Chronic Disease Prevention Communications Toolkit

Purpose of the Toolkit

Chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and other long-term conditions affect individuals, families, workplaces, and communities across Tennessee. Many chronic diseases share risk factors that can be reduced through healthy behaviors, preventive healthcare, and supportive community environments.

The Tennessee Public Health Association (TPHA) and the Tennessee Association of County and City Health Officials (TNACCHO) encourage public health professionals and community partners to help Tennesseans understand that prevention does not have to be complicated. Small, realistic changes can support better health over time.

This toolkit provides consistent, easy-to-share messages about six important components of chronic disease prevention:

- Physical activity
- Healthy sleep
- Mental health
- Good nutrition
- Preventive health screenings
- Knowing your numbers

1. OVERARCHING COMMUNICATIONS APPROACH

Primary Message

Small steps today can make a difference in your health tomorrow.

Chronic disease prevention is not about achieving perfect health behaviors. It is about making healthy choices more often and creating communities where those choices are easier for everyone.

Regular physical activity, adequate sleep, nutritious foods, preventive healthcare, stress reduction, and recommended screenings can help people protect their health and identify health concerns earlier.

Supporting Messages

- **Small changes add up.** People do not have to change everything at once. Walking more, improving one meal, establishing a bedtime routine, or scheduling an overdue health screening are meaningful steps.
- **Mental health is part of overall health.** Taking care of emotional and mental well-being is an important part of living a healthy life. Stress, anxiety, loneliness, and other emotional challenges can affect sleep, physical activity, eating habits, relationships, and physical health. Developing healthy ways to cope and seeking support when needed can help protect long-term well-being.
- **Healthy communities support healthy people.** Health is affected by more than individual choices. Safe places to exercise, access to nutritious food, quality healthcare, transportation, education, housing, and economic opportunity all influence health.
- **Prevention is for every stage of life.** Healthy behaviors and preventive healthcare are important throughout adulthood. The appropriate actions may change with age, health status, family history, and individual circumstances.
- **Know your health.** Regular healthcare visits and appropriate screenings give people information they can use to make informed decisions about their health.

TPHA, TNACCHO and its partners can reinforce chronic disease prevention through a simple five-part message - **Move. Sleep. Care. Nourish. Screen. Know. Small steps can help protect your health.**

2. KEY MESSAGES

A. Physical Activity: Move More for Your Health

Every move counts. Find ways to move more throughout your day.

Regular physical activity supports heart health, helps maintain muscle and bone strength, improves mental well-being, and can reduce the risk of several chronic diseases.

Adults should work toward approximately 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity each week, along with activities that strengthen muscles. People who are currently inactive can begin with smaller amounts and gradually increase their activity.

Supporting Messages

- Physical activity does not have to happen in a gym.
- Walking, gardening, dancing, biking, swimming, household activities, and active play can all help people move more.
- Ten minutes of activity is better than no activity.
- Breaking activity into smaller periods throughout the day can make exercise easier to fit into a busy schedule.

- Strength, balance, and flexibility become increasingly important as we age.
- People with health conditions or physical limitations can talk with a healthcare professional about activities appropriate for them.

Example Call to Action: **What is one way you can add a little more movement to your day?**

B. Mental Health: Take Care of your Whole Health

Mental health is part of overall health.

Taking care of emotional and mental well-being is an important part of living a healthy life. Stress, anxiety, loneliness, and other emotional challenges can affect sleep, physical activity, eating habits, relationships, and physical health.

Everyone experiences stress and difficult periods. Developing healthy ways to cope and seeking support when needed can help protect long-term well-being.

Supporting Messages

- Make time for activities that help you relax, recharge, or feel connected.
- Stay connected with supportive family members, friends, neighbors, or community groups.
- Take breaks from situations, media, or activities that contribute to unnecessary stress.
- Spend time outdoors when possible.
- Practice relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, mindfulness, stretching, prayer, or meditation if those approaches are helpful to you.
- It is okay to ask for support when stress or emotional challenges become difficult to manage.
- Talk with a healthcare or mental health professional if emotional distress begins to interfere with daily life, relationships, work, sleep, or other activities.

Suggested Call to Action: **Do one thing today that supports your mental well-being.**

C. Sleep: Make Rest Part of Your Health Routine.

Healthy sleep is part of healthy living. Quality sleep supports the brain, heart, immune system, metabolism, mood, and overall health. Most adults benefit from approximately seven or more hours of sleep each night, although individual needs vary.

Supporting Messages

- Try to go to bed and wake up at approximately the same time each day.
- Create a comfortable, quiet sleeping environment.
- Reduce screen time and other stimulating activities close to bedtime when possible.
- Regular physical activity can support healthy sleep.

- Alcohol, caffeine, medications, stress, and some health conditions can interfere with sleep.
- Persistent difficulty sleeping, excessive daytime sleepiness, or loud snoring may be reasons to talk with a healthcare professional.

Suggested Call to Action: Make sleep part of your health plan. Try one change this week that could help you get better rest.

D. Nutrition: Build healthy choices one meal at a time.

Healthy eating is about patterns, not perfection. Nutritious foods provide the body with the energy and nutrients it needs while helping reduce the risk of chronic disease.

Healthy eating patterns generally emphasize fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean sources of protein, and other nutrient-rich foods while limiting foods high in added sugars, sodium, and saturated fat.

Supporting Messages

- Add fruits or vegetables to meals when possible.
- Choose water more often in place of sugary drinks.
- Look for opportunities to include whole grains and foods high in fiber.
- Plan meals and snacks ahead when possible.
- Compare nutrition labels when choosing packaged foods.
- Small improvements in eating patterns can make a difference over time.

Suggested Call to Action: Choose one healthy addition to your plate today.

E. Preventive Health Screenings

Do not wait until you feel sick to think about your health.

Preventive healthcare and recommended screenings can identify health concerns before symptoms appear and may allow treatment to begin earlier. The screenings a person needs depend on age, sex, family history, health history, risk factors, and recommendations from healthcare professionals. Preventive healthcare may include blood pressure checks, blood pressure checks, cholesterol screening, diabetes screening, colorectal cancer screening, breast cancer screening, cervical cancer screening, lung cancer screening .

Supporting Messages

- Know whether your cholesterol and blood glucose have been checked.
- Learn your family health history when possible.
- Ask your healthcare professional which screenings are recommended for you.
- Keep track of when screenings were completed and when they should be repeated.

- If cost, transportation, or access is preventing you from receiving preventive care, ask your healthcare provider or local health department about available resources.

Suggested Call to Action: At your next healthcare visit, ask: “What screenings do I need?”

F. Know your Numbers and Know your Risks

Knowing your numbers and understanding your personal risk are essential parts of prevention because many chronic conditions can develop for years without obvious symptoms.

Supporting Messages

- Know your blood pressure numbers.
- Know your cholesterol and blood glucose levels.
- Know before symptoms appear.
- Know what your numbers mean.

Suggested Call to Action: Know your numbers. Know your risk. Then talk with your healthcare professional about the steps that are right for you.

3. SOCIAL MEDIA RECOMMENDATIONS

Keep Posts Simple

Social media users often scan content quickly. Each post should ideally communicate one primary idea and one action. Consider creating a series:

- Monday: Physical activity
- Tuesday: Sleep
- Wednesday: Care
- Thursday: Nutrition
- Friday: Screenings
- Saturday: Know your numbers

Use Positive Language

Focus on what people can do rather than what they are doing wrong. Instead of: “Too many Tennesseans fail to get enough exercise.”

Consider: “An evening walk, a few extra steps at work, or dancing in your living room all count. Find a way to move that works for you.”

Make the Action Achievable

Calls to action should be specific and realistic. Examples:

- Take a 10-minute walk.
- Add a vegetable to dinner.
- Put your phone away 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Check the date of your last physical.

Avoid Stigma

Communications about chronic disease should avoid suggesting that health outcomes are solely the result of individual choices.

Use language that recognizes that people experience different opportunities and barriers related to food, physical activity, healthcare, transportation, employment, housing, and other factors that influence health.

Use Images That Reflect Tennessee Communities

Images should demonstrate that healthy living can occur at different ages and levels of ability. Whenever possible, social media images should show diverse Tennesseans in realistic settings:

- Walking in neighborhoods or parks
- Older adults remaining active
- Families participating in healthy activities together
- People living in rural, suburban, and urban communities

Keep Graphics Uncluttered

For graphics, use one major message, large, readable text, proper logo and branding, high color contrast, and alt text for accessibility. Detailed information can be included in the social media caption rather than placing all information on the graphic.

Encourage Engagement

To encourage engagement, you can use a poll, or simply a question. Questions can help turn one-way health education into community conversation.

- How are you moving today?
- What's your favorite healthy Tennessee-grown food?
- What's one thing that helps you get a good night's sleep?

Suggested Hashtags

Use hashtags selectively rather than adding a long list to every post. Suggested options include:

#PublicHealth
#TennesseePublicHealth
#HealthyTennessee
#MoveMore
#HealthyEating

#HealthyMind
#HealthySleep
#KnowYourNumbers

4. EXAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA POST TEXT

A. GENERAL CHRONIC DISEASE PREVENTION

Post 1

Your health is built one day at a time.
You don't have to change everything today. Choose one small step.
Small steps today can make a difference in your health tomorrow.

#SmallStepsTN #TennesseePublicHealth #PreventionMatters

Post 2

Prevention doesn't have to be complicated.

A walk after dinner.
An extra serving of vegetables.
A good night's sleep.

Small actions can add up to better health over time.

#HealthyTennessee #ChronicDiseasePrevention

B. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Post 3

You don't need a gym membership to be active.
Walk the dog. Work in the garden. Dance. Take the stairs. Ride a bike.
Movement is movement—and it counts.

What will get you moving today?

#MoveMore #SmallStepsTN

Post 4

Trying to be more active?
Start small.
Take a 10-minute walk today. Add another few minutes when you're ready. Every move counts.

#HealthyTennessee #PhysicalActivity #PreventionMatters

C. MENTAL HEALTH

Post 5

Your mental health is part of your overall health.
Taking a walk, talking with someone you trust, or simply taking a few quiet minutes can help support your well-being.
Take care of your whole health.

#MentalHealth #SmallStepsTN #TennesseePublicHealth

Post 6

Feeling stressed?
You don't have to solve everything at once.

Take a short break.
Step outside.
Take a few slow breaths.

Small actions can help you reset and recharge.

#MentalWellbeing #HealthyTennessee #SmallStepsTN

D. SLEEP

Post 7

Sleep deserves a place on your health checklist.
Try creating a consistent bedtime routine and giving yourself enough time to rest.
Healthy sleep is part of healthy living.

#HealthySleep #SmallStepsTN

Post 8

What's one thing you can do tonight to improve your sleep?Put away your phone a little earlier
Keep a consistent bedtime

Small changes to your night-time routine may lead to better re**st.**

#HealthyTennessee #HealthySleep

E. NUTRITION

Post 9

Healthy eating isn't about having a "perfect" diet.
Try making one nutritious change today:

Add a vegetable to your meal.
Choose fruit for a snack.
Drink water instead of a sugary beverage.

Build healthy choices one meal at a time.

#HealthyEating #SmallStepsTN

Post 10

Instead of asking, "What should I stop eating?" try asking: "What healthy food can I add?"

More vegetables. More fruit. More fiber. More water.
Healthy eating patterns are built over time.

#Nutrition #HealthyTennessee #PreventionMatters

F. SCREENINGS

Post 11

When it comes to your health, don't wait for symptoms.
Preventive screenings can help find some health problems early
At your next healthcare visit, ask: "What screenings do I need?"

#PreventionMatters #HealthScreenings #TennesseePublicHealth

Post 12

When was your last health checkup?
It may be time to talk with your healthcare professional about screenings.
Knowing your health information gives you the opportunity to act.

#KnowYourNumbers #SmallStepsTN

G. KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Post 13

Do you know your blood pressure?
High blood pressure often has no obvious symptoms. Knowing your number is an important step in protecting your heart health.
Know your numbers. Know your health.

#KnowYourNumbers #HeartHealth #HealthyTennessee

Post 14

Your family history can tell an important health story.
Ask questions. Learn your history.
Share what you know with your healthcare provider.

#PreventionMatters #FamilyHealthHistory