

What Are You Worried About?

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As a result of the recent influx of non-traditional college students on the Wilkes Community College Campus, new opinions, aspects, and concerns are present on campus. These include health issues, which differ between traditional and non-traditional college students.

Recent surveys have shown that the top health concerns for people ages 30 and above are heart attack, stroke, cancer, menopause, and fatigue. Each of these is a very real and present health risk, and this risk often increases with age. This article's purpose is to provide the non-traditional college student with information about these health risks, including causes, treatment, and prevention.

Fatigue is probably the top health concern of any college student. The concern undoubtedly increases with additional stress from jobs, children, and home management. Fatigue is often confused with tiredness, but contrary to popular belief, the two are very different. Fatigue is a daily lack of energy, often lasting more than one week. It is whole body tiredness and is not relieved by sleep. Many factors contribute to fatigue, and they include, but are not limited to, drastic changes in appetite; cancer or other long term illnesses; medication; chronic severe pain; and stress or worrying.

Fatigue can be prevented and treated in several ways. It is important to conserve energy in any way possible. Plan ahead and make a schedule of weekly plans to avoid extra, unneeded stress and don't forget to schedule rest. Set a pace for life; this will allow the body to form and adjust to a routine. Practice proper body mechanics by staying comfortable and avoiding physical activities that place stress on the body. Limit activities that increase tension, both physical and emotional; however, it is important to avoid long hot showers or baths that result in a long term feeling of tiredness. When treating fatigue, it is also important to maintain a healthy balanced diet and to practice stress management.

Strokes are to the brain what a heart attack is to the heart. They are caused by a blockage in blood supply to the brain, resulting in a limited oxygen supply to cells. Blockages in arteries (blood clots, etc.), tears in artery walls resulting in bleeding in the brain, and low or high blood pressure are all causes of strokes.

Strokes can be prevented through simple daily activities. A healthy diet that allows one to maintain a healthy blood pressure, which varies from person to person, is important. Strokes can be caused by blood pressure that is extremely low, not just high blood pressure. When practicing stroke prevention, it is important to limit intake of alcoholic beverages and to exercise regularly. Medicinal prevention also exists, but a physician should be consulted before taking this step.

Heart attacks are caused by blockages of blood to the heart. They work much the same as a stroke, resulting when the oxygen supply to the heart is low or when the

heart is overworked. People with heart disease are at greater risk of a heart attack. Heart attacks can be prevented by healthy eating and regular exercise. Avoid excess exercise or activities that can place extreme strain on the heart.

Menopause, or perimenopause (the condition that precedes menopause), is a major health issue for women over 30 because it is a time of such drastic change and is often an issue that is difficult to understand. Perimenopause usually occurs between the ages of 40 and 44 as a woman's supply of eggs begins to deplete. As the egg supply becomes less and less, estrogen (the female hormone that regulates reproductive functions) levels also drop. These changes trigger symptoms such as a change in menstrual cycles, hot flashes, night sweats, insomnia, mood swings, forgetfulness, and joint stiffness. This process occurs over a period of time, and women generally reach menopause around age 50 to 55.

For women who have difficulties coping with the symptoms preceding menopause, there are treatments. Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) is a treatment that is proven 80% effective in relieving symptoms associated with menopause. This treatment requires a physician's administration in order to be effective. Several "over-the-counter" medications are available, but are not as safe or effective as HRT. To relieve joint stiffness women are advised to an "over-the-counter" pain reliever, such as Motrin or Advil.

Cancer is a general term that encompasses over 100 diseases. Virtually everyone is a candidate for some type of cancer due to heredity or environmental factors. Cancer occurs when cells become abnormal and begin to multiply. When the cells multiply unnecessarily a tumor forms, which may be malignant or benign. Since all organs and bodily tissues are made up of cells, they are all susceptible to cancer.

Fortunately, there are warning signs for cancer, so people can seek medical care when they experience these symptoms. Signs include, but are not limited to, sores that do not heal, unusual bleeding or discharge, a thickening or lump in ANY area of the body, indigestion, difficulty swallowing, obvious changes in warts or moles, nagging cough, or hoarseness. It is important to note that some of these symptoms are also associated with much less severe diseases but should be checked to be absolutely sure.

Treatment for cancer comes in several forms. With the latest advancements in technology, treatments now include surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, and hormone therapy.

There are ways to prevent cancer. Prevention is not ALWAYS 100% effective, but does help. Ways to prevent cancer include avoiding tobacco products and harmful rays from the sun, tanning beds. Etc. Choose food with less fat and more fiber. Taking precautionary steps may not totally eliminate the chance of developing cancer, but it will reduce the risk.