\\_balt/Controller](https://baltimore.customerservicerequest.org/web_intake_balt/Controller)).

Residents can receive a range of services for the elderly by calling the Commission on Aging and Retirement Education at 410-396-CARE (2273) (<http://www.ci.baltimore.md.us/government/care/>).

The Health Department will assess progress by monitoring police statistics on arrests and crime, 311 calls, and services provided by CARE.

### **Dissemination of B'More Healthy Message**

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The Baltimore City Health Department will disseminate the 10-step B'More Healthy Agenda on the Baltimore City Health Services Card. Over 30,000 cards have been printed as part of the initial distribution. Cards are available in English and Spanish (Attached).

The cards will be distributed through Health Department programs and outreach efforts, through other city agencies, and through a range of other channels.

- Health Department clinics: Adolescent and Reproductive Health, STD clinics, HIV clinic, Men's Health Center; Dental Clinic, Tuberculosis clinic.
- Health Department outreach efforts: Animal Control, Asthma Program, Environmental Inspection, Field Health Services, harm reduction programs, Immunization Program, Infants and Toddlers Program, Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, home visiting programs, Vector Control, and Women, Infants, and Children.
- Other agencies: Department of Housing, Baltimore Healthcare Access, Inc., Baltimore City Healthy Start, Inc., Baltimore Mental Health Systems, Inc., Baltimore Fire Department, Baltimore Police Department, federally qualified community health centers.
- Other channels: offices of the city council and state legislators, Office of Criminal Justice (for returning ex-offenders), safe zones, and the Latino Providers Network.

A coordinated advertising campaign will begin the week of June 18 for 20 bus shelters around the city and Penn Station. The campaign will feature posters containing two B'More Healthy items per poster.

## Notes

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