



Indian Health Service/California Area Office

Patient Newsletter

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Area Director's Message Ms. Margo Kerrigan, MPH

Autism Awareness

Autism is a developmental disability that usually appears within the first three years of life. People with autism have difficulty communicating and interacting with others. Those with autism may have delayed language and may have inflexible, repetitive behavior.

There is no known specific cause of autism, but the number of individuals diagnosed with autism has been increasing over the past several years. In 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that the prevalence of autism is 1 in 88 births in the United States, and in boys, the prevalence is higher at 1 in 54 births.



There is no cure for autism, but early diagnosis and intervention can lead to significantly improved outcomes. During your baby's well child visits, your doctor will likely do developmental screening and ask specific questions about your baby's progress. There are five behaviors that may signal a need for further medical evaluation (a child not meeting any of these developmental goals does NOT mean your child has autism, but just indicates further testing may be needed):

- Child does not babble or coo by 12 months
- Child does not hand gesture (point, wave, grasp) by 12 months
- Child does not say single words by 16 months
- Child does not say two-word phrases by 24 months
- Child has any loss of language and/or social skills at any age

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Unintentional Poisoning By Lisa Nakagawa, MPH

A poison is any substance that is harmful to your body if too much is eaten, inhaled, injected, or absorbed through the skin. Poisons can include medicine, household chemicals, carbon monoxide from gas appliances, and pesticides.

Tips for preventing poisonings:

- Only take prescription medications that are prescribed to you by a healthcare professional
- Never take larger or more frequent doses of medication than recommended by a medical professional pharmacist or the directions
- Store pesticides and household chemical products in a locked cabinet away from children and pets
- When using household chemicals, make sure to read the label thoroughly and follow the directions exactly
- Never transfer pesticides and other household chemical products to containers that may be mistaken for food or drink

- Never store pesticides and chemicals with food items
- Have a working carbon monoxide detector in your home

The California Poison Control System provides immediate, free and expert treatment advice and referral over the telephone in case of exposure to poisonous or toxic substances. Pharmacists, physicians, nurses, and poison information specialists provide answers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Language interpreters are always available.

For more information, visit:

EPA Poison Prevention Checklist
<http://www.epa.gov/oppead1/Publications/roombyroom-checklist.pdf>

California Poison Control
<http://www.calpoison.org/home.html>



Autism Awareness (continued from page 1)

Other signs parents can look for in children are:

- Lack of or delay in spoken language
- Repetitive use of language and/or mannerisms
- Little or no eye contact
- Lack of interest in peer relationships
- Lack of spontaneous play or make-believe play
- Constant fixation on parts of objects

Any concerns should be shared with your child's doctor so appropriate medical evaluations can be done. If your child is diagnosed with autism, your child may qualify for local early intervention services from the state of California.

For more information, visit:

Autism Society: <http://www.autism-society.org/>

Autism Speaks: <http://www.autismspeaks.org/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/index.html/>



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Sunglasses and Ultraviolet (UV) Protection By Wendy Blocker, MSN

Well-made sunglasses do more than make you look like a movie star. They can protect your eyes from many dangers, including the sun's harmful rays. The American Optometric Association says you should always wear sunglasses during the daylight hours because:

- UV radiation from the sun can damage not only the skin of your eyelid, but also the cornea, lens, and other internal parts of the eye. UV exposure also contributes to the growth of certain types of cataracts
- They protect against "blue light" from the solar spectrum, which could increase your risk for macular degeneration. Blue-blocking lenses, which are generally tinted amber, can make distant objects easier to see, especially in low light. Blue-blocking plastic lenses may also make it difficult to discriminate the hues in traffic lights. Not all blue-blocking lenses offer adequate UV protection.
- They lead to improved and more comfortable vision from not having to squint
- They can make it easier to adapt to darkness. Prolonged exposure to bright light can make it more difficult for your eyes to adjust to driving at night

When you're choosing sunglasses, look for UV-protection details on product labels. Choose sunglasses that block 99-100% of both ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. Skip sunglasses that are labeled "cosmetic" and those that don't offer details on UV protection. Opt for larger lenses rather than smaller lenses.

Standard prescription eyeglasses can be treated with a material that provides UV protection while retaining a clear, non-tinted appearance. Some contact lenses also offer UV protection, but because contact lenses don't cover the entire eye, it's still important to wear sunglasses for UV protection when you are outdoors during daylight hours.





Upcoming Events

May 20-23, 2013
Annual Medical
Providers' Best
Practices Conference in
Sacramento, California

- No registration fee!
- All community members welcome!

Recognizing the Signs of Alzheimer's Disease By Christine Brennan, MPH

Alzheimer's Disease is one of the most common forms of dementia and causes problems with memory, thinking, and behavior. Symptoms of Alzheimer's usually emerge slowly and worsen over time. The specific cause of Alzheimer's Disease is not known, but research has shown that two abnormal structures are highly suspected of playing a part in the disease process. The two abnormal structures are known as "plaques" and "tangles". "Plaques" are deposits of a protein called beta-amyloid which builds up in the spaces between nerve cells in the brain. "Tangles" are twisted fibers of a protein called tau which builds up inside cells in the brain. Age and family history of Alzheimer's also play a role in a person's risk of developing the disease.

Alzheimer's Disease is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States and the number of cases of Alzheimer's is expected to increase over the next several

years. In 2013, an estimated 5.2 million Americans have Alzheimer's and by 2025, the number of Alzheimer's cases is expected to reach 7.1 million.

There is no cure for Alzheimer's Disease, but there are treatments that can slow the progression of the disease and lessen some of the symptoms. The treatments include medications to slow the progression of memory loss and medications for behavioral and sleep changes. There are also many clinical trials underway in which you may qualify to participate.

There are 10 warning signs of Alzheimer's. If you notice one or more of these warning signs in yourself or in a loved one, make an appointment with a doctor for a medical evaluation:

- Memory loss that disrupts daily life
- Challenges in planning or solving problems

- Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, work, or at leisure
- Confusion with time and/or place
- Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
- New problems with words in speaking or writing
- Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
- Decreased or poor judgment
- Withdrawal from work or social activities
- Changes in mood or personality

For more information, visit:

Alzheimer's Association:
<http://www.alz.org/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:
<http://www.cdc.gov/aging/aginginfo/alzheimers.htm>

The Practice of "Cocooning" to Protect Babies By Susan Ducore, RN, BSN, MSN, PHN

"Cocooning" is a strategy recommended for protecting babies from exposure and catching diseases from the people who are in close contact with them. It involves vaccinating those in close contact with babies in order to protect them from infectious diseases. Unvaccinated parents, siblings, grandparents, friends, child-care providers, babysitters, and healthcare providers are susceptible to vaccine preventable disease and can transmit these diseases to babies and young children under their care. Appropriate vaccination by age will help to ensure that those who are too young or immune-system compromised will be protected.

Babies less than 6 months old are too young to have received all the doses of vaccine that are needed to protect them from whooping cough (pertussis), flu (influenza), and other dangerous diseases. Babies younger than 6 months old are more likely to develop certain infectious diseases than older children.

The following are recommended practices related to "cocooning":

- All children should be vaccinated on schedule with DTaP (the childhood whooping cough vaccine)
- All children should get all the DTaP vaccine doses in a series—not just the first dose
- All teenagers and adults need a one-time dose of Tdap vaccine (the teen and adult whooping cough vaccine)
- Pregnant women should receive a Tdap vaccination in each pregnancy, preferably during the 3rd trimester. This will protect the pregnant woman as well as her baby
- Everyone age 6 months and older needs to receive a flu vaccine every year

If you have questions or need additional information, please talk with your medical doctor or nursing professional. The following websites offer valuable immunization information for both patients and health care professionals:

- **Video: Surround Your Baby with Protection**
<http://cocooning.preventpertussis.org>
From the Texas Department of State Health Services
- **Diseases and the Vaccines That Prevent Them**
<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/patient-ed/conversations/prevent-disease/index.html>
From the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- **Vaccine Education Materials for Parents**
<http://www.chop.edu/service/vaccine-education-center/order-educational-materials>
From the Vaccine Education Center, Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
- **Vaccine Information Website**
<http://www.vaccineinformation.org>
From the Immunization Action Coalition
- **Immunization Action Coalition**
<http://www.vaccineinformation.org>