

COOK COUNTY MWCCS Newsletter



MACS/WIHS COMBINED COHORT

Summer 2025

Summer Time in The City

The MWCCS summer newsletter is all about the importance of health screenings. Sometimes our day to day can be so busy and full, it is easy to forget routine preventive health screens that maintain, and in some cases save lives.

This issue will also give helpful summer tips to beat the heat, reminders on how to use your ClinCard, a new resource page and much more.

We hope you enjoy!



A Message from the MWCCS Principal Investigators

Summer is upon us, and we send a message of gratitude and appreciation for being a part of our research community. You have generously donated your time and effort toward promoting women's health. We know that it is important to nurture our community during these uncertain times and our goal is to make sure we provide you with important information.

We've received our study funding for this year and have no indication that there will be a loss in that funding. We have optimistically submitted the renewal for funding for the next six years, because of your continued commitment and the work of our great staff, it is a strong application.

We understand that there are concerns about what may happen in the future, like you, we don't know what will happen with NIH funding for this project and other important research going forward. Just know that we remain steadfast in our commitment to the great work MWCCS has contributed to for the past 30 years. And we will continue to be transparent with everyone if we learn of any changes that may affect the study.

In the meantime, we hope you enjoy our Summer issue newsletter focused on staying healthy during the warmer months. Thank you for your participation and we look forward to a productive year!

Beat the Heat !

Higher summertime temperatures can be welcome after a long, cold winter. But what happens when the weather is too hot? Heat waves and other extreme weather events are not just uncomfortable, they can cause problems with your health.

Hyperthermia, or heat-related illness, can happen to your body when you have trouble cooling down. Ideally, your body can cool down when you become overheated. Sweat glands produce moisture that evaporates from your skin and reduces your body temperature. But what about when it's so hot and humid your body can't cool down naturally? This is when heat-related illnesses can take hold. Let's look at some mild to severe forms of hyperthermia and what you can do to cool down.



Heat cramps – These are muscle cramps, usually in your arms, legs or belly, that occur when exerting yourself in the heat. They're accompanied by severe sweating. When you get heat cramps get out of the heat. Get rest, fluids and electrolytes. And don't do any vigorous activity in the heat for two days.

Heat rash – This is a group of tiny, itchy bumps that form when sweat gets trapped beneath your skin. To beat heat rash, keep your skin cool and dry. Wear loose clothing and use anti-itch cream. Seek medical help if you have signs of infection, such as pus drainage.








Beat the Heat! (cont.)

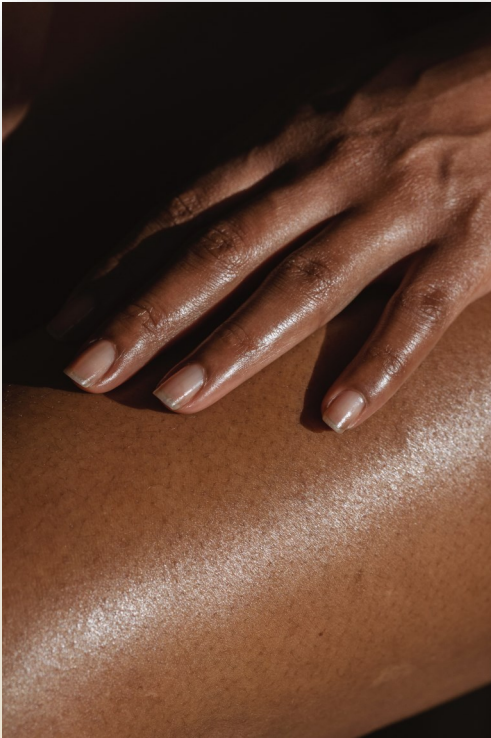
Heat exhaustion – This moderate heat illness occurs when you lose too much water and/or salt while exerting yourself in the heat. Your body temperature can rise as high as 103 degrees, causing symptoms such as dizziness, nausea, vomiting and headaches. Because progressing to heat stroke is a danger, you should seek medical attention. Treatments include getting out of the heat, slowly sipping water and applying ice packs or towels soaked in water to your skin.

Heat stroke – This dangerous and life-threatening illness occurs when your body temperature soars to 104 degrees or higher and constitutes a medical emergency. In addition to heat exhaustion symptoms, you may suffer from brain dysfunction, such as confusion, behavior changes and slurred speech. You may even lose consciousness. Seek immediate medical attention. Rapid body cooling and supportive treatment for your organs will be needed. If you witness someone with heat stroke, call 911.

Heat-related illnesses need to be taken seriously. Be alert to the signs of hyperthermia so you can keep yourself safe.

Heat Exhaustion		Heat Stroke
ACT FAST <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Move to a cooler area• Loosen clothing• Sip cool water• Seek medical help if symptoms don't improve		ACT FAST CALL 911 <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Move person to a cooler area• Loosen clothing and remove extra layers• Cool with water or ice
<i>Heat exhaustion can lead to heat stroke.</i>		<i>Heat stroke can cause death or permanent disability if emergency treatment is not given.</i>
<div>Stay Cool, Stay Hydrated, Stay Informed!</div>		

Facts About Darker Skin and the Sun



Sunnier days are finally here! It's time to get out and enjoy the warm weather. If you have fair skin, you may have been told to be cautious about the dangers of too much sun exposure and you're probably armed with glasses, a hat and sunscreen. But do you need to take these precautions if you have darker skin? Read on to learn the facts about darker skin and the sun.

Fact: The sun can damage darker skin. Melanin, the pigment that determines skin color, is more prevalent in darker skin. Because sun damage, such as sunburns and even skin cancer, are less obvious on darker skin, some people don't realize it's happening. Melanin does offer some natural protection but not nearly enough to stop harmful Ultraviolet radiation, also known as (UV) rays, emitted by the sun and artificial sources, such as tanning beds, from penetrating dark skin and wreaking havoc.

Fact: Darker skin sun damage can be visible. Sun spots, or hyperpigmentation, are darker than normal patches of skin that occur when you produce too much melanin, often because of sun exposure. There are treatments for hyperpigmentation, but sometimes the spots are permanent. Excessive sun exposure can also cause photoaging -- the fine lines, wrinkles, skin texture changes and

even lesions that give the appearance of premature aging. And nobody wants that!

Fact: People with darker skin can get skin cancer. The most dangerous kind of sun damage is skin cancer. According to the University of Virginia Health System, skin cancer is less prevalent in Black, Hispanic and Asian populations. However, because many darker skin patients don't realize they can get skin cancer, when they are finally diagnosed the cancer may be more advanced and harder to treat. The most serious form of skin cancer, melanoma, led to the death of Reggae music legend Bob Marley.

Now that you know the facts, what can darker skin individuals do to limit damage from the sun?

Cover up! Everyone, regardless of skin tone, should avoid direct sun exposure. This means that hats, sunglasses and sunscreen of an SPF of at least 30 should be worn when you go out. Especially between 10am and 2pm, when the sun's rays are the strongest.

Doctor, Doctor... People of all skin tones should see a dermatologist, a medical doctor who specializes in conditions that affect the skin, hair and nails, every 2-3 years for skin cancer screenings. The specialist will examine any dark spots or lesions. If you don't have access to a dermatologist, make sure you are doing regular check-ups of your skin, especially after long periods in the sun, and tell your health care provider if anything looks out of the ordinary.

Remember, anyone with skin can develop sun-related skin damage. Treat your darker skin kindly as you enjoy your summer!

Set a Date! Breast Health

It's a fact that can't be ignored. The American Cancer Society estimates there's a 1 in 8 chance that a woman of average risk will develop breast cancer in her lifetime. That's the scary news. The better news is that breast cancer treatments have become more effective in recent years. To give yourself the best chance of surviving and thriving you want to catch it as early as possible.

The best screening tool for breast cancer by far is the **mammogram**. A mammogram is an x-ray that can detect cancer before it can be felt or cause symptoms. Studies have shown that having regular mammograms can lower the risk of dying from breast cancer. The breast MRI and breast ultrasound, which use radio waves and sound waves to take pictures of the breast, may also be given to women at high risk to find breast cancer.

The American Cancer Society recommends that women ages 45 to 54 at average risk should have mammograms once a year. And that after 55, women should screen every two years. Your health care provider can help you decide the schedule that's right for you. This is a new medical protocol, many providers will still suggest a mammogram at age 40.

Notice Them and Be Hands On!

Many doctors believe there is value in women knowing how their breasts normally look and feel. This familiarity can alert women to changes in their breasts that they can report to their healthcare provider. A number of women have reported that the first sign of their breast cancer was a new lump they discovered during a self-exam. It is recommended that adult women conduct self-exams at least once a month. Your health care provider can advise you of the best methods for performing self-exams. Changes, even lumps, can be normal in breasts. Contact your health care provider if you notice the following:

- A hard lump or knot near your underarm
- Redness, warmth, swelling or pain
- Thickening or prominent fullness that is different from the surrounding tissue
- Dimples, puckers, bulges or ridges on the skin of your breasts
- Inverted nipples or bloody nipple discharge
- Itching, scales, sores or rashes



Tips on How to Remember Self and Mammogram Exams

A helpful way to remember your self-exam is doing it the same time once a month like choosing the first week-end of every month. Those who still have their periods are suggested to do it a week after, which can also help you to remember. To help to remember to schedule a mammogram, one suggestion is to schedule near an important date or holiday. Maybe your birthday or anniversary, something you know you will remember.

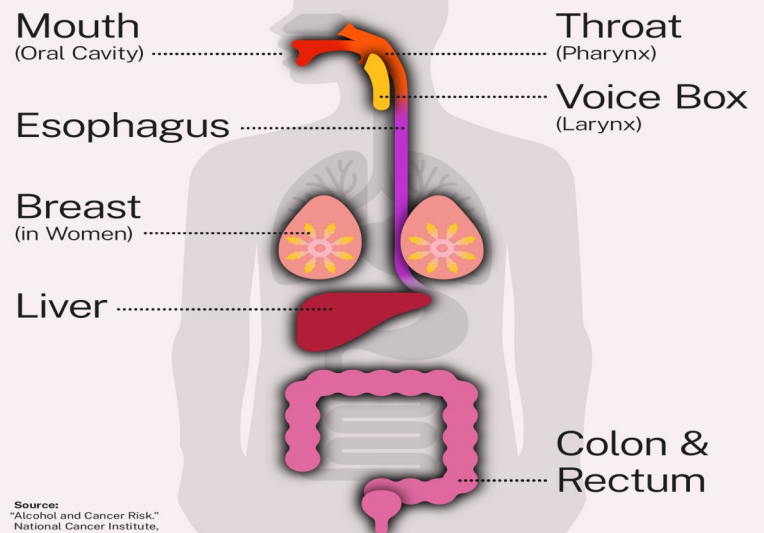
There is information to help you schedule breast cancer screenings on the Resources page in this issue. Now that you know the facts, be proactive about your breast health!

Alcohol and Cancer Risk

Did you know that recent scientific studies have linked alcohol use to cancer? These studies have shown that drinking three or more alcoholic drinks per day may increase the risk of developing several different kinds of cancer. They are:

Mouth cancer
Throat cancer
Voice box (larynx) cancer
Esophagus cancer
Colorectal
Liver cancer

Consuming alcohol increases the risk of developing at least 7 types of cancer



Source:
"Alcohol and Cancer Risk,"
National Cancer Institute,
<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/alcohol/alcohol-fact-sheet>

Office of the
U.S. Surgeon General

The Center for Disease Control lists several reasons alcohol may increase cancer risk. Heavy drinking can damage DNA, causing cellular damage that might lead to cancer. It can raise hormone levels, such as estrogen, which plays a role in breast cancer in women. And alcohol makes it easier for your mouth to absorb carcinogens – cancer causing chemicals, such as when smokers who drink absorb carcinogens from tobacco.

Reportedly, about 20,000 adults in the US die from alcohol related cancers every year. According to guidelines from the American Cancer Society, to decrease cancer risk it's best not to drink at all.

For those who do choose to consume alcohol, men should limit their intake to two drinks per day. While women, because of generally smaller body size and slower absorption, should have no more than one drink per day.

If you chose to drink alcohol, be mindful of what you need to know to avoid increasing your cancer risk.

Colon Cancer and Women

Are you concerned about colon cancer? The colon is the part of your digestive system that breaks down the food you eat. The American Cancer Society estimates that more than 52,000 women in the US will develop colon cancer this year. Let's talk about the risks and prevention of colorectal or colon cancer.

Who is at risk for colon cancer? The disease tends to affect people over 50, but it can happen at any age. Here are others at heightened risk for colon cancer:

African Americans have a higher risk than others in the US

Previously having colon cancer or polyps increases the risk of cancer coming back

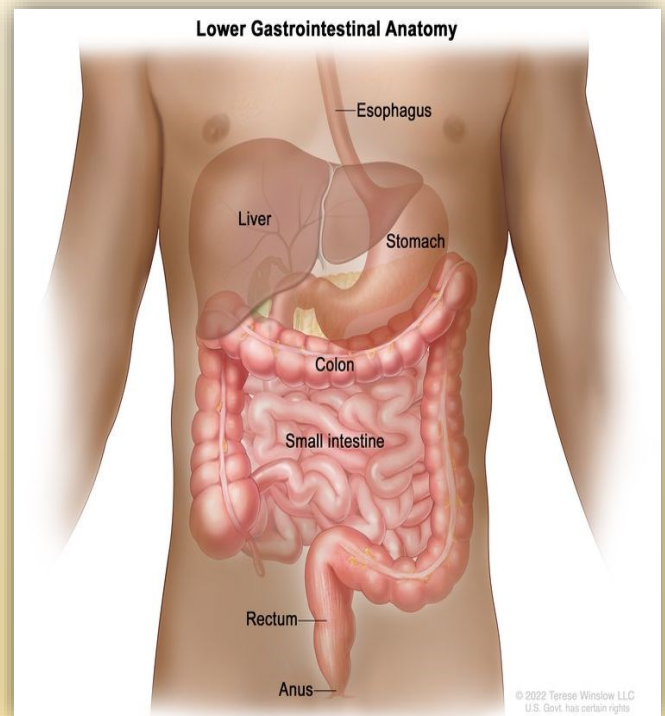
Having blood relatives with colon cancer makes it likelier you'll get it

Diabetes can contribute to a greater colon cancer risk

Several unhealthy habits, such as smoking, lack of regular exercise and excessive alcohol consumption can increase the risk of colon cancer

Colon cancer often begins with polyps, small clumps of cells that grow in the colon. The presence of polyps doesn't automatically mean they will be cancerous. But some polyps, if they aren't removed, can eventually become cancerous.

To find and remove polyps before they cause cancer, doctors recommend regular screening. The American Cancer Society says adults at average risk should start getting screened for colon cancer at age 45. Cancer screening tests such as a colonoscopy, where a doctor uses a special camera to examine the colon, or a stool test, where you collect a stool sample at home and return it to a lab, are key to early detection.



Colon Cancer and Women (cont.)

You can have polyps in your colon without any symptoms. How do you know when to seek help? If cancer develops some signs may appear. They include:

Bowel changes, such as more frequent diarrhea or constipation

Rectal bleeding or blood in the stool

Stomach discomfort, such as gas, cramps or pain

The sense that your bowel doesn't empty all the way during bowel movements

Weakness or tiredness

Unexplained weight loss

There are effective treatments for colon cancer, such as surgery, chemo and radiation therapies. According to the American Cancer Society when colon cancer is detected at an early stage, before it spreads, the 5-year survival rate is about 90%.

So how can you protect yourself? There are steps you can take to reduce your risk:

Get screened for colon cancer – Schedule with your health care provider

Limit alcohol – Excessive drinking can increase your risk of colon cancer

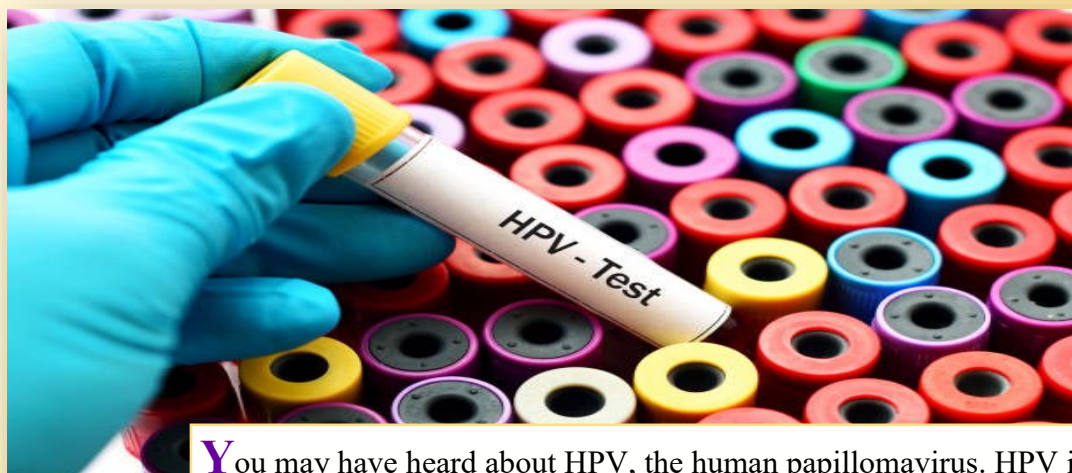
Don't smoke – Smoking is another higher risk factor for the disease

Watch what you eat – Studies have shown that people who eat a high-fiber diet are less likely to develop colon cancer

Maintain a healthy weight – Carrying extra pounds can heighten your risk of several cancers, including colon cancer

Colon cancer can strike anyone. But if you get screened and take steps to lower your risks, you can anticipate positive outcomes.

HPV – The Silent Threat



You may have heard about HPV, the human papillomavirus. HPV is a highly contagious sexually transmitted virus that is passed on through genital contact, such as vaginal, oral and anal sex. It can also spread through skin-to-skin contact.

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted infection (STI) in the country. According to the Office on Women's Health, about 80% of women will get at least one type of HPV in their lifetime. HPV can cause genital warts and growths that appear on other parts of the body. But sometimes HPV doesn't cause any symptoms.

Women and men may have the infection and not know it. A person can have and pass on the virus even if they have not had sex for years. But a person who has sex at an early age, has many sex partners or has a sex partner who has had many other partners, is at higher risk.

There are over 100 different kinds of HPV. There is a vaccine that some adults aged 27 through 45 may receive that can prevent the most dangerous strains of HPV. Talk to your provider to learn more.

HPV-Silent Threat (cont.)

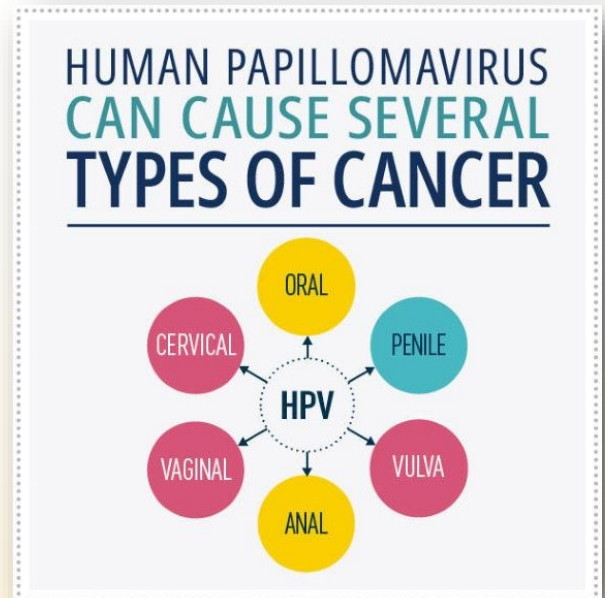
The National Institutes of Health says that 80-90% of HPV infections are cleared up by the body's immune system within two years. That's the good news. However some high-risk HPV infections linger in the body and, over time, may lead to various forms of cancer; including cervical, vaginal, throat and vulvar cancers. HPV poses the greatest risk to women because cervical cancer is the most common HPV-related cancer. And if you are HIV positive and have a chronic, high-risk HPV infection, you may have an increased risk of developing these cancers.

So what can you do?

Be sure to get regular health screenings. Women between the ages of 30 and 65 should get a Pap test - to detect abnormal cells in the cervix - every three years. There's also a test for HPV that tests cells from the cervix. Your health care provider might order this test if your Pap test results are not clear, if you're over 30 or if you've previously had abnormal cervical cancer screenings. The National Institute of Health recommends this HPV test every 5 years for the 30 through 65 age group

If these tests detect abnormal cells don't panic. High-risk HPV doesn't always lead to cancer and there are treatments to remove warts and destroy abnormal cells. But working closely with your health care provider is key to successful treatment.

Bottom line, there is no cure for HPV. Most of these infections won't survive a healthy immune system. For those that do, work with your health care provider to screen, monitor and if necessary, fight back against HPV.



ClinCard FAQs

The ClinCard Visa debit card was introduced in Visit 104 as a convenient new way to compensate participants for study visits. Read on for tips on getting the most out of your ClinCard.

Have you lost your ClinCard or forgotten your PIN? Just call customer service, at 866-952-3795 to order a replacement or retrieve your PIN. In the event of unauthorized charges, customer service can help you open a dispute case.

You can transfer your ClinCard balance to your personal bank account. To transfer some or all of your funds to your bank account you must go to the ClinCard holder website, www.myclincard.mycardplace.com, or use the My ClinCard mobile app.

Trying to make a purchase that is more than the ClinCard balance? If the purchase amount is more than the funds available on the ClinCard, tell the cashier how much you wish to pay with the ClinCard. If the cashier attempts to process an amount higher than the available balance on the ClinCard, the transaction will be declined.

There are no fees for making purchases, getting cash back with purchases, calling customer service to speak with an agent or to check balances.

When paying for gas at the pump, the retailer might place a hold on your ClinCard for additional funds that takes several days to remove. It may be better to pay inside for gas to specify the purchase amount.

When using ClinCard at restaurants, make sure you have enough funds to potentially cover tips; they may verify if you have enough in your account for the bill.

You may pay for a rental car with your ClinCard Visa, but a credit card is usually necessary to reserve a rental car.

Store return policies may vary. Some stores offer returns in cash or store credit. For those who credit your account, it may take up to one week to process before it is available on your ClinCard for use.

Summer Is Here!

READ/WATCH/LISTEN (Staff Picks)

Summertime is here. Will you be out and about in the sunshine or beating the heat in the air-conditioned indoors? Whether you want to hit the beach with a book or veg in front of the TV, we have some suggestions for how to pass the time.

What to Read (Books/Magazine Articles)

Our Pick!

Matriarch: A Memoir by Tina Knowles

The larger-than-life story of the woman who nurtured two superstar singer-songwriters, Beyoncé and Solange Knowles.

(available in hardcover/paperback/Kindle/Audible)



What to Watch (TV/Movies/Online)

Our Pick!

An Oprah Winfrey Special: The Menopause Revolution

This primetime special gives groundbreaking insight about perimenopause and menopause, featuring information from leading experts.

(available streaming on Hulu)



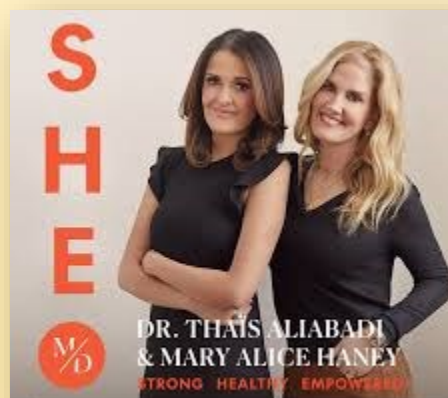
Have a Listen (Music/Podcast)

Our Pick!

She MD

This weekly podcast hosted by renowned OBGYN Dr. Thaïs Aliabadi and Mary Alice Haney seeks to educate and empower women to advocate for their health.

(available on iTunes, Spotify)



MWCCS RESOURCES PAGE

MWCCS (National Website)

<https://statepi.jhsph.edu/mwccs/science/>

Health Screenings

Breast Cancer Screenings/Support

Sisters Working it Out (SWIO)

<http://www.sistersworkingitout.org/>

Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH/Breast Health)

https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/cdph/provdrs/healthymothers_and_babies/svcs/get_a_breast_examandmammogram.html

Birthday Cancer Screening Program (Cook County)

<https://cookcountyhealth.org/services/cancer-care/#:~:text=Cook%20County%20Health%20is%20proud,%3A%20312%2D864%2D4289.>

Call to schedule or learn more: 312-864-4289.

Health/Wellness

AARP (Exercise and Wellness-Online)

<https://www.aarp.org/health/healthy-living/staying-fit/>

Millennium Park Free Summer Workout Series

<https://millenniumparkfoundation.org/programs/summer-workouts/>

https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dca/supp_info/millennium_park.html

Social Services

Know Your Rights

https://cookcountyhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/Know-Your-Rights-ICE-Public-Defender-Flyer_PD-Edits-English.pdf

MWCCS Survey What Do YOU Say?

You have a voice in your MWCCS health study!

Visit 104 ran from October 2023 through September 2024. As part of your Core visits, study staff asked for your feedback. We've compiled your answers to our questions about your study experiences during V104.

We are once again overwhelmed by the number of you who, when asked about your favorite part of the study, mentioned interacting with MWCCS staff. Further, we are gratified that so many of you responded that you had no complaints when we asked what you liked least about your visits.

Here are the questions we asked and your top answers:

*What do you like **best** about your study visit?*

Staff	42.4%
Informative	11.3%
Free healthcare/care visit	9.4%

*What do you like **least** about your study visit?*

Nothing	43.6%
Length of visit	15.2%
Sample collection/Blood work	9.5%

*What could we do to **improve** your study visit?*

Nothing/don't know	59.3%
Timing/length of visit	7.5%
Add more studies/tests/group studies	3.3%

Visit 105 is well underway. We will continue to elicit your feedback going forward. As we compile your answers, your voice will play a role in shaping your MWCCS study.