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Learning and sharing at Women's Health Day

AMY MOSS STRONG Bandon Western World Feb 11, 2016



Amy Moss Strong, Bandon Western World

Nanci Johnson, a certified personal trainer, right, leads a group of women in stretching exercises between speakers at South Hospital & Health Center's annual Women's Health Day Saturday at the Bandon Community Center.

BANDON – Almost 100 women – and a few men – gathered at the Bandon Community Center Saturday to hear about hormones.

While it may not sound like the most exciting topic, the information presented at the Southern Coos Hospital & Health Center and Southern Coos Health Foundation's annual Women's Health Day was well received.

Titled "Hormone Detectives: The Endocrine Connection," the event began with breakfast with local health providers, including nurse practitioner Mary Anker from North Bend Medical Center, and Dr. Megan Holland, Dr. Stan Pense and hospitalist Sarah Barry, all from Southern Coos Hospital & Health Center.

Dr. Sarah Swarts then presented information about bone health and osteoporosis, emphasizing the importance of proper diet, supplements, weight-bearing exercise, bone density testing and the prevention of falls.

"Anyone who has a minor fracture has a much higher occurrence of fracturing again," Swarts told the audience. "It doesn't seem like a big deal, 'Oh, I broke my wrist,' but it is a big deal. It's about predicting the risk of a fracture."

Swarts said age and prior fractures are the main indicators used to predict future fractures.

At one point she recommended hip protectors – thick pads that can be worn at the hips underneath clothing to protect against hip fractures – which drew laughter from the audience.

"It really does protect you from a fall," Swarts said. "And people who are afraid to fall, fall more often."

Swarts also described current supplements and medications that can be used for those suffering from or at a high risk of osteoporosis.

Next, Dr. Susan Vanucci, doctor of osteopathic medicine, talked about diabetes and mainstream as well as alternative therapies to treat the disease.

"Sugar really is not our friend," Vanucci said. "High sugars equal high insulin, which equals fat storage."

She emphasized the prevention of diabetes, including adopting a low-glycemic diet and losing excess weight, practicing weight-bearing exercises, reducing stress and thereby cortisol levels, getting adequate sleep, taking multivitamins and supplements, monitoring blood sugars closely and being vigilant about keeping blood sugars and A1C numbers at optimum levels. Vanucci also recommended several books to read.

“Educate yourself,” Vanucci said. “I’m married to an Italian man who loves his bread. It took me 10 years to get him off grains, and it wasn’t me, it was him getting an audio version of ‘Wheat Belly.’ Bread has gluten; gluten is inflammatory and causes a lot of issues. But everyone is an individual and should be treated individually.”

In between speakers, Nanci Johnson, certified personal trainer, urged everyone out of their seats to do stretching and other exercises.

“Women who exercise consistently have a lower incidence of breast cancer, and exercise actually lowers estrogen levels, so let’s save the girls,” Johnson said, eliciting giggles among the audience.

After a healthy lunch catered by Mother’s Natural Grocery and Deli, Jennifer Briggs and Tina Vecera spoke about acupuncture and Chinese herbology, followed by an exercise break, then break-out sessions on nutrition, thyroid disease, adrenal failure and gentle yoga flow.

Several healthcare-related vendors also were available during breaks.

Many of the women present attend Women’s Health Day yearly.

“It’s a really good time of year to do this, after the holidays and gray weather, it’s just a cheery thing to do to be around other women for the day,” said Camy Taylor of Bandon.

“There’s always good information and a variety of topics. I think I’ll even get tested this year for bone density.”

Regina Gregory also enjoys the day each year.

"I come to stay up with current health issues and learn what's new," Gregory said.

"Everybody's questions are good and that way you learn from other people's issues. I also just enjoy the social part."

Lennae Wright, an outreach and enrollment specialist with Coast Community Health Center, agreed that the information is valuable both to her personally and in her role at CCHC.

"(Women's Health Day) provides a safe place for women to talk about things they might not normally feel comfortable addressing, and that's really valuable and useful," Wright said. "It's all about removing barriers from women and their health care."

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