

Health Communication Activity Types

There are many activity options from which program planners can choose to communicate messages about health. More traditional activity types (e.g., airing PSAs, distributing brochures, putting up posters) have their place in the message mix for an intervention, but program planners also should consider less traditional types of activities. Some ways these activities can be applied to a variety of health problems are shown below. In this document, activities are organized by *activity types* (i.e., media advocacy, edutainment, professional to lay interaction, peer to peer interaction, and new media) and are demonstrated by using mass reach media, interpersonal, and small group *channels*.

Activity Type	Definition
Media advocacy	Using mass media strategically to advance a social or policy initiative
Edutainment	Incorporating health messages into formats typically reserved for entertainment
Professional to lay interaction	Having a health professional personally disseminate health messages to the target audience through conversations with or presentations to individuals or small groups
Peer to peer interaction	Having friends, family members, coworkers, or other peers of the target audience disseminate health messages through conversations with or presentations to individuals or small groups
New media	Using new technologies, such as interactive computer applications, to disseminate health messages

1. *H. pylori*

Goal: *To significantly increase, within one year, the number of ulcer sufferers who ask their doctor about testing and treatment for H. pylori.*

Media advocacy

Create public support for changes in HMO policy regarding the treatment of ulcers caused by *H. pylori* and encourage local health beat reporters to publish stories comparing the costs and benefits of curing ulcers to ongoing symptom treatment using over the counter medications (OTCs). Stories should be sure to highlight the annual costs incurred by consumers who treat ulcer symptoms by using OTCs.

Edutainment

Work with screenwriters to include an ulcer treatment story line in a comedy series or medical show that is watched by members of the target audience.

Professional to lay interaction

Provide fact sheet on *H. pylori* for pharmacists to give to patients.

Peer to peer interaction

Prepare symptom checklist for family caregivers and make it available through multiple channels and settings (e.g., local pharmacies, the Internet).

New media

Incorporate information on ulcer treatment into electronic information kiosks found in large discount store pharmacies.

2. Lyme disease

Goal: To reduce exposure to deer ticks that carry the Lyme disease virus.

Media advocacy

Use the media to create public support for instituting Lyme disease prevention measures at summer camps. During summer camp season, have television health journalists report the risks posed by Lyme disease and what measures camp supervisors and counselors can take to reduce camper exposure to the deer ticks that carry the virus. Journalists should encourage parents to choose camps that have implemented Lyme disease prevention measures.

Edutainment

Incorporate deer tick protection reminders into nature and hunting events, as well as local outdoor (e.g., fishing or bird watching) shows.

Professional to lay interaction

Ask public health or medical spokespersons to lecture community groups on Lyme disease prevention measures (e.g., PTAs and homeowner association meetings).

Peer to peer interaction

Provide parents with instructions on Lyme disease protection for children.

New media

Place an interactive kiosk in outdoor sports stores or at hunting or fishing convention sites. The kiosk would include touch screens for accessing a picture of the type of tick that carries the Lyme disease virus, a video demonstration of safe tick removal, and key protective measures that should be taken.

3. Influenza

Goal: To increase annual immunization among adults 65 and older.

Media advocacy

In areas where flu shots are inaccessible to at-risk adults, use the media to publicize this gap in service. The media can encourage public health officials to provide supplies and money needed to extend clinic hours for vaccine shots until flu season has passed.

Edutainment

Ask movie theaters to show a public service ad on immunization prior to movies that attract older adults.

Professional to lay interaction

Place notices of where and when flu shots will be given in non-primary care medical/ dental waiting areas (e.g., podiatrists, optometrists, and hospital emergency rooms).

Peer to peer interaction

Include immunization reminders in paychecks and church bulletins.

New media

Ask America Online or other commercial Internet vendors to post public service reminders of flu immunizations for adults 65 and older.

4. Tobacco control

Goal: To prevent tobacco use among youth that do not already smoke.

Media advocacy

Force cooperation of vendors selling cigarettes if local vendors illegally sell cigarettes to minors by informing the local media. The press can confront and publicly admonish the vendor as well as call for tougher enforcement of anti-tobacco laws by local police.

Edutainment

Work with the community theater to involve youth in producing an anti-tobacco theatrical event for middle school assemblies.

Professional to lay interaction

Provide coaches with anti-tobacco use messages and materials for discussion at team sessions and locker room display.

Peer to peer interaction

Sponsor an essay contest for youth on why they do not smoke; publish winning entries and distribute through schools.

New media

Seek corporate partners who will sponsor anti-tobacco messages on popular, commercial youth Internet sites.

5. Childhood immunizations

Goal: To increase the number of preschool children who have all recommended immunizations.

Media advocacy

Use the media to debunk the myth among some parents that vaccines are not necessary and emphasize parental responsibility of preventive health measures for children.

Edutainment

Work with local performers to preschoolers (e.g., puppets or clowns) to mention immunizations or hand out reminders at community performances.

Professional to lay interaction

Prompt pediatric offices to ask parents about immunizations at all visits, not only during check-ups.

Peer to peer interaction

Ask grandparents (e.g., at senior centers, libraries) to check on immunizations needed.

New media

Promote the availability of the CDC immunization schedule on as many web sites as possible.

6. Cryptosporidium

Goal: To decrease exposure to Cryptosporidium through the public water supply among immunosuppressed individuals.

Media advocacy

Promote awareness of *Cryptosporidium* and its risks if the city is not willing to institute a *Cryptosporidium* testing policy, private individuals or organizations can have the water tested in a laboratory. Provide the local media with the results of the laboratory test along with statistics and facts illustrating the dangers posed to immunosuppressed individuals.

Edutainment

Provide immunosuppressed children with a storybook or comic book that incorporates a message about avoidance and prevention of *Cryptosporidium*.

Professional to lay interaction

Provide fact sheets through large managed care providers.

Peer to peer interaction

Work with bottled water suppliers to provide water safety information through direct mail and newspaper insert advertising.

New media

Provide water quality alerts and reports on local government web sites. Identify key organizations (e.g., hospitals, advocacy groups, and nursing homes) and develop a newsletter that provides subscribers with weekly water quality updates.

7. Folic acid

Goal: To increase the intake of folic acid among women who may become pregnant (decreasing the incidence of spina bifida and anencephaly).

Media advocacy

Use the media to disseminate the importance of folic acid. Use statistics that creatively and dramatically illustrate the efficacy of taking a simple multivitamin that can reduce the incidence of certain birth defects.

Edutainment

Encourage screenwriters to include a mention of folic acid whenever they have a pregnant character or a character that is planning a pregnancy. Have a talk show segment on folic acid.

Professional to lay interaction

Ask pregnancy planning counselors (e.g., genetic counselors, Planned Parenthood, fertility specialists, and OB-GYNS) to discuss folic acid with their patients.

Peer to peer interaction

Provide information on folic acid to sororities and social clubs where young women may congregate.

New media

Sponsor a web site or add folic acid information to existing pregnancy planning web sites.

8. Nutrition and Physical activity

Goal: To increase healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors among middle-aged adults and their children who are at-risk for chronic diseases.

Media advocacy

Challenge local media to investigate nutritional values of lunches provided at public schools.

Edutainment

Organize a nutrition and physical activity pep rally at school. Have children to invite parents to attend. Include songs and activities where the audience can participate. For adults, identify five healthy eating tips (e.g., how to eat healthy during a busy day) and five physical activity behaviors (e.g., take a brisk walk with a friend). Recommend that soap opera characters model these behaviors whenever relevant situations arise during shows.

Professional to lay interaction

Provide interested work sites with a list of local nutritionists who are willing to give presentations.

Peer to peer interaction

Produce “snack and act packs” for families that include ideas for active family time (e.g., walking the dog, trying iceskating) and low-fat snack ideas for energy during the activities.

New media

Develop a computer game for elementary school students where they can select characters and learn about the body’s digestive processes.

9. Seat belts

Goal: To increase seat belt usage.

Media advocacy

Use the media to advocate the belief that all children riding in a car, even those riding in the back seat, should be required to wear seat belts. Track and publicly report the number of fatalities and injuries that could have been prevented if children in the back seat had worn seat belts.

Edutainment

Have writers for children's programs create scenes where children and their parents talk about car safety and wearing seat belts.

Professional to lay interaction

Invite police officers to conduct a Safety Day at elementary schools where using seat belts is incorporated into the activities.

Peer to peer interaction

Ask religious leaders to remind parishioners at the end of services to buckle their seat belts on the drive home.

New media

Incorporate "buckle-up" messages at the beginning of video games that feature car racing or using cars.

10. Drinking and driving

Goal: To decrease the number of people who operate motor vehicles after drinking alcohol.

Media advocacy

Use the local newspaper to list the names of community members who received tickets for driving under the influence of alcohol.

Edutainment

Work with the entertainment industry to promote “don’t drink and drive” messages in storylines of television shows aired during vulnerable seasons (e.g., Super Bowl Sunday, July 4th weekend).

Professional to lay interaction

Ask employers at establishments that sell alcohol to remind employees that they support alternatives to drinking and driving. Provide employees with business cards that lists the telephone number of local cab companies providing free rides to intoxicated customers. These cards can be handed out to customers.

Peer to peer interaction

Provide “tip sheets” to help people handle situations where alcohol will be served (e.g., designating a driver who won’t drink, offering party guests alcohol-free cocktails such as a “virgin” daiquiri).

New media

Produce an interactive CD-ROM targeting high school students where scenarios unfold and are affected when students are asked to make decisions about drinking for on-screen characters. Use a computerized driving simulator to illustrate what it is like to drive while under the influence of alcohol. In high schools with Intranets, set up a chat network where students can share with others how they have avoided getting into a car with drivers who have been drinking.

11. Diabetes management

Goal: *To increase daily physical activity for people 65 and older with Type II diabetes.*

Media advocacy

Share results of studies that clearly demonstrate the benefits of physical activity for diabetes management. Ask local newspapers to feature stories lauding local malls that open their doors early in the morning to permit walking for seniors.

Edutainment

Work with the Nostalgia Network to create a regular program that features health experts providing advice for seniors.

Professional to lay interaction

Develop a brochure that helps diabetes educators effectively demonstrate different types of light exercises.

Peer to peer interaction

Sponsor regular physical activity sessions at senior centers that are led by individuals in the same age group.

New media

Provide interactive health kiosks at local malls that allow seniors to access diabetes-related information and see on-screen demonstrations of recommended physical activities.

12. Skin cancer prevention for children

Goal: To decrease sun exposure among young children (decreasing the incidence of melanoma).

Media advocacy

Review how elementary schools address the issue of sun exposure, and partner with dermatologists to pediatricians and advocate through the media for school policy and playground changes.

Edutainment

Approach Sesame Street producers about collaborating on message and materials production.

Professional to lay interaction

Make sure that parents are being advised about sun protection at well-child health care visits.

Peer to peer interaction

Provide skin protection favors (e.g., caps or sunscreen sticks) to parents for use in birthday party “goody bags.”

New media

Work with singers and song writers for young children to produce and promote a sun protection song on audiotape.

13. Mammography

Goal: To increase the number of women aged 50 and older to have annual mammograms.

Media advocacy

Identify any “systemic” health care gaps (e.g., women who cannot be reimbursed; areas where there are no mammography facilities) and encourage media coverage of the need to change policies and provide needed services.

Edutainment

Look for opportunities to rebroadcast the *Murphy Brown* episodes on mammography and breast cancer treatment.

Professional to lay interaction

Institute a staff reminder system to encourage health care providers to motivate women to get a mammogram.

Peer to peer interaction

Use trained peers to call friends and ask them to schedule a mammogram (e.g., ACS's Tell a Friend program).

New media

Provide current screening recommendations along with FAQ pages on the Internet and promote their availability. Develop videos that depict what happens during a mammogram. Doctors can “rent” the video to patients or the video can be made available through local video stores at a nominal fee.

14. Drug use prevention

Goal: To decrease illicit drug use among youths aged 12 to 15.

Media advocacy

Use annual data on youth illicit drug use to advocate for programs to help parents guide their children on nonuse. Study portrayals of drug use in movies and publicize statistics and names of films that depict illicit drug use in a positive way.

Edutainment

Work with the entertainment industry to reduce the number of incidences where images of drug use appear.

Professional to lay interaction

Provide materials to managed care organizations and physicians that advise parents on talking to children about drug use.

Peer to peer interaction

Sponsor peer-to-peer street theater and mural productions discouraging drug use.

New media

Set up a youth-to-youth chat room on how to avoid drug use including dealing with peer pressure and recommending fun, drug-free activities. Use video conferencing to set up a Youth Summit on alcohol and drug prevention in schools.