

## May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month *(continued from page 1)*

### Preventing and Controlling High Blood Pressure

About half of the patients who have been prescribed medication for high blood pressure do not receive the full benefits because they do not adhere to treatment. Studies have shown that while many patients initially adopt lifestyle changes such as healthy diets and exercise regimens, they tend not to maintain these changes after 1-2 years. Other studies have found that up to half of the patients who remain in treatment after one year take less than 80% of their medications. Some patients do not see their physicians regularly; others stop taking medications because of their schedules or because they have trouble getting refills. Others stop taking medications because they begin to "feel better" or because of side effects, complexity of dosage, or cost.

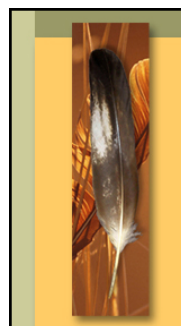
For hypertensive patients, adhering to prescribed treatment regimens, which include lifestyle (diet, physical activity) changes and medication, is an essential part of controlling blood pressure and reducing the associated risks.

If you have high blood pressure, it can be controlled. See your doctor regularly and take your medication as directed. Make sure you understand what each medication is for and how and when to take it; do not hesitate to ask your primary care provider or pharmacist for information. Do not stop taking medication because you begin to "feel better." If you experience side effects, tell your doctor.

If you don't have high blood pressure, you can prevent it. Simple lifestyle changes can help prevent and control high blood pressure, as well as improve overall health and quality of life:

- Lose weight, if overweight, and maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight increases the likelihood of developing high blood pressure.
- Healthy eating: follow an eating plan that emphasizes fruits, vegetables, and low fat dairy foods. Reduce salt and sodium intake.

- If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation. For men, that means a maximum of 2 drinks per day; for women, a maximum of 1 drink per day.
- Physical activity: being physically active is one of the most important steps you can take to prevent or control high blood pressure. Do some kind of physical activity every day.
- Quit smoking: smoking injures blood vessel walls and speeds up the process of hardening the arteries.
- Control your blood sugar if you have diabetes.



### Important Events

- **Indian Health Summit (July 7-9, 2009)**  
**Location: Hyatt Regency Hotel, Denver, Colorado**—A national gathering of Indian Health Professionals and administrators, community advocates, and activists, and Tribal leadership.
- **Taking Control of Your Diabetes Conference and Health Affairs (Saturday, June 20, 2009, 9:00 AM—4:00 PM)** **Location: DoubleTree Hotel, Sacramento**—Everything you need to know about diabetes all under one roof.



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# California Area Indian Health Service

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## Area Director's Message Ms. Margo Kerrigan M.P.H.



### May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month

May is National High Blood Pressure Education Month. More than 65 million American adults, or 1 in 3, have high blood pressure (also called hypertension), and only about 30% of these have the condition under control. A blood pressure reading of 140/90 mmHg or higher is considered high. Normal blood pressure is less than 120/80 mmHg.

Diabetes increases the risk of developing high blood pressure, as does being overweight or obese, or being

physically inactive. A high salt and sodium intake, low potassium intake (due to not eating enough fruits and vegetables), and excessive alcohol consumption can also contribute to developing high blood pressure.

Why is it important to control blood pressure? Blood pressure is the force of blood against the interior walls of arteries. When that force is too high, and stays that way over time, the heart works too hard, the walls of the arteries harden, and there can be damage to the heart, brain, or kidneys. High blood pressure contributes to 67 percent of heart attacks in the United

States, and 77 percent of strokes. Lowering blood pressure can reduce the chance of heart attacks, strokes, and death from cardiovascular disease.

Many American Indians and Alaska Natives have high blood pressure. Researchers measured blood pressure in 4,549 American Indians ages 45 to 74 from 13 communities. The prevalence of hypertension ranged from 27% to 56%. More than 70% of these patients were aware that they had high blood pressure, and more than 50% were receiving treatment, but only 30% had controlled their hypertension with medication.

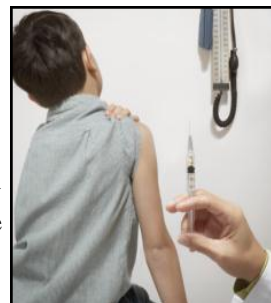
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## Are Your Children Up-to-Date On Immunizations? By David Sprenger, M.D.

Making sure your children are current on all immunizations is one of the best ways to prevent a number of very serious illnesses that can result in hospitalization and even death. While the United States has few cases of the diseases that the immunizations protect against, the viruses and bacteria that cause them still exist. Each child who isn't immunized gives these highly contagious diseases one more chance to spread. Less than twenty-five years ago large numbers of children in this country were killed or disabled by two of the diseases for which immunizations are recommended:

- From 1989 to 1991 there was an epidemic of measles in the United States. The outbreak resulted in over 55,000 cases, more than 11,000 hospitalizations, and 166 suspected measles-related deaths. Some of the survivors suffered permanent brain damage. The cases were predominately unvaccinated preschoolers.
- Hib disease (Haemophilus influenzae type b) was the leading cause of bacterial meningitis in children younger than 5 years old in the United States as recently as the mid-1980's. It struck one child out of every 200 in that age group. About one in four of these children suffered permanent brain damage, and about one in 20 died.

Without vaccines, epidemics like these and many other preventable diseases could return, resulting in increased illness, disability and death among children. That is why it's important that children, especially infants and young children, receive recommended immunization on time. Because childhood immunizations are such an important part of preventative health care for children, the Indian Health Service tracks rates annually. In 2007 and 2008, only 78% of American Indian and Alaska Native children between the ages of 19 and 35 months had the full series of recommended immunizations. Make sure your child is not among the large percentage of children that are unprotected. If you don't have insurance, vaccines for Alaska Native and Native American children are free under the Vaccines for Children Program.



The concept of balance is core to traditional views of health. This includes understanding mind, body, and spirit, and having a sense of well-being. Many traditional teachings emphasize maintaining wellness, rather than treating illnesses or problems. These concepts have served communities well throughout time, helping Native people survive many challenges. Even in tough times, bringing people together around wellness can help them move in a positive direction together. It can help them identify their own resources, and use the knowledge and ability of community members to promote change. This can include working with groups and individuals to develop a vision of community wellness, and decide on changes that will create community owned wellness. For example, while knowing that injuries are a leading cause of death among Native people, it is also important to recognize the valuable elements of healing among Native people. For example, car crashes may be a result of drinking, but can also be due to poor road conditions, or the lack of stop signs at busy intersections. By working together, communities can identify how to best address social and environmental conditions that impact wellness from their viewpoint. Community-owned wellness looks



Fun Run/Walk at the Tribal Leaders Conference 2008

at health related behaviors and understanding how these behaviors relate to the community and environment. Engaging in community-owned wellness looks at the surrounding environment and health behavior and involves discovering how changes can be made in the community to improve the physical, behavioral, social, and spiritual environment.

For more information and resources:

IHS Health Promotion/  
Disease Prevention:  
[www.ihs.gov/hpd/](http://www.ihs.gov/hpd/)  
Healthy Native Communities  
Fellowship:  
[www.hncpartners.org/  
HNCP/Home.html](http://www.hncpartners.org/HNCP/Home.html)

### What Is Fluoride Varnish? By Steve Riggio, DDS

Fluorides have been used for many years to help prevent decay. As children, most of us experienced the rather unpleasant application of fluoride gel applied in trays. Fluoride varnish offers several advantages over this traditional application of fluoride. Varnish comes in child-friendly flavors and is easily tolerated, especially by infants, toddlers and developmentally disabled children. It is easy and quick to apply; it is painted onto the teeth much like nail polish is painted onto nails. It is safe and can be applied to very young children who have a difficult time sitting in the dental chair.



Fluoride varnish provides up to a 38% reduction in children

who are at high risk for dental decay. Some of the factors that put children at high risk are diets high in sugars and other carbohydrates (crackers, chips and cereals), poor oral hygiene and the transmission of decay-causing bacteria from the primary caregiver to their children via their saliva. The younger a child is when the varnish is applied, the better; in fact it should be applied as soon as the front teeth erupt. If you would like more information please contact your dental provider.

### Nutrition: Making It Work For You by Beverly Calderon, RD, CDE

Making it work for you can start with one question... What do you want? Is your answer control diabetes, lower cholesterol, better blood pressure, weight loss before that special event or simply not getting nagged about what you eat. Well, if so, try asking the question again. What do you want? When you really think about it, what might some answers be? Being around to see the grandchildren grow, feeling comfortable moving, feeling less moody? This is goal setting; not because someone said you have to do it, but because it is what you want for yourself. Now, choosing to change is also required to make nutrition work for you. Try to focus on the positive, while

not ignoring the negative (those poor food choices). This can include focusing on eating more fresh fruit, switching to water, having whole wheat bread, skipping fast food shops and focusing on portion control. Did you know portion sizes have dramatically increased over the past 20 years? Consider these tips to help control portions and make nutrition work for you:

- Plan to eat 4-6 small meals, select water as your beverage and take a look at what you eat.
- Have a small piece of fruit, a few nuts or some fresh veggies an hour before dinner. Keep the casserole and serving

dishes off the dinner table. Serve dinner on individual plates to decrease the temptation for second or third servings.

- Use a salad plate to cut calories. Split the restaurant entrée and add extra vegetables or tossed salad.
- If you need a sweet, go out and buy it instead of keeping any in the house.
- Get a new after dinner habit, no not the TV, take a walk or sit and do lateral arm raises while you read for 30 minutes.



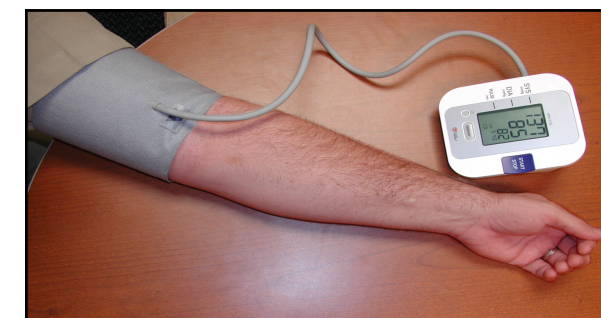
Portion Distortion:  
<http://hp2010.nhlbihin.net/portion/>  
Test Your Food Label Knowledge:  
<http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~dms/flquiz1.html>

### Why Eye Care and Blood Pressure Monitoring is Important If I Have Diabetes

By Helen Maldonado, PA-C, CDE

People with diabetes have special issues with their eyes. The complications associated with diabetes can cause several visual disorders that may lead to vision loss or blindness, such as retinopathy, cataracts, and glaucoma. Your doctor will monitor your blood sugar control with a goal A1c of <7.0% and will monitor blood pressure control with a goal blood pressure of <130/80. Eye complications are frequently without symptoms and go unrecognized by people. You should seek eye care promptly with any change in vision such as: blurred vision, difficulty

reading signs or books, seeing double, seeing floaters or spots, apparent distortion or bending of straight lines, loss of side vision, eye pain in one or both eyes, prolonged eye redness, feeling of pressure in the eyes. You should be seen by an ophthalmologist (eye doctor) at least once a year to prevent serious problems with your eyes. Having diabetes increases your risk of developing high blood pressure and other cardiovascular problems, because diabetes adversely affects the arteries, predisposing them to atherosclerosis (hardening of the arter-



ies). Atherosclerosis can cause high blood pressure, which if not treated, can lead to blood vessel damage, stroke, heart failure, heart attack, or kidney failure.

#### How Do You Control High Blood Pressure?

- Stop smoking
- Eat healthy
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Exercise
- Limit salt intake in the diet
- Take your blood pressure medications as directed by your doctor