

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*



Beverly Miller, M.H.A., M.B.A.

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Director's Message:

Opioid Epidemic in California

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All over the nation, people are dying from taking too many prescription opioids. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the most common opioids include oxycodone (such as Oxycontin®) and hydrocodone (such as Vicodin®). In California in 2016, there were 2,031 deaths due to opioid overdosing and 4,623 opioid overdose emergency department visits according to the California Department of Public Health. Prescription opioid overdose rates are higher among American Indian and Alaska Natives and non-Hispanic Whites than other races.

Anyone can become addicted to prescription opioids; about 25% of patients who were taking opioids for long term pain treatment struggled with opioid dependence in 2014. Opioids have many side effects including: stopping breathing which could lead to death, increased sensitivity to pain, constipation, depression, sleepiness, dizziness and lowering levels of testosterone leading to

lower sex drive and energy.

In many cases, there are options for treating chronic pain that will work better and have fewer risks and side effects than opioids. Some options include using other pain medications, exercise therapy, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and depression or seizure medications to treat pain. Talk to your provider about the specific type of pain you are having and discuss all the options you have to treat your pain. If you are prescribed an opioid for pain, try to take as low of a dose for as short of a time as possible, and make sure to keep the prescription medication in a safe place away from children and other community members. If you are currently suffering from opioid dependence, seek help from your local health center. Medication-assisted treatment and/or counseling can help you or a loved one. Also consider carrying Naloxone to treat opioid overdose in your community.

For more information, please visit:
<https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/opioids/prescribed.html>



Vaping and Children

by Rachel Harvey, MPS

Vaping, or inhaling and exhaling aerosol from e-cigarettes or similar devices, has grown in popularity and is thought to help some cigarette smokers quit the dangerous activity. When used by or around pregnant women, children, or babies, however, e-cigarettes may be extremely dangerous. Some mistake the aerosol emitted from e-cigarettes for water vapor, but it actually contains several harmful chemicals, including:

- Nicotine
- Flavoring (including diacetyl, which has been linked to lung disease)
- Carcinogens, or Cancer causing substances
- Heavy metals such as nickel, tin and lead

When exposed to e-cigarette vapor, children and especially babies are at-risk for inhaling ultrafine particles into their lungs. These particles are unpredictable and could lead to Cancer, lung disease, or other serious health problems.

E-cigarette use among teens is associated with a greater likelihood of using regular tobacco products, but they are especially enticing due to the range of flavorings available. This may be why several areas around the United States have seen an increase in accidental injuries and even death associated with e-cigarettes from children who drink the e-cigarette fluid. Children can also suffer from acute nicotine exposure if the liquid is absorbed through their skin or eyes. Since there are limited regulations on e-cigarettes, the packaging is often not childproof.

The American Academy of Pediatrics is pushing for greater regulations for e-cigarettes. In the meantime, do your part to protect your loved ones:

- Keep e-cigarettes up high and out of reach of children and babies.
- Always use your e-cigarette outside and keep your home and vehicle smoke-free.
- Wash your hands, clean your teeth, and change your shirt after vaping, before interacting with any babies.
- Talk to your medical provider about using other methods to help you quit smoking, such as patches or gum.

For more information, visit:

https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/e-cigarettes/index.htm

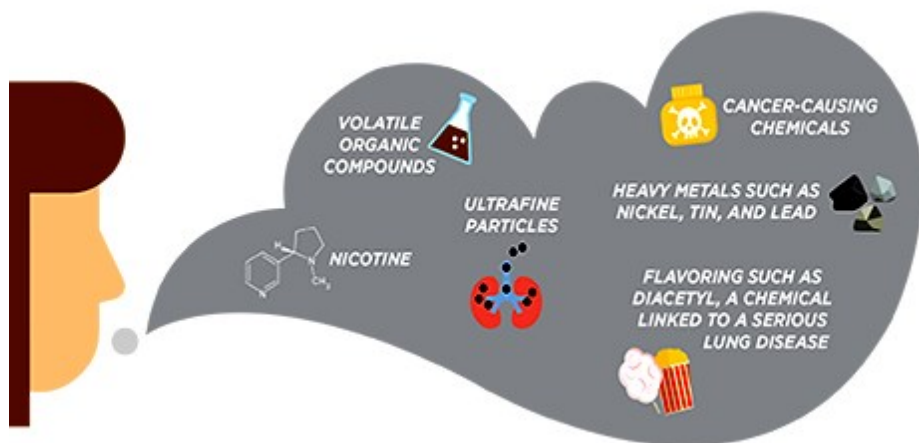
Family Strengthening and Stress

by Carrie Greene, M.S.Ed. LPCC

Stress is a part of life. Parenting adds to that stress. Here are some ways to deal with stress and strengthen your family in the process:

- **Build resilience.** Parents and families deal with stress every day. Sometimes it might feel like you can't catch a break, but somehow you manage to work it out. The process of problem solving and bouncing back from hardship is called resilience. When you get through something tough, you prove to yourself that you have the strength and the courage to deal with life's challenges. What a great skill to model for your family! Stress is always going to be there, but it helps to know you have the resilience to get through it.
- **Be patient.** Childhood, like parenting, is also filled with struggle. Being patient and understanding towards your child will help them build self-esteem and confidence. The

compassion you show your kids helps them deal with stress. It also helps them develop self-control and a belief that they are capable of working through their problems. Kids will still make lots of mistakes. Knowing what's normal behavior for your child's developmental stage can help you adjust your parenting style and see your kids in a positive light. If you had a difficult childhood yourself, you may need a little help to develop patience or learn different parenting strategies.



- **Develop a social network.** Parents need to be cared for just like anyone else. It's important to have people in your life that will be good listeners, who offer support, and can give well-informed advice. Building a social network where you can be cared for, and in exchange care for others, increases your well-being. Staying connected to your family and tribe can strengthen your social connections and maintain your community support system.
- **Ask for help.** Sometimes the assistance we require comes in the form of day-to-day needs. A safe environment, healthy food, clothing, or access to health care are examples of things we all need to thrive. In times of crisis, it can be difficult to meet these needs for your family. Asking for help can be difficult but it is a step towards improving your circumstances.

Remember, there is no such thing as a perfect parent. Everyone makes mistakes. Showing your child love, taking care of yourself, and asking for help are great ways to keep your family strong.



Here is a link for more information:

<https://www.cssp.org/young-children-their-families/strengtheningfamilies>

Stages of Menopause

by Sonal Goyal, PharmD MPH

Menopause is when a woman has stopped having her period for at least 12 continuous months. It occurs when a woman's ovaries stop producing the hormones estrogen and progesterone which prevent a woman from being able to become pregnant. Usually, women are between the ages of 45 and 55 when they reach menopause, though it can happen before or after that age.

Women who have had their ovaries removed experience menopause immediately. Damage to ovaries from chemotherapy may also increase the chance of early menopause. Otherwise, women generally go through a menopause transition called **perimenopause** as the ovaries slowly produce less estrogen and progesterone. A woman usually begins experiencing menopausal symptoms and

changes to her body during perimenopause. Perimenopause is about 4 years long, but sometimes it could take up to 10 years before reaching menopause. A woman can get pregnant during perimenopause so if someone is on birth control during perimenopause, she should continue to use it.

The hormones estrogen and progesterone regulate many functions in the body, so when their levels lower, it leads to changes in the brain and nervous system as well as physical changes to the body. A decrease in these hormones causes a change to time between periods and flow, a loss of bone density which makes women more prone to bone fractures, an increased risk for heart problems including heart attacks and strokes, dry and itchy skin, the feeling of a need to urinate more often and vaginal dryness. Other symptoms women may experience include: mood swings, memory loss, problems focusing, fatigue, insomnia, hot flashes, night sweats, stress, anxiety and depression.

After menopause, women are in **postmenopause**. During this phase, many women begin experiencing fewer menopausal symptoms. There are also some lifestyle modifications that can assist with symptoms. These include avoiding hot flash trigger foods and wearing multiple layers of clothing for easy removal, using a vaginal moisturizer or extra lubricant during sex, exercising regularly to elevate mood and developing healthy bedtime routines to help insomnia.

When the symptoms are severe enough that they impact a woman's quality of life, medication is an option, though it does carry some risk and is not right for everyone. The most effective medication is hormone therapy, but it is not recommended in women who have a history of blood clots, heart disease, stroke or breast cancer. Also, hormone therapy should not be used longer than 3-7 years (depending on the type being used) or it can increase the risk of developing breast cancer. Some women have also successfully used low doses of depression medication to treat hot flashes, mood changes or anxiety. The best way to know which treatment options are best for you is to speak with your doctor.

For more detailed information, please visit:

<https://www.womenshealth.gov/menopause>

The Importance of Fruits and Vegetables

by Beverly Calderon, MS RD CDE

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that only 12% of Americans eat the daily minimum amount of fruit and only 9% eat the daily minimum amount of vegetables recommended. This shows that most Americans are not receiving the prevention benefits that fruits and vegetables provide against cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Just eating one banana, half an apple, a salad and one cup of tomato soup is all that is needed to meet the dietary guidelines. Yet, most Americans do not achieve this.

Following advice, even sound advice, can make us feel like someone is taking away our choices and causes us to rebel. We also have our own beliefs that impact our decision-making process which are less likely to give the best results since we don't always have the right information to make good decisions. This is why it is important to understand the benefits of eating fruits and vegetables for ourselves.

Most fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories; none have cholesterol. Fruits and vegetables are important sources of many nutrients, including potassium, dietary fiber, folate (folic acid), vitamin A, and vitamin C.

- Diets rich in potassium may help to maintain healthy blood pressure. Fruit and vegetable sources of potassium include sweet potatoes, white potatoes, white beans, tomato products (paste, sauce, and juice), beet greens, soybeans, apricots, lima beans, avocado, spinach, lentils, and kidney beans.
- Dietary fiber from fruits and vegetables, as part of an overall healthy diet, helps reduce blood cholesterol levels and may lower risk of heart disease. Fiber is important for proper bowel function. It helps reduce constipation and diverticulosis. Fiber-containing foods such as vegetables help provide a feeling of fullness with fewer calories.

- Folate (folic acid) helps the body form red blood cells. Women of childbearing age who may become pregnant should consume adequate folate from foods, and in addition 400 mcg of synthetic folic acid from fortified foods or supplements to reduce the risk of neural tube defects, spina bifida, and anencephaly during fetal development.
- Vitamin A keeps eyes and skin healthy and helps to protect against infections.
- Vitamin C helps heal cuts and wounds, keeps teeth and gums healthy and aids in iron absorption.

For more information, please visit:

USDA Dietary Guidelines for American 2015-2020, Eight Edition:

https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/resources/2015-2020_Dietary_Guidelines.pdf

USDA Find Your Health Eating Style, Maintain It For A Lifetime:

https://www.cnpp.usda.gov/sites/default/files/dietary_guidelines_for_americans/MyPlateMyWinsTips.pdf



Indian Health Service/California Area Office
650 Capitol Mall, Suite 7-100, Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 930-3927 | <http://www.ihs.gov/california>

