



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



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Most of us feel that our health information is private and should be protected. That is why a federal law known as HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) was put in place. HIPAA sets rules for health care providers and health insurance companies. These rules define what information is protected as well as who can look at and receive patient health information.

One major purpose of HIPAA is to improve the quality of health care by restoring trust in the healthcare system. Maintaining patient privacy is especially important in Native American communities since past history has left many with decreased trust. Every single privacy breach in a small community can have a huge impact on patient trust.

Protected Health Information (PHI) includes any information in the medical record or designated record set that can be used to identify an individual and that was created, used, or disclosed in the course of providing a health care service such as diagnosis or treatment. There are 18 elements of Protected Health Information.

More Patient Rights. HIPAA granted patients specific rights over their health information, including the right to receive a copy of their health information, make sure it is correct, and know who has seen it. Health care providers must provide patients with a notice of their facility privacy practices. This notice must also be posted publicly within the healthcare facility and on the organization's webpage.

The 18 Elements of PHI:

1. Names
2. Geographic subdivisions smaller than a State*
3. Dates*
4. Telephone numbers
5. Fax numbers
6. E-mail addresses
7. Social security numbers
8. Medical record numbers
9. Health plan beneficiary numbers
10. Account numbers
11. Certificate/license numbers
12. Vehicle identifiers and serial numbers
13. Device identifiers and serial numbers (e.g. license plate)
14. Web Universal Resource Locators (URLs)
15. Internet Protocol (IP) address numbers
16. Biometric identifiers (e.g. finger and voice prints)
17. Full face photographic images
18. Any other unique identifying number, characteristic, or code

*some exceptions apply



Measles: Why is this Vaccine-Preventable Disease Still Circulating?

By Susan Ducore, MSN, RN, PHN

Measles is a highly contagious, yet very preventable respiratory disease caused by a virus. It is spread through the air by cough or a sneeze by someone ill with the disease. In the year 2000, likely due to high vaccine coverage, measles was declared eliminated in the United States. Since that time, there have been infrequent cases of the disease in this country.

In March of this year, when reported cases of measles in the state were on the rise, the California Director of Public Health and state health officer, in an official press release, was quoted as saying that “being fully vaccinated against measles does more than just protect the person who receives the vaccination—it also protects their family and friends, including children who may be too young to be vaccinated”. Over the past 20 years, although the disease has been very low in California, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that measles kills an estimated 164,000 people each year around the world. In a surveillance update on March 28, 2015, the California Department of Public Health reported that 134 cases of measles have been confirmed in California since December 2014.

If you, a friend, or family member have any of the following symptoms, please contact your health care provider immediately:

- Blotchy rash
- Fever
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes
- Feeling run down, achy
- Tiny white spots with bluish-white centers found inside the mouth

Facts about Measles:

- Infected people are usually contagious for about eight days before and four days after the start of a rash.
- Complications can include diarrhea, ear infections, and pneumonia.
- In sever cases, death can occur.
- Infants, pregnant women, and people with impaired immune systems are more susceptible to complications.
- Before measles vaccine was available in 1954, nearly all children got measles by the time they were 15 years of age. Each year in the United States about 400-500 people died because of measles, 48,000 were hospitalized, 7,000 had seizures, and about 1,000 suffered permanent brain damage or deafness.

Prevention:

- Talk to your healthcare provider about what you can do to ensure that you and your children are protected against the measles virus.
- Children are recommended to get their first dose of MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine at age 12 to 15 months. The second does of MMR is usually administered before children start kindergarten at age 4 to 6 years.
- Talk to your healthcare provider if you are planning to travel overseas.

For more information, visit:

Immunizations Action Coalition: www.vaccineinformation.org/
CDC: www.cdc.gov/measles/about/signs-symptoms.html

Is Weightlifting Safe if I Have High Blood Pressure?

By CDR Wendy Blocker, MSN

You shouldn't lift weights if your blood pressure is uncontrolled — meaning it's higher than 180/110 millimeters of mercury (mm Hg). If your blood pressure is high, check with your doctor before starting a weightlifting program to discuss any precautions or special considerations.

Weightlifting can cause a temporary increase in blood pressure. This increase can be dramatic, depending on how much weight you lift. But, weightlifting can also have long-term benefits to blood pressure that outweigh the risk of a temporary spike for most people. Regular exercise, including moderate weightlifting, provides many health benefits, including helping to lower blood pressure in the long term.

If you have high blood pressure, here are some tips for getting started on a weightlifting program:

- Learn and use proper form when lifting to reduce the risk of injury.
- Don't hold your breath. Holding your breath during exertion can cause dangerous spikes in blood pressure. Instead, breathe easily and continuously during each lift.

- Lift lighter weights more times. Heavier weights require more strain, which can cause a greater increase in blood pressure. You can challenge your muscles with lighter weights by increasing the number of repetitions you lift.
- Alternate between upper and lower body exercises to let your muscles rest during exercise.



Maintaining Patient Information Privacy cont'd.

Get It. Patients can ask to see or get a copy of their medical record and other information. (Patients who want an electronic or hard copy of their health record must make a written request and pay for copy and postage costs).

Check It. Patients have the right to request correction or addition of information contained in their health record. The patient has a right to have the disagreement noted even if the health care provider believes the information is correct.

Know Who Has Seen It. By law, patient health information can be used and shared for specific reasons not directly related to your care, such as making sure doctors give good care, making sure nursing homes are clean and safe, reporting when the flu is in the area, or reporting as required by state or federal law. It is important to note that HIPAA requires health care providers and insurers to limit PHI disclosed to the “minimum necessary”.

In many of these cases, patients can request information about who has seen their health information.

Limit Who Sees It. Patients can request that their health information not be shared with certain people, groups, or companies. In a clinic setting, the patient can ask their caregiver not to share any of the patient’s medical records with other caregivers. A patient may also request other

restrictions; however, the health care facility is not always required to agree to do what is requested, particularly if it could affect the patient’s care.

Patients can request the health care provider or pharmacy not to disclose information to the patient’s health insurance company about care received or drugs prescribed if the patient pays for the care or drugs in full.

Specify contact methods. A patient can make reasonable requests to be contacted at different places or in a different way. For example, a patient can be asked to be called at their office or to have correspondence sent in an envelope instead of a postcard.

Complaints. Patients have the right to file a complaint with their health care provider, health insurer, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services if they believe their health information is not being protected or that their rights are being denied.

It is important for all of us (healthcare providers, health insurers, and patients) to work together to insure that patient privacy is protected. Are you doing your part?

For more information, visit: www.hhs.gov/ocr/privacy/

Hepatitis C Virus Screening and Treatment—New Medical Options for a Widespread Disease

By Charles Magruder, MD

It has never been more important to diagnose and treat Hepatitis C virus (HCV). About 5 million persons in the U.S. have the disease, yet most persons with HCV do not know they are sick because the infection can have no symptoms for years or decades. Untreated, HCV can lead to life threatening liver disease such as cirrhosis or liver cancer.

Only recently, there were limited medical options for HCV, but treatment breakthroughs have completely changed the landscape. New treatments have a cure rate of over 90% with a simple treatment regimen. For most patients, one pill a day for 12 weeks will cure HCV. The treatment has almost no side effects. Though treatment is extremely expensive, assistance programs are available that can lead to no out-of-pocket costs for the patient or the health facility.

Your medical provider may test you for HCV even if there is no reason to think you may have the virus. It is nationally recommended to screen all persons born between 1945 and 1965 for HCV as data infection rates are highest in that age group.

If you are diagnosed with HCV, you should not be afraid of infecting others in your household; you only need to avoid

sharing razors or toothbrushes. Your medical provider will also recommend stopping use of tobacco or alcohol because these accelerate the damage that HCV does to the liver.

Continued follow-up with your primary care provider after a positive screening test is very important. They can confirm that you have the virus and also assess the health of your liver to prioritize your treatment, either in the primary care clinic or with a specialist.

For more information, visit: www.cdc.gov/knowmorehepatitis



Conserve Water, But Stay Hydrated

By Amy Patterson, PhD

Water is on a lot of people's minds these days. Due to the ongoing, devastating, historic drought in California, new state-wide restrictions on water usage have been imposed. We need water to survive. Both our environment and our bodies depend on access to safe, fresh drinking water. It's important for all Californians to do our part to limit our water use and ensure that we have enough water for everyone.

What can you do to help conserve?

- Take shorter showers. Consider putting a container to catch overflow shower water in the stall with you, and use this to water your plants and gardens.
- Don't let the tap run while you brush your teeth.
- Don't let the tap run continuously while you hand-wash dishes. Consider using used dishwater to water plants and gardens.
- Only run washing machines and dishwashers when they are completely full.
- Don't wash your car, sidewalks, or driveways. There are now statewide restrictions on these activities.
- Consider replacing your lawn with native plants that do not need much water.
- Install water-saving appliances if you can. There are numerous rebate programs for people who make these updates. Check with your county or city to see if you qualify.

Conserving water is about more than just protecting the environment. Your body needs water! Without enough water, you can become dehydrated, which means your body doesn't have enough water to carry out its normal functions.

However, fluids come from many sources. On average, the food you eat provides about 20 percent of your required water/fluid intake. Foods such as lettuce, watermelon, or grapefruit are over 90% water, so these are particularly good choices. As for beverages, milk, juice, and even caffeinated beverages also provide fluid.

What can you do to stay hydrated?

- Drink enough fluids that you don't feel thirsty.
- Drink enough fluids that your urine is colorless or light yellow.
- Try to drink about 2 or more cups of water or other low calorie beverage with each meal and between each meal.
- Choose foods that have high water content, especially if you need more fluids.
- Choose plain water over other types of beverages, unless you need to replace electrolytes due to heavy exercise.
- Remember to drink before, during, and after exercise.

Also, try to drink filtered water from your tap instead of buying commercial bottled water. Commercial bottled water is expensive and, at present, many companies are drawing water from underground aquifers in California, worsening the current shortage. For every liter of water produced, bottling companies use 1.3 liters of water. Using a water filter to filter your own tap water is a better option. Invest in a re-usable glass or metal container to carry your water with you, so that you don't have to resort to buying bottled water.

Together, we can help California to conserve, and keep ourselves healthy!

Tips From Former Smokers

By Beverly Calderon, RD, CDE

According to the U.S. Surgeon General, "Smoking cessation represents the single most important step that smokers can take to enhance the length and quality of their lives." Smoking kills more than 480,000 each year, and remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the U.S. At least 30 Americans live with a smoking-related illness for every smoking-related death.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) *Tips From Former Smokers* campaign is the first-ever paid national tobacco education campaign. It has real people—not actors—share their stories of living with serious, long-term health effects from smoking and secondhand smoke. American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) people are likely to know someone with health problems from cigarette smoking because it is more common among Native people than almost any other racial/ethnic group in the U.S. There is a special section for AI/AN information on the *Tips From Former Smokers* website.

Knowing your options and where to get help can increase your odds of both quitting and then staying a non-smoker.



Call 1-800-QUIT-NOW to access a coach to answer questions, help you develop a quit plan, and provide support.

For more information, visit:

CDC: www.cdc.gov/tobacco/campaign/tips/
Department of Health & Human Services: <http://betobaccofree.hhs.gov/>
Indian Health Service: www.ihs.gov/forpatients/healthtopics/TobaccoPrevention/
American Cancer Society: www.cancer.org/%20healthy/stayawayfromtobacco/guidetoquittingsmoking/index
California Department of Public Health: www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/tobacco/Pages/default.aspx