

# Native American Health Messenger

## Your Wellness Connection

Phoenix Indian Medical Center

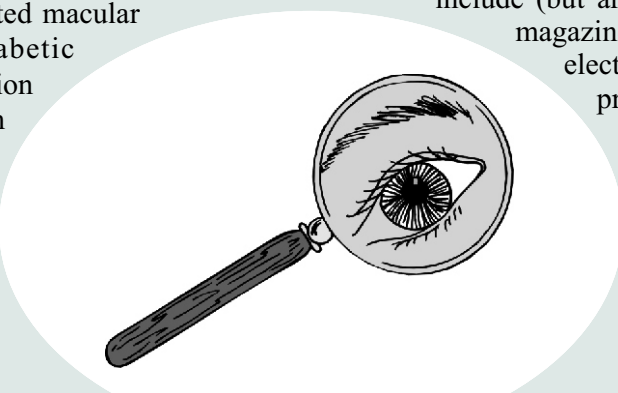
September 2004

## Do You Know Someone with Low Vision?

**What is low vision?** We are surrounded by people who need eye glasses or contact lenses in order to see well. We are also surrounded by people with "low vision." Low vision is *not* being able to see normally *even with* glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery. People with low vision have trouble doing everyday things like recognizing people, reading the newspaper, or writing checks. They may have trouble walking, going outside, or holding a job. Because of these problems, they may become fearful, anxious, depressed, and grief-stricken. In addition, people with low vision who lose their depth perception are at greater risk of falling and injuring themselves.

**What causes low vision?** Low vision can result from many different diseases, disorders, and injuries that affect the eye. Some of the more common reasons for low vision include age-related macular degeneration, cataracts, glaucoma, or diabetic retinopathy. Those with a higher risk for low vision include people over age 65 and people with diabetes.

**Do you or a loved one have low vision?** Even with regular eye glasses, do you have difficulty: (1) recognizing faces of friends and family? (2) doing things that require you to see well up close, like reading, cooking, sewing, or fixing things



around the house? (3) picking out and matching the color of your clothes? (4) doing things at work or home because lights seem dimmer than they used to? (5) reading street signs and bus signs? If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you should get an eye exam.

Regular eye exams should be part of your routine health care (every year for people with diabetes). Sudden changes in your vision require that you see an eye care professional as soon as possible.

**What next?** If your vision can not be corrected with glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery, then you should ask your eye care provider for information about *vision rehabilitation*. You will learn about devices that can help you read, write, and manage every day living. These devices include (but are not limited to): adjustable lighting, large-print magazines, magnifying devices, closed-circuit televisions, electronic reading machines, and computers with large print and speech output systems. You will also learn lots of tips on how to live well with low vision. Vision rehabilitation may include training on how to use these devices and there may be local support groups you can join. In addition to getting help from the eye care professionals at PIMC, you can contact the groups listed in the "Resource List" (below) for more information.

## Avoiding the Flu

It's that time of year, again! School has started. Fall, with its cooler weather, is approaching and cold and flu season is on its way! Many of us know, from first-hand experience, how bad the flu can be. The flu can give you a fever (often high), headaches, muscle aches, tiredness, dry cough, sore throat, and runny or stuffy nose. Children with the flu can have nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Suffering caused by the flu can last 7 to 14 days. Any one who has had the flu once will want to do whatever it takes to prevent it from happening to them again. This article will give you some ideas on how **not** to get the flu this year.

The flu (influenza virus) is usually spread from one person to another when coughing or sneezing. Moisture from the nose or mouth of the infected person contains the virus and this moisture is shot out (up to 3 feet) into the air when that person coughs or sneezes. To avoid the flu, idea #1 is to *stay more than 3 feet away from people who are coughing or sneezing*.

Sometimes the flu virus can be spread by touching an object that has been coughed or sneezed on (like a telephone, money, or a door knob) and then touching your face without washing your hands. To avoid the flu (or especially the common cold), idea #2 is to *always wash your hands before touching your face, mouth, nose, or eyes*.

*The single best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated (get the flu shot) each fall.* The best time to get the flu shot is in October or November. Check with your health care provider to find out when he/she expects to have the vaccine available.

## Do You Know . . . who should get the flu shot?

People who are at *increased risk of complications* from having the flu should get the shot. This includes all persons age 65 and older; persons living in nursing homes or other chronic-care facilities; adults and children with chronic health problems like heart or lung disease, including asthma; persons with diabetes, kidney problems, or persons whose immune systems are compromised (such as those with HIV or AIDS, and persons taking anti-rejection medications); women who will be pregnant during the flu season; children and teens who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy; and all children from 6 months to 23 months of age.

Other people who should get the flu shot include people between 50 and 64 years of age; people in close contact with persons at increased risk for complications (such as persons living in the homes of persons at high risk); home care givers; household contacts and out-of-home care givers of children between 0 to 23 months of age; and employees of hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities.

## For more Information

The *Native American Health Messenger* is published monthly by the Phoenix Indian Medical Center Office of Planning. Please contact Roberta Arthur, Public Relations, at 602-263-1576 or e-mail at [roberta.arthur@mail.ihs.gov](mailto:roberta.arthur@mail.ihs.gov) if you wish to submit articles for publication, suggest topics to be covered in future issues, or for more information about the services, programs, and field initiatives of the hospital. Or, you may write: Phoenix Indian Medical Center, Administration Planning, 4212 North 16<sup>th</sup> Street, Phoenix, AZ 85016.

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## Reading News Flash!

Reading to children as young as 6 months old is very important for their future. Children who are read to and talked to early will develop a love for reading. There are a number of programs in the Valley that encourage and support reading to the young. The PIMC Pediatric Clinic has a program where volunteers read to children in the clinic and care providers give out a new, age-appropriate book to each child seen. Libraries throughout the Valley have reading contests with prizes. The following libraries offer story times for various age groups from newborn to 5 years old: Arabian Library, Civic Center Library, Foothills Branch library, Glendale Public Library, Mustang Library, Palomino Library, and Century Branch Library. Several of the Barnes and Noble Booksellers stores and Border's Books, Music and Café, as well as the Market Street Coffee Company at 10810 North Tatum Blvd also have story times for children 5 and under.

Get in on the action: read to a child!

## Resource List for Low Vision

National Eye Institute, NIH, 2020 Vision Place  
Bethesda, MD 20892-3655 (301) 496-5248  
[www.nei.nih.gov](http://www.nei.nih.gov)

Lighthouse International, 111 East 59<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10022 1-800-334-5497  
1-800-829-0500 [www.lighthouse.org](http://www.lighthouse.org)

Council of Citizens with Low Vision Intl  
5707 Brockton Drive, Suite 302  
Indianapolis, IN 46220-5481  
1-800-733-2258

American Academy of Ophthalmology  
P.O. Box 7424, San Francisco, CA 94120-7424  
(415) 561-8500 [www.eyenet.org](http://www.eyenet.org)

Natl Assoc for Visually Handicapped  
22 West 21<sup>st</sup> Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10010 (212) 889-3141  
[www.navh.org](http://www.navh.org)

American Foundation for the Blind  
11 Penn Plaza, Suite 300, New York, NY 10001  
1-800-232-5463 [www.afb.org](http://www.afb.org)

AZ Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
602-273-7411

The Magnifying Center  
5130 North 19<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Phoenix, AZ  
602-956-6637

AZ Rehab Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
602-266-6752  
[www.de.state.az.us/rsa/blind.asp](http://www.de.state.az.us/rsa/blind.asp)

American Diabetes Association  
1-800-DIABETES; 1-800-342-2383  
[www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org)  
8125 North 23 Avenue, #222, Phoenix 85021  
602-861-4731

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## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

Sep 25. **Navajo Nation voter registration** and absentee ballot request at Native American Connections, 650 North 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue in Phoenix. 602-254-3247 X 1001 or X 1405.

Sep 30-Oct 3. **Northern Navajo Nation Fair**, Shiprock, NM. 505-368-3727.

Oct 1- Nov 17. **Native American Recognition Days**. There are many activities taking place throughout the Valley, such as an All-Indian Rodeo, parade on Central Avenue, and lots more. For more information, go to [www.aznard.com](http://www.aznard.com)

Oct 14. **First Time Home Buyers Class**, at the Phoenix Indian Center. Taught by Tess Robinson (Native American lender) and Bo Morales (Native American realtor). Classes held the 2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday of each month. For more information and to RSVP, contact Tess at 480-228-2276 or Bo at 480-220-6899.

Oct 14-17. **Western Navajo Nation Fair**, Tuba City, AZ. For more information, call 928-283-3284 or go to [www.westernnavajofair.com](http://www.westernnavajofair.com)

Oct 17. **Native American Farmer's Market and Craft Fair**, Pueblo Grande Museum in Phoenix. For more information, go to [www.aznard.com](http://www.aznard.com)

Oct 23. **American Indian Prevention Coalition Social Pow Wow**; 10 a.m.; Steele Indian School Park. [www.aznard.com](http://www.aznard.com)

Oct 27. **Women's Health Expo** on PIMC east patio; 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Booths, exhibits, and more.

Oct 30. **Salt River-Maricopa Indian Community Run Against Diabetes**; 7:00 a.m.; Salt River Indian Community. [www.aznard.com](http://www.aznard.com)

Nov 2. **National General Election for U.S. President**. Be sure to get out and vote!

Nov 11. **Veteran's Day Gourd Dance**; 11:00 a.m.; Pueblo Grande Museum, Phoenix. [www.aznard.com](http://www.aznard.com)

Nov 14-15. **6<sup>th</sup> Annual Navajo Nation Museum Keshmish Festival**; Window Rock, AZ. 928-871-6029.

Nov 18. **Great American Smoke Out** on PIMC east patio; 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Booths, information, and help on stopping smoking!

## Eye-Q-Test

Please check "True" if you agree or "False" if you disagree with each of the following statements. Answers can be found below.

1. You can save your sight by limiting use of your eyes.  
 True  False
2. You can damage your eyes if you use them too much.  
 True  False
3. If you are legally blind, you have no vision.  
 True  False
4. Sitting close to the television will damage your eyes.  
 True  False
5. All vision can be corrected with the right glasses.  
 True  False
6. Diabetic eye disease usually has early warning signs.  
 True  False
7. People with diabetes should have yearly dilated eye exams.  
 True  False
8. The risk of blindness from diabetic eye disease can be reduced.  
 True  False
9. People who have good control of their diabetes don't have to worry about diabetic eye disease.  
 True  False
10. People with diabetes are at low risk for having glaucoma.  
 True  False

*Answers:* (1) False, (2) False, (3) False, (4) False, (5) False, (6) False, (7) True, (8) True, (9) False, (10) False. For more information about diabetes, low vision, and eye diseases, please read the other articles in this issue, talk with your health care provider, or contact one of the organizations on the Resource List in this issue.



## Letter from the Director...

Please pardon our dust! As you may have noticed, the Pharmacy on the main floor of the hospital is undergoing a renovation. Construction began on September 2<sup>nd</sup> and we are hoping to finish the project by October 8<sup>th</sup>. During construction, the medical record (or chart drop-off) location will be changed. The chart drop-off is now located next to the waiting room across from the Pediatric Clinic. You will be able to pick-up your new and old prescriptions at the "temporary pharmacy" near the Operating Rooms. Signs will direct you to this area and staff will be available to assist you and your family if you have questions.

Please continue to use the existing waiting room and the main lobby waiting area while you are waiting for your medicine. You will be paged overhead when your medicine is ready.

This renovation will help the pharmacy staff to serve you better by giving them extra work space. By making other physical improvements to PIMC, it is my hope that, until we get a new hospital, we will continue to make you and your family's health care experience at PIMC more comfortable. Thank you!

Dr. John Meeth, PIMC CEO

## For Kids Only!

This month, the PIMC Safety Bears want to talk to you about your eyes. Your eyes are very important, and need to be protected. Here are some things you can do to protect your eyes from harm:

- When carrying pointed things (like scissors or knives), always keep the pointed end down.
- When playing ball, use "softer" baseballs and softballs.
- Wear protective glasses when handling objects that might spray or splash up into your face.
- Don't play with guns; even a BB gun can blind or kill.
- Don't play near where someone is mowing or edging the grass or using a power trimmer. Small rocks and twigs can be dangerous if shot out from the blades.
- Always wear protective eyewear when playing baseball, basketball, hockey, lacrosse, football, soccer, paintball, and racquet sports.
- Wear sunglasses with UVA and UVB protection when outside.
- Don't play with fireworks.

The PIMC Safety Bears wish you a happy school year!

## Preventing Low Vision and Blindness

Low vision (difficulty seeing even with glasses, contact lenses, medicine, or surgery) and blindness can make life very difficult. Prevention (or delay of onset) is the best goal. This means something has to be done *before* you have a problem or *as soon as* you have a diagnosis! The most common causes of low vision and blindness in Native Americans are cataracts, glaucoma, and diabetic retinopathy.

**Cataracts** can happen to anyone at any age, but happens more often in people with diabetes, people who spend a lot of time in the sun without eye protection, smokers, and people age 65 or older. Cataract is a clouding of the eye's natural lens. Cataracts can be successfully treated with surgery.

**Glaucoma** is caused by gradual damage to the optic nerve that carries visual information to the brain. There are usually no symptoms until a large amount of nerve damage has already happened. Most cases of glaucoma can be controlled and vision loss slowed or stopped by early diagnosis and treatment. However, any vision lost to glaucoma cannot be brought back. To prevent problems from glaucoma, you should have your eyes examined regularly (at least once a year for people with diabetes). This examination should include tonometry (a test of the pressure inside your eyes). Treatment is usually with prescribed eye drops or surgery. **Diabetic retinopathy** is caused by damaged blood vessels in the back of the eye because of diabetes. Diagnosis can be made *before* symptoms occur, but only if those with diabetes have a yearly dilated eye exam beginning as early as age 40. Early diagnosis and treatment (often with laser surgery) can slow the progress of this eye condition.