



May 10-16, 2026

## NWHW 2026 Focus Areas



National Women's Health Week 2026 reflects an important shift in how women's health is understood, supported, and advanced. Increasingly, care is moving toward a more proactive, connected, and science-driven approach — one that prioritizes early action, incorporates new discoveries, and ensures those advances translate into meaningful improvements in everyday health. This evolving model recognizes that better outcomes are achieved not through isolated moments of care, but through continuous, informed engagement across the lifespan.

The four focus areas include:



## Prevention & Early Detection Across the Lifespan



## Sex-Specific Biology and Hormonal Foundations of Women's Health



## Chronic Disease, Midlife Health, Aging, & Longevity



## Innovation, Translation, & the Future of Women's Health



### Prevention & Early Detection Across the Lifespan

Health outcomes are often shaped long before symptoms appear. That is why prevention and early detection play such a critical role in supporting women at every stage of life. Routine screenings, timely risk assessments, and early interventions make it possible to identify potential concerns sooner, when they are more manageable and, in many cases, preventable.

At the same time, prevention extends well beyond clinical care. Daily habits, particularly nutrition and physical activity, are among the most powerful tools for reducing the risk of chronic conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and osteoporosis. A balanced diet, regular movement, adequate sleep, and stress management all contribute to maintaining healthy weight, supporting metabolic function, and protecting long-term health. When combined with routine screenings and preventive care, these behaviors form a comprehensive approach to reducing risk and improving outcomes.






This approach also includes equipping women with the knowledge and confidence to recognize changes in their bodies, seek care when needed, and make informed decisions about their health. Because risk factors and health needs evolve over time, prevention strategies must be adaptable, reflecting differences in age, lifestyle, family history, and environment.

Across the lifespan, small, consistent actions can have a lasting impact. While individual needs may vary, the following strategies offer a general guide for prioritizing prevention at every stage:



**Adolescence and young adulthood:** Establish a strong foundation of healthy habits, including balanced nutrition, regular physical activity, and mental health awareness. Begin age-appropriate screenings and build comfort with accessing healthcare services.

-  **Reproductive years:** Maintain consistent preventive care, including routine screenings and reproductive health visits, while prioritizing nutrition, physical activity, and stress management to support overall wellbeing.
-  **Midlife:** Monitor key risk factors such as blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood sugar. This is also a critical time to reinforce healthy eating patterns and regular exercise to reduce the risk of chronic disease.
-  **Older adulthood:** Focus on maintaining mobility, strength, and balance through regular physical activity, along with nutrition that supports bone health and cognitive function. Continue recommended screenings and prioritize independence and quality of life.

By strengthening this foundation, through both preventive care and healthy daily behaviors, women are better positioned to maintain long-term health, reduce the likelihood of serious illness, and experience a higher quality of life.



Learn more about the recommended health screenings for women across the lifespan with the HHS Office on Women's Health [Screenings and Discussions for Every Stage of Life fact sheet](#).



Access the [Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#) for science-based recommendations on healthy eating patterns across all life stages, emphasizing nutrient-dense foods, variety, and flexibility to support overall health and reduce chronic disease risk.

View [Recipes of the Month](#) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to get started on building healthy, delicious meals for you and your family.



## Sex-Specific Biology and Hormonal Foundations of Women's Health

Advances in research are deepening our understanding of how biological and hormonal factors shape women's health across the lifespan. Hormones such as estrogen, progesterone, and others play a central role in regulating physical, emotional, and metabolic processes, and their influence shifts significantly at different life stages. During puberty, hormonal changes drive growth, reproductive development, and brain maturation. In the reproductive years, hormonal patterns affect menstrual health, fertility, pregnancy, and mood. As women transition through menopause, declining hormone levels can impact cardiovascular health, bone density, sleep, and cognitive function. Recognizing these shifts allows for more timely support and better-informed care at each stage.



Sex-specific differences also affect how diseases develop, present, and respond to treatment. For example, cardiovascular disease, the leading cause of death among women, often presents with symptoms such as fatigue, nausea, or shortness of breath rather than the more widely recognized chest pain. Autoimmune diseases are more common in women, while conditions like osteoporosis disproportionately affect women later in life. These differences extend to treatment as well, as women may respond differently to medications due to variations in metabolism, body composition, and hormonal influences. Increasing attention to sex-specific research is helping to close these gaps, leading to more accurate diagnoses and more personalized, effective care.



Learn more about cardiovascular disease from the NIH National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute: **[Know the Difference fact sheet](#)**.

Health is also shaped by the environments in which women live, work, and age. Exposure to environmental factors, such as air and water quality, chemicals in consumer products, and workplace conditions, can influence hormone function, reproductive health, and long-term disease risk. Research supported by the NIH National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) highlights how even low-level, long-term exposures may contribute to health outcomes over time, particularly when

combined with biological and life stage-specific factors. Access to clear, evidence-based information about these exposures can help women better understand potential risks and take practical steps to reduce them.

By recognizing how hormonal, biological, and environmental influences intersect, both individuals and healthcare providers can make more informed decisions, leading to more personalized care and improved health outcomes across every stage of life.



NIEHS.

Access [steps you can take to reduce exposure to environmental toxins](#) from the NIH



## Chronic Disease, Midlife Health, Aging, & Longevity

Midlife represents a pivotal period for women's health, one in which the risk for chronic conditions becomes more pronounced, but also one of the most important opportunities for prevention and early intervention. Conditions such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and autoimmune disorders often emerge or accelerate during these years, making timely awareness and action especially critical. Cardiovascular disease remains the leading cause of death among women, yet it is frequently underrecognized, while diabetes and metabolic changes can develop gradually and go undetected without routine screening. Autoimmune conditions, which disproportionately affect women, may also become more evident or progress during this stage of life.

Women also experience unique risk factors that can influence how and when these conditions develop. Hormonal changes associated with menopause can affect cholesterol levels, blood pressure, fat distribution, and insulin sensitivity, increasing the risk for heart disease and metabolic disorders. In addition, pregnancy-related conditions such as gestational diabetes or preeclampsia can have long-term implications for cardiovascular health later in life. Social and structural factors, including caregiving responsibilities, chronic stress, and reduced time for self-care, can further contribute to health risks and delay care.

Despite these challenges, midlife offers a critical window for intervention. Regular monitoring of key health indicators, such as blood pressure, cholesterol, and blood glucose, can help detect early changes before they progress into more serious conditions. At the same time, lifestyle strategies, including physical activity, balanced nutrition, quality sleep, and stress management, can significantly reduce risk and improve overall wellbeing. Preventive care during this stage is not only about managing current health, but about shaping long-term outcomes.



As women move beyond midlife, the focus expands to maintaining strength, cognitive function, mobility, and independence. The goal is not simply to extend lifespan, but to support a longer health span, years lived in good health, with the ability to remain active and engaged. Attention to bone health, brain health, and functional ability becomes increasingly important, helping to reduce the risk of falls, cognitive decline, and loss of independence.

By recognizing midlife as both a period of increased risk and a powerful opportunity for action, women and healthcare providers can work together to prevent or better manage chronic disease and support healthier aging over time.



## Innovation, Translation, & the Future of Women's Health

Breakthroughs in research and technology are rapidly expanding what is possible in women's health. However, the true measure of progress lies in how effectively these advances reach individuals and improve day-to-day care. Bridging the gap between discovery and practice remains a critical priority.

Innovations such as data-driven care, digital health tools, and more personalized treatment approaches are beginning to reshape the healthcare experience. At the same time, efforts are underway to ensure these advances are accessible, practical, and relevant to women across different life stages and care settings.

Equally important is the role of education and empowerment. When women have access to clear, actionable information, they are better able to participate in decisions about their care and take meaningful steps to support their health. Communities, health care providers, and public health initiatives all contribute to creating



environments where this knowledge can be shared, applied, and sustained over time.

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