



*Raising the physical, mental, social, and spiritual health of American Indians and Alaska Natives to the highest level*



# Indian Health Service/California Area Office Patient Newsletter

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## Director's Message

### 4 Steps Towards Increased Diabetes Awareness

#### Step 1: Learn About Diabetes

Diabetes means that your blood glucose (blood sugar) is too high. There are two main types of diabetes; Type 1 and Type 2. Type 1 diabetes is when the body does not make insulin and a person needs to take insulin every day to survive. Type 2 is when the body does not make or use insulin well. People have to take pills or insulin and this is the most common type of diabetes.

Diabetes is serious, but you can learn to live well with diabetes. All people with diabetes need to make healthy food choices, maintain a healthy weight, and be physically active every day. Making the choice to live well with diabetes can make you feel better and avoid problems such as:

- Heart disease and stroke
- Eye problems
- Nerve damage in your hands and feet
- Kidney problems
- Gum diseases and loss of teeth

#### Step 2: Know Your Diabetes ABCs (A1C, Blood Pressure, and Cholesterol)

Talk to your health care team about how to manage your A1C (blood sugar), blood pressure, and cholesterol. This will lower your chances of having a heart attack, a stroke, or other diabetes problems. Here's what the ABCs stand for:

- **A for the A1C test:** This test shows you what your blood sugar has been over the last three months. The A1C goal for many people is below 7, but this goal is different for every person.
- **B for Blood Pressure:** The blood pressure goal for most people with diabetes is below 140/90. This goal may be different for you; ask your doctor what your goal should be.
- **C for Cholesterol:** Ask what your cholesterol numbers should be. LDL or "bad" cholesterol can build up and clog your blood vessels in your heart and brain. This can cause a heart attack or stroke. HDL or "good" cholesterol helps remove cholesterol from your blood vessels.

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## Seasonal Affective Disorder By Amy Patterson, PhD

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a kind of depression that occurs during the same season each year. The most common form starts in late fall or early winter, and is also called “winter depression.” Most people with SAD start to have symptoms in the fall and feel better by the spring. Some have an opposite pattern where symptoms start in spring or summer. The key is that the symptoms start out mild, become more severe as the season progresses, and let up when the season changes.

SAD is most likely to affect:

- Women (although men often have more severe symptoms)
- Ages of 15-55 (SAD is less common in older adults)
- People who live farther from the equator and experience less sunlight, as well as people who work or stay indoors all day in more temperate climates
- People with a family history of SAD
- People who already suffer from clinical depression or bipolar disorder

Experts believe that SAD is caused by lack of sunlight. This upsets your biological clock and affects your brain’s ability to produce serotonin, which regulates your mood.

Common symptoms of SAD include:

- Feeling sad, moody, or anxious
- Not having interest in your usual activities
- Not wanting to be around other people
- Eating more and craving carbohydrates or sugary foods
- Gaining weight
- Sleeping more, but still feeling tired during the day
- Having trouble concentrating

SAD is usually diagnosed if:

- You’ve been depressed during the winter and have gotten better by spring for at least two years in a row
- You have symptoms that occur with SAD, such as sleeping more than usual
- You also have a close relative that has experienced SAD

- Other causes have been ruled out, including thyroid problems

SAD is more than just occasionally feeling “down.” If you have symptoms of SAD, see your doctor. If you feel hopeless or suicidal, do not delay in getting help.

There are a number of treatments for SAD. The most common and least invasive is Light Therapy, also known as phototherapy. Light therapy usually involves a “light box,” which mimics the light levels usually experienced in the summer. Light box therapy usually lasts about 30 minutes per day. Many SAD sufferers report great improvement in a relatively short period of time (usually 1-2 weeks).

Exercise, especially if done outside where you can be exposed to natural light, is also very helpful. Even a short walk can improve your mood and your overall fitness in winter. Avoiding stimulants such as coffee and sugar will also help to stabilize your mood. Acupuncture and herbal formulas prescribed by Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners can also be very helpful. Massage therapy and meditation are also great for improving mood and relieving stress.

The herb St. John’s Wort has been used to treat depression, but should be used only after discussion with your physician, as it can interfere with other medications. Omega-3 fatty acids, found in cold water fish, flaxseed, flax oil, walnuts, and in supplements, are thought to help depression, but also should be discussed with your physician, as high doses can interfere with other medications.

In severe cases, SAD is treated with antidepressants. Psychotherapy can also help by identifying negative thoughts and behaviors, and learning healthier ways to cope.



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## Benefits of the Electronic Health Record By Marilyn Freeman, RHIA

### VistA Imaging

Twenty-three California tribal health clinics use the Resource and Patient Management System (RPMS) electronic health record (EHR). All of these clinics now use VistA Imaging to scan and/or import documents and photos. Use of VistA Imaging software allows our clinics to incorporate all relevant documentation in the patient’s EHR, helping to improve healthcare quality while reducing cost.

### Meaningful Use

The EHR financial incentive program known as meaningful use (MU) encourages eligible providers to improve quality of

care. Stage 2 MU brings increased requirements for providers including engaging patients in their healthcare management. Two methods for this include a patient portal and secure electronic messaging.

IHS patients will soon have access to a personal health record (PHR) and DIRECT messaging. After a patient has registered for the PHR and presented identification documents to the clinic representative, he/she will be able to sign in online to view pertinent sections of their health record. DIRECT messaging will provide secure electronic messaging between the patient and the healthcare provider.

## 4 Steps Towards Increased Diabetes Awareness cont'd.

### Step 3: Manage Your Diabetes

Many people avoid the long-term problems of diabetes by taking good care of themselves. Work with your health care team to reach your ABC (A1C, Blood Pressure, Cholesterol) goals. Develop a self-care plan with your health care team. In addition, practice these healthy habits:

- Make healthy food choices
- Get 30 to 60 minutes of physical activity on most days of the week
- Stay at a healthy weight
- Ask for help if you feel down
- Learn to cope well with stress
- Stop smoking
- Take medicines even when you feel good
- Check your feet every day for cuts, blisters, red spots, and swelling
- Brush and floss your teeth every day
- Check your blood sugar every day
- Check your blood pressure if your doctor advises
- Report any changes in your eyesight to your doctor

### Step 4: Get Routine Care to Avoid Problems

See your health care team at least twice a year to find and

treat any problems early. Ask what steps you can take to reach your goals.

If you have diabetes, at each visit be sure you have a blood pressure check, foot check, weight check, and review of your self-care plan. Get a pneumonia shot as least once. Get an A1C test at least twice a year. Be sure to have the following procedures done at least once a year:

- Cholesterol test
- Triglyceride test—a type of blood fat
- Complete foot exam—if your feet are numb they should be checked more often
- Dental exam to check teeth and gums—tell your dentist you have diabetes
- Dilated eye exam—or more often if your eye doctor advises
- Flu shot
- Urine and blood test to check for kidney problems

For your more information, visit:

<http://ndep.nih.gov/i-have-diabetes/LearnAboutDiabetes.aspx>

## Proper Disposal of Unwanted or Expired Medications By Christine Brennan, MPH

Improper medication disposal can create a hazard to the environment and to human health. In 2002, the U.S. Geological Survey sampled 139 streams across 30 states. Eighty percent of the streams tested had measurable amounts of prescription and nonprescription drugs. Exposure to even low levels of medications can have a negative effect on fish and other species.

Wastewater treatment plants are not able to remove medications that have been flushed down the toilet, which leads to the medications entering our streams and lakes. For this reason, the safest and most recommended method to get rid of unwanted or expired medication is taking it to a disposal facility that takes prescription medications. In California, CalRecycle has a searchable list of facilities that take unwanted medications for safe disposal: <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/FacIT/Facility/Search.aspx?Activity=Medication>

Many chain pharmacies also carry postage paid mailers for mailing in unwanted or expired medications. Check with your local chain pharmacy to see if this option is available. If no medication collection facilities are available in your area, there are other options to dispose of unwanted medications. There are a few medications that, due to security concerns, the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) does recommend flushing down the toilet if there is no take-back facility available. These are medications that can cause severe

harm to pets or people or are often heavily abused in the U.S. That list of medications can be found here: <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/EnsuringSafeUseofMedicine/SafeDisposalofMedicines/ucm186187.htm#MEDICINES>

Another option, if no take-back program is available, is disposal in household trash. Before throwing the medication in the trash, follow these steps:

- 1) Mix the medication (do not crush tablets or pills) with kitty litter or used coffee grounds
- 2) Place the mixture in a sealed baggie or container
- 3) Throw the baggie or container into the trash
- 4) Scratch out all information on the prescription bottle before throwing that into the trash bin



## How to Be Happy By CDR Wendy Blocker, MSN

Despite what the fairy tales depict, happiness doesn't appear by magic. Happiness is not something that happens to you; it's something you can cultivate.

### How to be happy: What science tells us

People who are happy know that their happiness is the sum of their life choices. Their lives are often built on the following pillars:

- Devoting time to family and friends
- Appreciating what they have
- Maintaining an optimistic outlook
- Feeling a sense of purpose
- Living in the moment

### How to be happy: Practice, practice, practice Invest in relationships

Surround yourself with happy people. Being around people who are content sustains your own mood. By being happy yourself, you give something back to those around you.



### Express gratitude

Make a commitment to practice gratitude. When you find yourself thinking an ungrateful thought, try substituting a grateful one. For example, replace "my sister forgot my birthday" with "my sister has always been there for me in tough times."

### Cultivate optimism

If you're not an optimistic person by nature, it may take time for you to change your pessimistic thinking. Start by recognizing negative thoughts as you have them. Then, take a step back and ask yourself these key questions:

- Is the situation really as bad as I think?
- Is there another way to look at the situation?
- What can I learn from this experience that I can use in the future?

### Find your purpose

Having a goal provides a sense of purpose, bolsters self-esteem, and brings people together. What your goal is doesn't matter as much as whether the process of working toward it is meaningful to you. Try to align your daily activities with the long-term meaning and purpose of your life. Research studies suggest that relationships provide the strongest meaning and purpose to your life so cultivate meaningful relationships.

### Live in the moment

Don't postpone joy waiting for a day when your life is less busy or less stressful. That day may never come. Instead, look for opportunities to savor the small pleasures of everyday life. Focus on the positives in the present moment, instead of dwelling on the past or worrying about the future.

## Sticking to Your 2015 Health Goals By Beverly Calderon, RD, CDE

### Prioritize Healthy Eating & Physical Activity

The new year brings a chance for new beginnings and a fresh start. This is the time to set new goals, including getting healthier. Your health goals may include eating better, exercising most days, and/or taking time for yourself. Sticking with your goals is important and helps in feeling motivated and re-invigorated. For many of us the initial enthusiasm fades, but this short list of tips can help you stick with your 2015 health goals.

#### 1. Schedule and Prioritize

Mark it on your calendar, set your alarm, plan ahead, and schedule the time to accomplish your health goals. Remember, the best fitness, diet and stress gadgets only work if you use them!

#### 2. Find a Friend

Eating better, exercising most days, and taking time for yourself can seem easier when you partner with others who are doing the same. Friends can hold you accountable and make exercising and other activities more fun.

#### 3. Set In-Between Goals

Set smaller goals leading to the larger goal. This can help make it easier to stick with it throughout the year. Maybe try a different physical activity, food, or relaxation class for February. Then, try something new or different for March and April. Achieving smaller goals can give a sense of accomplishment.

#### 4. Know Who You Are

Work with your own unique personality and be realistic. Others may have great suggestions, but if they don't fit who you are, they likely won't work for long.

#### 5. Be Kind To Yourself

If you miss a day or two, guilt can snowball and pity can lead to giving up. Becoming healthier is work and grows by being nurtured more than being battered. Minor setbacks can be learning opportunities, instead of failure.

