



COUNTY OF POLK  
Health Department  
[www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health](http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health)

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## Polk County Health Department News Release

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During September the Polk County Health Department will be fighting the age-old notion that growing older is an unpleasant process.

Terri Henkels, Director of the Polk County Health Department says “We each have the power to age gracefully. By avoiding disease, detecting disease early and managing diseases many people can enjoy a longer and higher quality life.”

Many people think of aging as a painful process, often because of the possibility of developing a variety of chronic diseases that can make everyday life uncomfortable. The risk of developing diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, cancer and arthritis increases with age.

Avoiding disease is the best way to ensure living a long and healthy life, however this can seem like an impossible task at times. “Many people don’t realize that there are small changes that they can make in their daily diets and exercise habits that can add up to substantial health benefits that will help prevent disease” said Henkels. Add more fruits, vegetables and whole grains to your diet and try to reduce the amount of fat and sugar in your diet. Set a goal to get at least 30 minutes of exercise each day.

Public health officials know that the earlier a disease, such as cancer or diabetes, is diagnosed the better chance a person has to successfully treat it. The Polk County Health Department has screenings available that can help diagnose some types of cancer, diabetes and heart disease.

“There is a good chance that many of us will develop a chronic disease but there are things we can do to help reduce the stress and pain that may accompany that disease” said Henkels. The Polk County Health Department offers classes that teach individuals and their care-takers how to do simple exercises, such as breathing and stretching, at home that will help them live more comfortably with a chronic disease.

For more information about how to avoid, detect and manage chronic disease visit [www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health](http://www.polkcountyiowa.gov/health).