

National Health and Nutrition Survey Will Include Newtonians

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), the most comprehensive survey of the health and nutritional status of people in the United States, is including Newton and other communities in Middlesex County this year.

Why Newton? Each year, 5,000 residents nationwide are chosen to participate in NHANES which is conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). All counties and cities in the United States have a chance to be selected for the NHANES and this year Middlesex County is one of the 15 counties.

“NHANES serves as the nation’s ‘health check-up’ by going into communities throughout the country to collect health information,” said Brian Moyer, PhD, Director of the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). “The survey provides a wealth of important data about many of the major health and nutritional issues affecting the country.”

This is an exciting opportunity for Newtonians to provide voluntarily health and nutrition information that will help public health experts have a better understanding of the nation’s health to guide programs and policies.

Since 1960, NHANES collects data that address critical health concerns, such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. NHANES includes, for example, what percent of adults in the U.S. have high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes, risk factors and prevalence of diseases, and whether babies and children are growing at a healthy rate. Public health officials, legislators, and physicians use this information to develop health policies, direct and design health programs and services, and expand health knowledge. NHANES data also help produce national references and standardized growth charts used by pediatricians across the country.

Who Is Selected?

Some Newton residents will have an invitation-only opportunity to participate in NHANES. Addresses are randomly sampled within the county. By selecting participants randomly and then combining data from all counties visited this year, NHANES data can more accurately represent the U.S. population.

Selected households will be sent one or more letters inviting them to be part of NHANES and residents will be asked to voluntarily complete a brief online questionnaire to see if anyone in their home is eligible to take part. The first letters from NHANES are being mailed to selected Newton households on April 18.

Those eligible will be contacted by a NHANES representative to set up a telephone health interview at a convenient time, followed by a health examination that takes place in the NHANES mobile examination center in a Middlesex County location still to be determined. While no medical care is provided directly in the mobile examination center, a report on physical findings is given to each participant, along with an explanation of those findings from survey medical staff.

All information collected in the survey is kept confidential and individual privacy is protected by law. NHANES is taking all precautions needed, as recommended by the CDC, to keep survey participants and staff safe by following guidelines on social distancing, use of personal protective equipment, handwashing, and sanitation of the mobile examination center and all equipment.

Newton's Health and Human Services Commissioner Linda Walsh joins me in encouraging participation. Those selected for this survey can be confident that the critical information they provide will help advance our understanding of local and national health trends and inform health programs and policies.

Find more information about NHANES at cdc.gov/nhanes.