



**Culture of safety**  
It starts with **YOU**

# National Nurses Week

**National Nurses Week** begins each year on May 6 and ends on May 12, Florence Nightingale's birthday. These permanent dates enhance planning and position National Nurses Week as an established recognition event. As of 1998, May 8 was designated as National Student Nurses Day, to be celebrated annually. And as of 2003, National School Nurse Day is celebrated on the Wednesday within National Nurses Week each year.

The nursing profession has been supported and promoted by the American Nurses Association (ANA)

since 1896. Each of ANA's state and territorial nurses associations promotes the nursing profession at the state and regional levels. Each conducts celebrations on these dates to recognize the contributions that nurses and nursing make to the community.

The ANA supports and encourages National Nurses Week recognition programs through the state and district nurses associations, other specialty nursing organizations, educational facilities, and independent health care companies and institutions.

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## A Brief History

- 1953** Dorothy Sutherland of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare sent a proposal to President Eisenhower to proclaim a "Nurse Day" in October of the following year. The proclamation was never made.
- 1954** "National Nurse Week" was observed from October 11-16. The year of the observance marked the 100th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's mission to Crimea. Representative Frances P. Bolton sponsored the bill for a nurse week. A bill for a "National Nurse Week" was introduced in the 1955 Congress, but no action was taken. Congress discontinued its practice of joint resolutions for national weeks of various kinds.
- 1972** Again a resolution was presented by the House of Representatives for the President to proclaim "National Registered Nurse Day." It did not occur.
- 1974** In January, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) proclaimed that May 12 would be "International Nurse Day." (May 12 is the birthday of Florence Nightingale.) Since 1965, the ICN has celebrated "International Nurse Day."
- 1974** In February of that year, a week was designated by the White House as "National Nurse Week", and President Nixon issued a proclamation.
- 1978** New Jersey Governor Brendan Byrne declared May 6 as "Nurses Day." Edward Scanlan, of Red Bank, NJ, took up the cause to perpetuate the recognition of nurses in his state. Mr. Scanlan had this date listed in Chase's *Calendar of Annual Events*. He promoted the celebration on his own.
- 1981** ANA, along with various nursing organizations, rallied to support a resolution initiated by nurses in New Mexico, through their Congressman, Manuel Lujan, to have May 6, 1982, established as "National Recognition Day for Nurses."
- 1982** In February, the ANA Board of Directors formally acknowledged May 6, 1982 as "National Nurses Day." The action affirmed a joint resolution of the United States Congress designating May 6 as "National Recognition Day for Nurses."
- 1982** President Ronald Reagan signed a proclamation on March 25 proclaiming "National Recognition Day for Nurses" to be May 6, 1982.
- 1990** The ANA Board of Directors expanded the recognition of nurses to a week-long celebration, declaring May 6-12, 1991, as "National Nurses Week."
- 1993** The ANA Board of Directors designated May 6-12 as permanent dates to observe "National Nurses Week" in 1994 and in all subsequent years.
- 1996** The ANA initiated "National RN Recognition Day" on May 6, 1996, to honor the nation's indispensable registered nurses for their tireless commitment 365 days a year. The ANA encourages its state and territorial nurses associations and other organizations to acknowledge May 6 as "National RN Recognition Day."
- 1997** The ANA Board of Directors, at the request of the National Student Nurses Association, designated May 8 as "National Student Nurses Day."
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