



## Health Disparities Affecting Minorities American Indian/Alaska Natives

According to the 2000 U.S. census, American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) comprise 0.9% to 1.5% of the U.S. population and have the highest poverty rates of all Americans.

### Major health disparities for American Indian/Alaska Natives:

- **Chronic Diseases-** the 2002 age-adjusted prevalence rate of diabetes was over twice that for all U.S. adults, and the AI/AN mortality rate from chronic liver disease was nearly three times higher.
- **Infant Mortality-** AI/AN rates were 1.6 times higher than non-Hispanic white rates. The AI/AN sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) rate was the highest of any population group, more than double that of whites in 1999.
- **Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs)-** the syphilis rate among AI/AN was six times higher than the syphilis rate among the non-Hispanic white population, the chlamydia rate was 5.5 times higher, the gonorrhea rate was four times higher, and the AIDS rate was 1.5 times higher in 2001.
- **Injuries-** in 2001 AI/AN death rates for unintentional injuries and motor vehicle crashes were 1.7 to 2.0 times higher than the rates for all racial/ethnic populations, while suicide rates for AI/AN youth were three times greater than rates for whites of similar age.

### What you can do to eliminate health disparities:

#### Healthcare Providers

- **Teach** clients about reducing their risks for chronic diseases, obtaining prenatal care, and preventing injuries.
- **Recommend** appropriate screening tests for cancer, diabetes, STDs, and liver disease.
- **Advise** tribal youth on where to find help for family violence prevention and suicide intervention.
- **Conduct** physical exams and laboratory tests to detect complications, signs of chronic liver disease, and STDs, hepatitis, or HIV infections.
- **Provide** culturally competent and linguistically appropriate care.

## Individuals

- **See** your healthcare provider annually, even if you feel healthy.
- **Eat** right, **be** active, and **maintain** a healthy body weight.
- **Take** elder and other family members to healthcare facilities as needed.
- **Place** sleeping babies on their backs. A separate but proximate sleeping environment is recommended such as a separate crib in the parents' bedroom. Bed sharing during sleep is not recommended.
- **Stop** smoking and limit alcohol intake.
- **Wear** your seat belt and make sure children ride in safety seats. Don't drive after drinking or ride with drivers who have been drinking.

## Community

- **Join** with others to promote community-wide health activities and campaigns for healthier lifestyles.
- **Form** alliances with tribal organizations, schools, youth groups and elders, and traditional healers to advocate for community friendly health programs.
- **Support** health policies and programs that respect tribal values and culture.

### For More Information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
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(404) 498-2320

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