Did you know that March 8, 2015, is National Sleep Awareness Week? It is held each year to raise awareness about the importance of sleep as a fundamental component of health. Americans suffer from chronic, long-term sleep disorders, and an additional 20 million experience short-term sleep disorders. A restorative sleep is essential to our physical, emotional, and mental health. Inadequate sleep can affect our learning, memory, and behavior.

If you are diabetic or at high risk for developing diabetes, Well Aware and Kaiser Permanente are offering a Diabetes Risk Test. The Diabetes Risk Test asks simple questions about weight, age, family history, and other potential risk factors for prediabetes or type 2 diabetes. Preventive tips are provided for everyone who participates.

The American Diabetes Association Alert Day is a one-day, nationwide health promotion event held each year to encourage adults to take action to control their risk of diabetes. In 2012, 29.1 million Americans, representing 9.3 percent of the population, had diabetes. Are you one of them? To find out, take the American Diabetes Association’s 5-question Diabetes Test. The test is an easy and no-cost way to see if you are at high risk for type 2 diabetes.

The theme for the 2015 National Nutrition Month is, “Bite into a Healthy Lifestyle.” According to the Surgeon General, “Our eating habits have changed dramatically—from our diets to our cooking methods to the portion sizes of foods. The result is that we are becoming less active, which can increase our risk of heart disease, stroke, and other chronic diseases, like heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and more. To combat these risks, we need to develop sound eating and physical activity habits and choose the right snack at the right time.” Take the first step to a healthier life by taking part in the American Heart Association’s National Walking Day: April 1, 2015. Ready to Quit For Good? Smoking is a preventable disease. It is the leading cause of preventable death in the United States. According to the Surgeon General, “The benefits of quitting smoking are immediate and lifelong. Two minutes after quitting, the heart rate slows; 5 minutes later, the body’s blood pressure drops; and within 20 minutes, the heart’s demand for oxygen decreases. Within 1 year, a former smoker’s risks of a heart attack drop to that of a nonsmoker’s. After 10 years without smoking, the risk of stroke is nearly equal to that of a lifetime nonsmoker.”

According to the Surgeon General, “It is during those first few days of quitting that people find the temptation to smoke the hardest. A regular walking program can help you manage your withdrawal symptoms, boost bone strength, and aid your transition to a more healthy lifestyle.” Gregory, a participant in a walking program, said, “I believe a group of people is better than one person; I think of them as my walking Buddhas. I have met several people who are becoming more active, which has made our group stick together.”

The Bethesda Transportation Depot’s Jumpstart program at the Bethesda Transportation Depot and uses his layover time to exercise. As the wellness program at the depot continues to grow, Gregory has only one request. “I would like to see more events, like the March Well Aware eNews.”

Visit our website to view the results of the March Well Aware eNews. For more information, including rules and prize information, please visit the March Well Aware eNews page. For more help, please call the Rest and Revive hotline at 1-877-455-4577.

Are You at Risk? To find out if you are at risk, you can take the American Diabetes Association’s 5-question Diabetes Test. To find out more about the American Diabetes Association Alert Day, please visit the American Diabetes Association Alert Day page. To find out more about the American Heart Association’s National Walking Day, please visit the National Walking Day page.

This month, join us in our efforts to promote overall health throughout Montgomery County Public Schools. We are working to raise awareness about the importance of sleep, diabetes, nutrition, and smoking cessation.