

California Area Indian Health Service PATIENT NEWSLETTER

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

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Director's Message

Dietary Guidelines

In January of this year, the 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans were released. The guidelines were first released in 1980, with updates provided every five years since. This ensures the guidelines continue to provide evidence-based food and beverage recommendations based on current nutrition science. The 2015-2020 updates encourage Americans to adopt a series of science-based recommendations that can improve how our eating habits can reduce obesity and prevent chronic diseases such as Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. This can be achieved by following the five overarching guidelines and a number of key recommendations with specific nutritional targets and dietary limits.

The guidelines are used by public health agencies, health care providers, and educational institutions as

recommendations and strategies to:

- Promote health
- Prevent chronic disease
- Help people reach and maintain a healthy weight

The guidelines also have a significant impact on nutrition in the United States because they:

- Form the basis of federal nutrition policy and programs
- Help guide local, state, and national health promotion and disease prevention initiatives
- Inform various organizations and industries (e.g. products developed and marketed by the food and beverage industry)

To learn more, get a copy of the updated guidelines, or access tools and resources, visit: <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/>





Importance of Folic Acid in Women of Child-Bearing Age by Christine Brennan, MPH

Each year in the United States, approximately 3,000 babies are born with neural tube defects. A neural tube defect occurs when the neural tube, which is the part of a developing baby that forms the brain and spinal cord, doesn't close completely. The most common neural tube defect is Spina Bifida. Spina Bifida results in paralysis of the nerves below the affected area of the spine. It can cause problems with walking and bowel and urinary problems. Neural tube defects can also cause some rare disorders that can result in blindness, deafness, or even death.

To help prevent neural tube defects, all women of child-bearing age should take 400 micrograms of folic acid each day. Folic acid helps prevent neural tube defects only if taken before and during pregnancy. Since almost half of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unplanned, it is recommended that all women of child-bearing age take folic acid daily. This could reduce the number of pregnancies affected by neural tube defects by almost 70%. Some studies have shown that folic acid could also reduce the incidence of cleft lip and palate and prevent heart defects as well.

Folic acid can be found in some foods. Foods that are good sources of folic acid include:

- Beans
- Leafy green vegetables
- Asparagus
- Broccoli
- Peanuts
- Citrus Fruits

It is difficult to get all the folic acid you need from food alone, so it is recommended that women take a vitamin containing folic acid. Folic acid can be found in most multivitamins, but check the label to be sure there are at least 400 micrograms in the vitamin. Once pregnant, women should take a prenatal vitamin that has 600 micrograms of folic acid. Some women who have had a previous pregnancy affected by a neural tube defect may need a higher dosage of folic acid. Talk to your provider to ensure you are taking the correct amount.

For more information, visit:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

<http://www.cdc.gov/features/folicacidbenefits/index.html>

March of Dimes

<http://www.marchofdimes.org/pregnancy/take-folic-acid-before-youre-pregnant.aspx>



Strategies for Staying Healthy During Influenza Season by Susan Ducore, BSN, MSN, RN, PHN

Influenza season is under way, but there is still time to get your flu vaccination. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) Advisory Committee on Immunization Practice recommends an annual flu vaccination for all individuals six months of age and older, unless medically contraindicated. The CDC also suggests that the single best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated each fall. Studies show that immunizations are the first line of defense against vaccine preventable disease and are important for children, adolescents, and adults.

What is Influenza ("Flu")?

Influenza is a highly infectious viral illness. Various strands of the virus circulate in the United States each year. Every year in the United States, on average:

- 5-20% of the population get the flu
- More than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu-related complications
- About 36,000 people die from flu-related causes

What are the symptoms of the "flu"?

The symptoms for all flu, including seasonal and H1N1 (Swine) flu, are similar. They include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or

stuffy nose, body aches, headaches, and chills.

If you experience any influenza-like symptoms, you should contact your medical provider or nurse immediately.

Most healthy people recover from the "flu" without problems, but the following persons are known to be at higher risk for developing complications from the flu:

- Persons age 65 and older
- Children younger than two years old
- People of any age who have chronic medical conditions (e.g. diabetes, asthma, congestive heart failure, lung disease)

The CDC recommends seasonal "flu" vaccination each year for all persons 6 months of age and older with additional focus on the following:

- Persons identified as "High Risk" are especially at risk for severe flu illness
- Healthcare Personnel
- Persons who live with or care for high risk people (so as to prevent or reduce spread of influenza virus to high risk people)

Strategies for Staying Healthy During Influenza Season cont'd.

What can you do to avoid getting the “flu”?

Get a “flu” vaccination each year. Ask your healthcare provider about getting a seasonal flu vaccination now!

In addition to getting vaccinated, the following habits can help stop the spread of germs:

- Avoid close contact
- Stay home when you are sick
- Cover your mouth and nose
- Wash your hands often
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth
- Practice other good health habits
- Cleaning and disinfection

For more information and resources, please visit:

<http://www.flu.gov>

<https://www.ihs.gov/flu>

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivitysurv.htm>

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/consumer/prevention.htm>



Domestic Violence: Recognize patterns, seek help by Wendy Blocker, MSN

Domestic violence—also called intimate partner violence—occurs between people in an intimate relationship. Domestic violence can take many forms, including emotional, sexual and physical abuse and threats of abuse.

You might be experiencing domestic violence if you're in a relationship with someone who:

- Calls you names, insults you or puts you down
- Prevents or discourages you from going to work or school
- Prevents or discourages you from seeing family members or friends
- Tries to control how you spend money, where you go, what medicines you take or what you wear
- Acts jealous or possessive or constantly accuses you of being unfaithful
- Gets angry when drinking alcohol or using drugs
- Threatens you with violence or a weapon
- Hits, kicks, shoves, slaps, chokes or otherwise hurts you, your children or your pets
- Forces you to engage in sexual acts against your will
- Blames you for his or her violent behavior or tells you that you deserve it

Create a safety plan

Consider taking these precautions:

- Call a women's shelter or domestic violence hotline for advice. Make the call at a safe time—when the abuser isn't around—or from a friend's house or other safe location.
- Pack an emergency bag that includes items you'll need when you leave, such as extra clothes and keys. Leave

the bag in a safe place. Keep important personal papers, money, and prescription medications handy so that you can take them with you on short notice.

- Know exactly where you'll go and how you'll get there.

Where to find help

In an emergency, call 911 or your local emergency number or law enforcement agency. The following resources can also help:

- **Someone you trust.** Turn to a friend, neighbor, coworker, or religious or spiritual advisor for support.
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE.** Call the hotline for crisis intervention and referrals to resources, such as women's shelters.
- **Your health care provider.** Doctors and nurses will treat injuries and can refer you to safe housing and other local resources.
- **A local women's shelter or crisis center.** Shelters and crisis centers typically provide 24-hour emergency shelter, as well as advice on legal matters and advocacy and support services.
- **A counseling or mental health center.** Counseling and support groups for women in abusive relationships are available in most communities.
- **A local court.** Your district court can help you obtain a restraining order that legally mandates the abuser to stay away from your or face arrest. Local advocates might be available to help guide you through the process.

Remember, no one deserves to be abused.

Taking a Pause—Making New Year Re-Solutions by Beverly Calderon, RD, CDE

With the start of each year often comes health and wellness related resolutions. More than 45% of us make resolutions and 24% never turn them into lifelong change. Often, making resolutions can create pressure to make unrealistic timelines that we cannot meet, contributes to feeling like we've failed, and reinforces the patterns that keep us from achieving our health and wellness goals.

If you are among the 24% that don't turn resolutions into lifelong change, try taking a pause. A pause is a short period in which something is stopped before starting again. Pausing to promote your health and wellness is similar to counting to ten before taking action when angry. It can help you notice aspects of your situation that you might not have otherwise considered. It can lead to positive behavioral change and the breaking of patterns that negatively impact our health and wellness.



Making New Year Re-solutions:

- Try a pause and be patient. New skills, lifestyle changes or improvements need time, effort and patience.
- Set realistic timelines. Consider the amounts of time you will work on changes you are passionate about.
- Set short-term goals. While concentrating on your big change, think about all of the changes you'll make along the way.

Think about your health and wellness resolution as a process that will eventually become everyday life.

Hashimoto's Disease: The most common cause of hypothyroidism by Amy Patterson, PhD

Over 20 million Americans suffer from some form of thyroid disease and the majority are unaware of their condition. The thyroid is a small gland at the base of the neck that has an important role in the production of hormones that regulate bodily functions. If your thyroid gland doesn't create enough hormones, your body's functions slow down and you are said to be "hypothyroid." About 4.6% of people above the age of 12 have hypothyroidism.

Hashimoto's disease is the most common cause of hypothyroidism. Hashimoto's is an autoimmune disorder in which your immune system attacks your thyroid. It may be due to genetics or it may be triggered by a viral or bacterial infection. It is most common in middle-aged women but can occur in others. People with a family or personal history of thyroid or other autoimmune diseases (such as Lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, or type 1 diabetes) are at higher risk of developing Hashimoto's.

Hashimoto's disease usually develops slowly, damaging the thyroid and causing your thyroid hormone levels to drop gradually. You can have it for years before noticing any symptoms. Once your thyroid is damaged to the point where your hormone levels have dropped significantly below normal, you may experience the following symptoms:

- Fatigue or drowsiness
- Increased sensitivity to cold
- Constipation
- Dry skin
- A puffy face
- Hoarse voice

- Unexplained weight gain
- Difficulty concentrating
- Muscle aches, weakness, tenderness and stiffness
- Excessive or prolonged menstrual bleeding
- Depression

If you have been experiencing any combination of these symptoms, ask your provider about checking your thyroid hormone levels.

While Hashimoto's cannot be prevented, there are nutritional studies that suggest that diet modifications may help slow the progress of the disease and prevent more serious complications. Research has found that people with Hashimoto's tend to be deficient in vitamins C, E, iodine, zinc, and selenium. Good food sources of these nutrients include:

- **Vitamin A and Beta-Carotene:** carrots, calf's liver, cod liver oil, eggs, Greek yogurt, lightly cooked spinach, kale, collard greens, Swiss chard, winter squash, red bell peppers, apricots, cantaloupe, sweet potato
- **Vitamin C:** red bell peppers, parsley, broccoli, citrus fruits, romaine lettuce
- **Vitamin E:** mustard greens and Swiss chard, sunflower seeds, almonds, avocado
- **Iodine:** seaweeds and seafood
- **Zinc:** oysters, crab, beef, sesame seeds, & pumpkin seeds
- **Selenium:** Brazil nuts, oysters, cremini mushrooms, cod, shrimp, halibut, snapper, oats, sunflower seeds, brown rice



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