



# Extension News Column

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Health care is an important issue to most of us and a very big part of the expenditures your family may face. We all know that staying healthy is far more cost effective than getting well. You know the usual steps that are commonly given: eat more fruits and vegetables, reduce the fat in your diet, get more exercise, and eat a wide variety of foods. However, regardless of how you eat or exercise, health issues may arise.

Regular health screenings are key to staying on top of the health game. Those screenings can be expensive. So today let's look at how to get free or reduced health screenings. Health Fairs. You can get your blood pressure checked, blood work done, thyroid checked, vision screening and all around good health information at a free or reduced cost at your local health fair.

This weekend is the Fairbanks Fair which will be held at Friends Church. Because it is run by an all volunteer staff, you can get a blood screening for \$40, thyroid for \$30 more, PSA for \$25 and the brand new screening for vitamin D for \$50. In addition, avail yourself of the fun activities at the fair set up by local groups and businesses. Each year we have free massages, eye tests, hearing test, and a lot of excellent information on everything from eating vegetables to mental health issues. If you have questions about our Health Fair, call 374-6853.

If this date isn't convenient for you or if you live outside of Fairbanks, there are other Health Fairs for you. Denali Borough Health Fair will be held on April 25<sup>th</sup>, Salcha on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Tok on May 9<sup>th</sup>, and the Central Health Fair on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

Public Health Center. The state of Alaska runs an excellent public health center for its residents. There is no charge for child health services such as well child exams and immunizations. Some adult services are available. Charges for adult services are based on a sliding scale fee according to household income and family size. No one is refused service based on inability to pay. Call the center at 452-1776 for specific information.

Interior Neighborhood Health Clinic. They do basic health care and dental care on a sliding scale depending on income. Call them at 455-4567 for information.

Breast Cancer Detection Center. For women over 40, you should have a breast cancer screening every year. Our local BCDC offers mammograms at low cost, but has a special program for those who are unable to pay. They also have a mobile unit that goes to many of our rural locations. Call 479-3909 for further information.

Local groups. Have heart disease, or are you afraid of getting it? Call the American Heart Association at 456-3659. How about Diabetes, call the American Diabetes association at 457-3492. For cancer, call the Interior Cancer Association at 374-0974. Have a disability and need help coping? Call Access Alaska at 479-7940.

There are a myriad of other associations that are staffed with kind and helpful volunteers and staff that are here to help you. This is another reason to go to the Health Fair. Many of these groups have booths here and will help you learn about your health and ways to protect it. Many of these groups are also listed in the phone book, so if you can't make the Health Fair, check your phone book.

Your health is priceless, protect it by availing yourself of those screenings that will protect you.