

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:

Hepatitis C - Who should get screened?

Inside This Issue...

Director's Message	P.1
Breastfeeding and Diabetes	P.2
Go Further With Food	P.2
Clean that Medicine Cabinet!	P.3
San Diego County Hepatitis A Outbreak	P.4

Hepatitis C is a disease that causes inflammation of the liver from the Hepatitis C virus. Because Hepatitis C is spread from infected blood passing through the skin, the most common way individuals get Hepatitis C today is by sharing needles or other equipment for injection drug use. In the recent past, Hepatitis C was challenging to treat, and the medication often caused serious side effects that were difficult to tolerate. Fortunately, a new era has emerged that allows treatment of Hepatitis C with few if any side effects, and the treatment is more than 95% effective. You may have also heard that the treatment is really expensive, but our clinics are now very experienced in getting medications at an affordable rate. In other words, cost should not be a significant obstacle for treatment.

For some time, the primary population that were at risk for Hepatitis C and needed to be screened was the baby boomers – people born between 1946 to 1965. Now, we also want to see younger people getting screened, as many from this era have recently been exposed to Hepatitis C.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, you should make an appointment at your clinic and get screened for Hepatitis C infection if:

- You were born from 1945 through 1965.
- You are a current or former injection drug user, even if you injected once or many years ago.
- You were treated for a blood clotting problem before 1987.
- You received a blood transfusion or organ transplant before July 1992.
- You are on long-term hemodialysis treatment.
- You have abnormal liver tests or liver disease.
- You work in health care or public safety and were exposed to blood through a needlestick or other sharp object injury.
- You are infected with HIV.

Get screened for Hepatitis C, it can save your life!

For more information about Hepatitis C, please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hcv/cfaq.htm>



Breastfeeding and Diabetes

by Charles Magruder, MD

The American Academy of Pediatrics and other prominent medical organizations recommend breastfeeding. Research clearly demonstrates that breastfeeding is beneficial for the mother and infant in numerous ways. Here are a few examples:

- Breast milk contains the perfect mix of vitamins, protein, and fat to ensure optimal growth.
- It is also more easily digested than infant formula, contains antibodies that help your baby fight off viruses and bacteria and lowers your baby's risk of having asthma or allergies.
- Furthermore, babies who are breastfed exclusively for the first 6 months, without any formula, have fewer ear infections, respiratory illnesses, and bouts of diarrhea.

These benefits can be attained when mothers with diabetes breastfeed as well. However, you will want to discuss this preference carefully with your physician during your pregnancy to make certain it is the right thing for you.

This is important as there are two circumstances where breastfeeding would not be recommended:

1. Diabetic complications inhibit your body's ability to handle the additional demands of breastfeeding
2. You are currently using medications or substances that are not compatible with breastfeeding.

Assuming your health care provider approves your desire to breastfeed, there are a few other items to be aware of that you may want to discuss with your health care provider:

- As taking care of a baby may prompt changes of when and what you eat, you may need to test blood sugars more often and adjust medication schedules
- Ensure you have adequate amounts of calcium and Vitamin D
- Determine if a snack is necessary before or during nursing or naps to prevent hypoglycemia
- Drink plenty of water
- If you drink milk or juices, be sure to count these in your meal plan
- Do not drink alcohol while you are breastfeeding. Alcohol can pass from breast milk to your baby.

Please contact your local Medical Provider if you have additional questions or concerns.

The following link offers access to additional information on this topic: <https://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding/recommendations/index.htm>

Go Further With Food

by Beverly Calderon, MS, RDN, CDE



Rightly so, many people believe food can influence health, disease, and healing. The small influences of what we eat and drink today can become substantial when repeated over time. Our relationship with food supports our well-being which is necessary to health and wellness. Poor dietary habits, turning eating into a stressful, unpleasant or miserable experience, glorifying or demonizing specific food groups, and excessively concentrating on specific nutrients can negatively influence health and wellness. As with other meaningful practices that are a part of our lives, dietary habits that support health and wellness are ongoing life practices. While some may prefer breathing exercises, relaxing activities, or an intense exercise to promote health and wellness, a healthy diet is often overlooked. It is a healthy diet that builds a stable and more enduring foundation for your body by reducing damage and inflammation, and, if needed, helps to minimize weight gain.

March is National Nutrition Month, a campaign that emphasizes the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating habits. This year "Go Further with Food" is the theme. During this time we can promote the positive aspects of nutrition by preparing healthy, wholesome, nutritionally balanced foods to go further at home and within our community. Examples include starting the day with a nutritionally sound breakfast or choosing fruit or nuts instead of chips and dip for a snack.

National Nutrition Month also recognizes the work of Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs), trained and credentialed providers who work with people on building healthy relationships with food that cultivate well-being and support health and wellness. As allied health professionals, RDNs are nutrition counselors who work hard to find dietary solutions that work for their clients through facilitated learning, collaboration and assisting their clients in setting their own goals. Take advantage of National Nutrition Month to rediscover your relationship with food and shift towards making more informed and healthy food choices. If available, also consider meeting with an RDN for nutrition counseling to support you in the process.

For more resources and nutrition tips, please visit: <https://www.eatright.org/food/resources/national-nutrition-month> and <https://www.choosemyplate.gov/national-nutrition-month>

Clean that Medicine Cabinet!

by Sonal Goyal, PharmD, MPH

Do you still have the old bottle of cough syrup from your child's cold 3 years ago? How about the half-filled bottle of multivitamins sitting on your kitchen counter that you stopped taking a while back?

Medications play an important role in treating conditions and diseases, but once they are no longer needed, damaged or expired, it's important to dispose of medications properly. When households continue to carry unnecessary, damaged or expired medications, there is an increased risk of those medications being accidentally taken or misused (oftentimes by children).

How to properly store medication:

Air, moisture, heat and light can all damage your medication. Storing medications properly can help your medication last until the expiration date and keep you safe.

- Keep medications in the container they came in with the label properly intact. Throw away the cotton balls inside the bottle because they add moisture.
- Store medications in a cool and dry place unless the medication label says otherwise (such as if the medication needs to be refrigerated).
- Avoid putting medications in areas that expose them to air, moisture, heat and/or light. For example, the glove compartment of a car is too warm, a windowsill may have too much sunlight and a bathroom cabinet may be exposed to moisture from the sink or shower. Even if your medicine cabinet is currently in the bathroom, it may not be the best place for your medications. Good places to store medications would be kitchen cabinets away from the sink, dresser drawers or in a box on the top shelf of a closet.
- Make sure to put medications (including over-the-counter medications, herbal medications and supplements) in a hard-to-reach location for children and consider locking-up dangerous prescription medications that can be abused such as pain killers.

How to decide which medications to throw away:

Collect all of the medications in your home; do not forget about the medications in your purse, car or emergency kits.

- Check all the labels for the expiration date. Expired medications do not work as well as non-expired medications and can lead to ineffective treatment. Depending on the type of medication and reason for use, some expired medications can even make you sick. If the medication is expired, get rid of it.
- If the label on the medication bottle is gone or so

worn out that you cannot read it any longer, throw the medication away.

- Open each bottle of medication and look at it. If any part of the medication is discolored or have changed shape, get rid of it.
- If you have any leftover antibiotics, get rid of them. Storing antibiotic medication can lead to drug resistance which is when the medication will not work for the same infection in the future.
- If you no longer use a prescription medication or have not used a medication or supplement in the last year, get rid of it.

Medication drop-off sites:

Several sites around the United States have public drug disposal programs where you can drop-off any unused medication. You can search for them at the following websites:

- <http://www.calrecycle.ca.gov/FacIT/Facility/Search.aspx?ActivityID=41#LIST>
- <https://apps.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/pubdispsearch/spring/main?execution=e2s1>.

Twice a year, a national drug takeback program also occurs where you can drop off medications for disposal at local law enforcement agencies. The next one is April 28th, 2018 from 10am to 2pm. Details of which sites participate can be found here:

- https://www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/drug_disposal/takeback/index.html

How to properly dispose of the medications:

If it is not possible to go to a public medication disposal site, you can throw the medication away at home.

- Dangerous prescription medications that can be abused, such as fentanyl or hydrocodone, should be flushed down the toilet.
- Most other medications (tablets, liquids, drops, creams, inhalers) can be thrown away in household trash, but the following steps should be followed:
 - Take out medications from their original containers and mix them in a ziplock bag with dirt, coffee grinds, cat litter, or some other undesirable substance to keep animals, children or people looking through the trash for drugs away.
 - Before throwing away the empty bottle or packaging in the trash, make sure to take off or cover up your personal information to protect your identity and privacy.



Learn more information at: <https://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/>

San Diego County Hepatitis A Outbreak

by CAPT B. Lewelling, Escondido District EHO

In September, San Diego County declared a public health emergency due to a widespread Hepatitis A outbreak. Soon thereafter, Santa Cruz, Los Angeles and other neighboring counties also declared local outbreaks. With the worst of the outbreak now predicted to be over, San Diego County has thus far reported 580 cases and 20 deaths related to the outbreak as of February 9th, 2018. An additional death has also been reported in Santa Cruz County. The majority of people who contracted Hepatitis A during this outbreak have been homeless and/or illicit drug users.

“Hepatitis” means inflammation of the liver. Hepatitis A is a type of Hepatitis that is spread person-to-person and through direct contact with fecally contaminated environments. In addition, Hepatitis A can be easily spread by food. An infected food handler with poor hand hygiene can easily contaminate foods with the virus.

The Hepatitis A vaccine is the main outbreak control and prevention measure and is extremely effective. More than 95% of adults vaccinated are protected after one of the two recommended doses and nearly 100% of those vaccinated are protected after the second dose. Hepatitis A vaccination has been recommended for all children in California.

San Diego County Health Department has conducted Hepatitis A Outbreak Vaccination Field Events across the county to control the outbreak. A total of 115,874 vaccinations have been administered. In addition, the county has distributed hygiene kits to the homeless population and began sanitizing streets which may harbor the virus. In December, the city of San Diego opened the first of three large tents capable of housing up to a total of 700 homeless people. City officials are using the tents as a way to get people off the streets where they have been living in such poor conditions.

The California Area Indian Health Service-Division of Environmental Health Services has worked with San Diego County public health to help insure important public health information reaches the tribal populations

residing in San Diego County. Flyers were sent to tribal health clinics and CAPT Brian Lewelling has worked closely with the tribal gaming food service industry on implementing measures that minimize the risk and spread of Hepatitis A.

Hepatitis A outbreak controls in food service include measures such as rigorous hand-washing discipline, continuous monitoring of buffet lines and encouraging food handlers to get the Hepatitis A vaccination. CAPT Lewelling reports that the tribal gaming food service industry is very aware of this outbreak and has been very supportive of doing their part to minimize the spread of this virus.

For the most current information about the outbreak in California:

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/Hepatitis-A-Outbreak.aspx>

For more information about Hepatitis A signs, symptoms and transmission:

<https://www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/hav/afaq.htm>

For more information about the Hepatitis A vaccine:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/hcp/vis/vis-statements/hep-a.html>

