**Talking Points: National Women’s Health Week**

**May 14–20, 2017**

* The 18th annual National Women’s Health Week kicks off on Mother’s Day, May 14 and is celebrated until May 20, 2017.
* The goal of National Women’s Health Week is to remind women to make their health a priority.
* The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office on Women’s Health (OWH) also encourages women to take simple steps for better health at every age.
* To improve their physical and mental health, women can:
  + Visit a doctor or nurse for a well-woman visit (checkup) and preventive screenings;
  + Get active;
  + Eat healthy;
  + Pay attention to mental health, including getting enough sleep and managing stress; and
  + Avoid unhealthy behaviors, such as smoking, texting while driving, and not wearing a seatbelt or bicycle helmet.
* Women make approximately 80 percent of health care decisions for their families, serving as the primary caregiver for their parents, partners, and children, especially when they become ill.1 When women take care of everyone else, they tend to put their own health and well-being on the back burner.

# *Ages & Stages: Women’s Health Needs Across the Lifespan*

* Women’s health needs change as women age.
* HHS OWH highlights the steps women can take to live healthier lives, no matter their age. For example:
  + Women of all ages should maintain a healthy weight. (In 2011-2014, we know that two-thirds or 66% of adult women were overweight or obese).2
  + Women in their reproductive years — 20s to 40s — should talk to their doctors about family planning — whether they’re planning to have children or not.
  + Women in their 50s should get screened for colorectal cancer.
  + Women in their 60s and 70s should talk to their doctor about osteoporosis screening, and getting the shingles and pneumonia vaccines.
* The screenings and shots you need depend on your age, health habits, risk factors, and family history.
* HHS OWH highlights women’s health needs by decade on womenshealth.gov.

# *Well-Woman Visit & Preventive Care*

* A well-woman visit is a yearly checkup. Women of all ages need one.
* It’s a time to have a conversation with your doctor; check in on your health status, your health goals, and what changes you can make to get there.
* More specifically you’ll:
  + Discuss your family history, family planning, current medications, and personal habits, such as alcohol and tobacco use.
  + Get or schedule necessary shots or tests, such as screenings for blood pressure, cholesterol, and colorectal cancer.
  + Set health goals, such as being active and maintaining a healthy weight.
* If you have health insurance, a yearly well-woman visit won't cost you anything extra.
* If you don't have insurance, you can still see a doctor or nurse for free or low-cost at a health center near you.
* Preventive screenings are needed because these tests help find diseases early, when they’re easier to treat.

# *Physical Activity*

* Only 19% of women met the Physical Activity Guidelines for aerobic and muscle-strengthening activity.3
* Only half of all women get the recommended amounts of physical activity they need.4
* Women need about 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity each week. That’s about 30 minutes a day.
* Some physical activity is better than none — and any amount has health benefits.5

# *Healthy Eating*

* Diet is one of the most powerful tools we have to reduce the onset of disease. Healthy eating patterns can help prevent obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure, many types of cancer and Type 2 diabetes.6
  + Nearly 2 out of 3 women in the United States die from chronic diseases.
  + Heart disease, for example, is the leading cause of death among American women.7
* A healthy diet is made up of lots of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat dairy, oils, and lean proteins. Avoid saturated fats, trans fats, added sugars, and sodium.
* We make hundreds of decisions about food each day,8 so there are a lot of chances to eat healthy.
* Try swapping white bread for whole grain bread. Use low-fat or fat-free milk in your coffee instead of cream. Add fruit to the top of your cereal or oatmeal, and add veggies to pasta and sandwiches.

# *Mental Health: General*

* Part of having a healthy body comes from taking care of your mind.
* When you’re in a good mental state, it’s easier to take care of yourself physically.
* Some tips include:
  + Eat healthy. The food you eat can have a direct effect on your energy level, physical health, and mood.
  + Get regular physical activity. It’s been shown to help with the symptoms of depression.9
  + Get plenty of sleep. Your body needs time to rest and heal, and sleep can help with that.9
  + Manage stress. Stress impacts physical and mental health, so it’s important to manage it. Reducing stress is all about taking time for you, **whether it’s taking a long walk, getting a massage, or making time to catch up with a friend.**
* Of course, taking these steps is not that simple for everybody. If you’re having trouble coping, you should talk to your doctor, your family, your friends, or another supportive person.

# *Mental Health: Depression*

* We know that some mental health problems are more common in women than men. For example, women are almost twice as likely as men to experience depression.10
* There are also certain types of depression that are unique to women, such as postpartum depression. CDC research shows about 1 in 9 women experiences postpartum depression.11

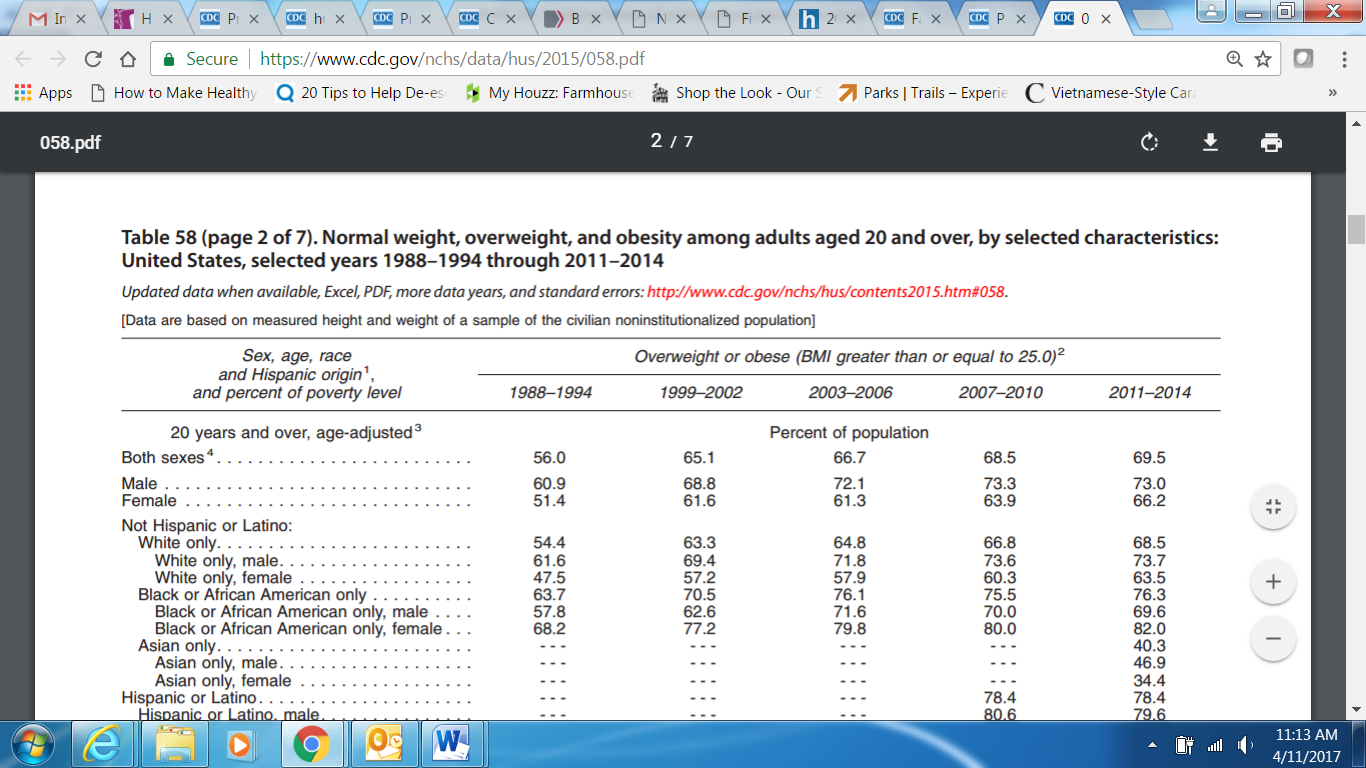
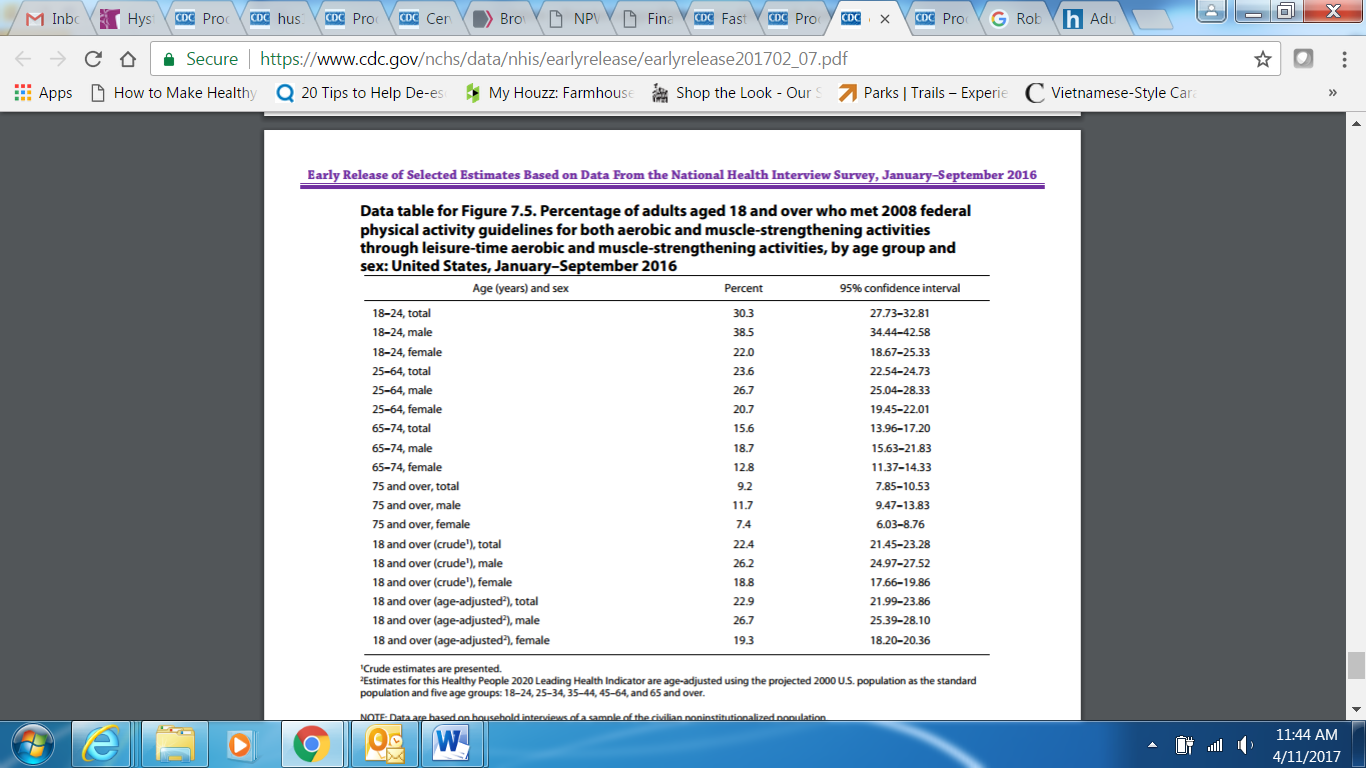
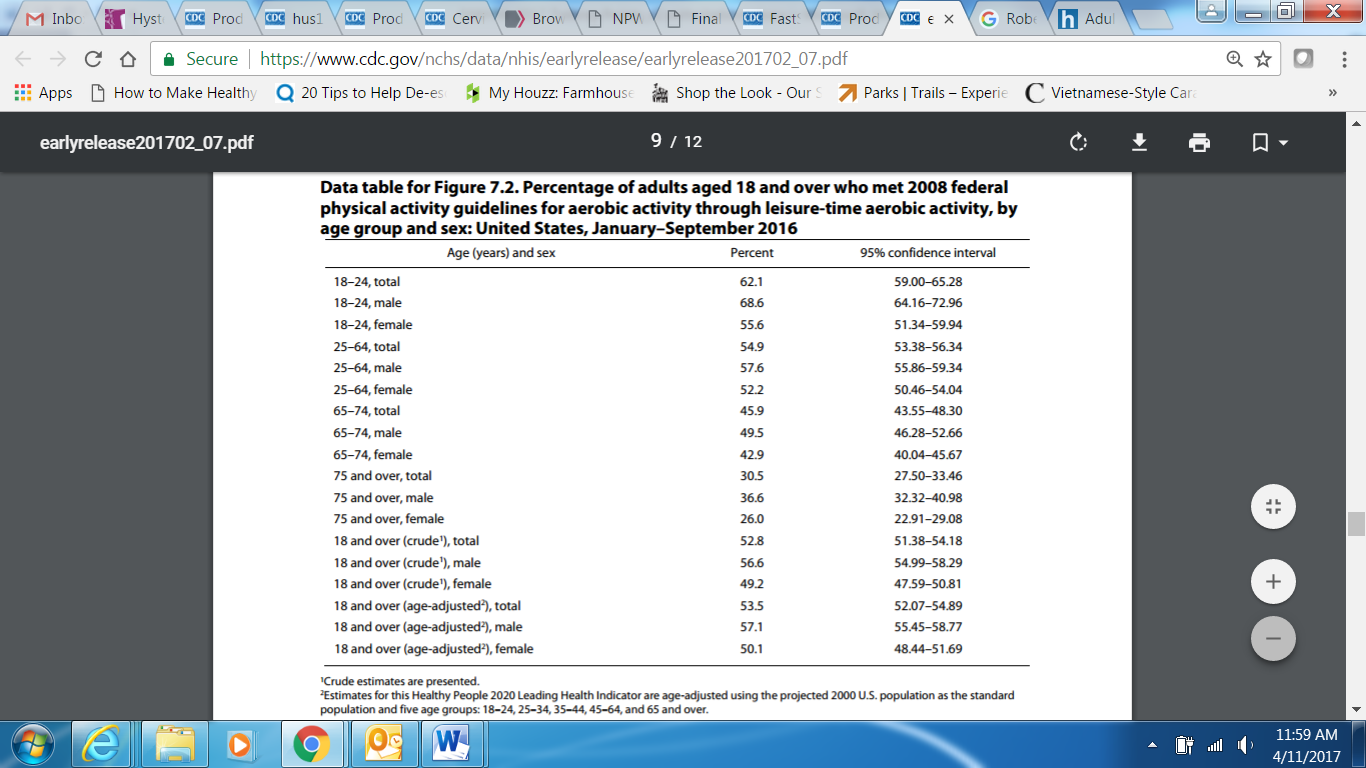
# *Mental Health: Substance Misuse*

* We've seen an alarming rise in overdose deaths from prescription painkillers among women in the United States. Between 1999 and 2010, overdose deaths from prescription pain killers increased more than 400% among women, compared to an increase of 265% among men.12
* A unique combination of biological, health, and social factors have led to this growing epidemic among women. For example, according to the CDC, women are more likely to experience chronic pain and to be prescribed opioid pain medications for longer periods and in higher doses than men.13
* And women have risk factors that are unique, or at least more common, for them. Psychological or interpersonal stress has been identified as a greater risk factor for prescription opioid misuse among women.10

# *Safe Behaviors*

* Engaging in safe behaviors, such as not smoking (or quitting smoking), not texting while driving, and wearing a seatbelt or bicycle helmet are important to long-term health and to an overall healthy lifestyle.
* Women are more likely than men to use a handheld device while driving.15
* Fatal crashes involving distracted driving are increasing.16 When you text, the average time your eyes are off the road is five seconds.17 When traveling at 55mph, that's enough time to cover the length of a football field blindfolded.17
* More than 13 of every 100 adult women smoke cigarettes.18 Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States.18
* HHS OWH invites everyone to participate in and support National Women’s Health Week. Learn more about National Women’s Health Week at [www.womenshealth.gov/nwhw](http://www.womenshealth.gov/nwhw).
* Use the **#NWHW** hashtag in your social media promotion. Follow **#NWHW** on Twitter.

**Sources** (all accessed on April 11, 2017):

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   “Women make approximately 80 percent of health care decisions for their families and are more likely to be the care givers when a family member falls ill.”  
     
   or  
     
   *Issue Brief, An Update on Women’s Health Policy: Women, Work, and Family Health: A Balancing Act*. Roberta Wyn, Ph.D. and Victoria Ojeda, M.P.H. of the UCLA Center for Health Policy Research with Usha Ranji, M.S. and Alina Salganicoff, Ph.D. of the Kaiser Family Foundation, published by the Kaiser Family Foundation in April 2003 at <http://www.kdheks.gov/hcf/healthquest/download/resource_downloads/Balancing_Act_Issue_Brief.pdf>   
     
   “Approximately 80% of all mothers are responsible for selecting their child’s doctor, taking children to doctor's appointments, and follow-up care (Figure 1).”   
     
   “Women are the major coordinators of care and the link to the health care system for their families. They play the key role in coordinating and ensuring access to health care for their children. Many women also assume an important role as caregivers of relatives who are sick, disabled, or elderly. These women often care for their families while maintaining employment commitments.”
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3. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Published February 2017. *Early Release of Selected Estimates Based on Data From the National Health Interview Survey, January–September 2016*. Data table for Figure 7.5. Percentage of adults aged 18 and over who met 2008 federal physical activity guidelines for both aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities through leisure-time aerobic and muscle-strengthening activities, by age group and sex: United States, January–September 2016. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhis/earlyrelease/earlyrelease201702_07.pdf>   
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7. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). *Leading Causes of Death (LCOD) in Females United States, 2014 (current listing)*. <https://www.cdc.gov/women/lcod/2014/index.htm>

“All Females, All Ages Percent\*

1) Heart disease 22.3”

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[Snapshot of chart in lieu of a quote]

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“The Nation lost 35,092 people in crashes on U.S. roadways during 2015, an increase from 32,744 in 2014. The 7.2-percent increase is the largest percentage increase in nearly 50 years.”

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   [www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data\_statistics/fact\_sheets/adult\_data/cig\_smoking/](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/data_statistics/fact_sheets/adult_data/cig_smoking/)  
     
   “More than 13 of every 100 adult women (13.6%)”  
     
   “Cigarette smoking is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in the United States, accounting for more than 480,000 deaths every year, or 1 out of every 5 deaths.1”