



# California Area Indian Health Service

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## National Infant Immunization Week

The week of April 23-April 30, 2011 is designated as National Infant Immunization Week (NIIW), recognized by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as a national health observance. NIIW is observed annually to highlight the importance of protecting infants from vaccine-preventable diseases and to celebrate the achievements of immunization programs and their partners in promoting healthy communities. Immunizations have a crucial role in safeguarding public health around the world. During NIIW, hundreds of

communities across the country will join in celebration. CDC predicts that over 60 countries around here and the world will also participate in this event.

We immunize our children to ensure their safety. If enough people in our communities are protected, vaccine-preventable diseases will not be passed between our children, our families, and our communities. Immunizations are especially important for American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities who are affected at a higher rate compared to other populations by some vaccine-preventable diseases, such as hepatitis A, hepatitis B, and pneumococcal diseases.

Vaccine-preventable disease rates are lower than they have ever been; however, in order to continue this pattern, healthcare providers must educate their patients and provide immunizations as recommended by the CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. Because children are vulnerable to infection, most vaccines are given during the first five to six years of life.

Other immunizations are recommended during adolescent and adult years, with certain booster vaccinations recommended throughout life.

*(continued on page 3)*



## Area Director's Message Ms. Margo Kerrigan, MPH

## Seasonal Allergies By Amy Patterson, PhD

Spring is when many people experience seasonal allergies. A seasonal allergy is a reaction to something only present during certain times of the year, usually pollen from trees, weeds, and grasses. Spring allergies start when trees begin pollinating between February and May. Pollen is spread by wind and may land in a person's eyes, nose, lungs, and skin. For some, the immune system treats the pollen as invaders and releases chemicals into the bloodstream to defend against them. The release of these chemicals causes allergy symptoms.

Symptoms of seasonal allergies include sneezing, runny and/or itchy nose, headache, watery eyes, nasal congestion, itchy throat, cough, and post-nasal drip. Usually, allergies begin with itchy, watery eyes or a tickle in the back of the throat. It is sometimes difficult to tell the difference between a seasonal allergy and a cold, but allergy symptoms are more likely to come

and go depending on exposure to the allergen.

Seasonal allergies may be treated with over-the-counter (OTC) medications called antihistamines, including Benadryl and Tavist. Antihistamines block the allergic response. However, antihistamines cause drowsiness and should not be used before driving or operating machinery. Another allergy remedy is a nasal decongestant called pseudoephedrine, which can relieve stuffiness by constricting the vessels that bring blood to the nasal passages. However, this remedy also has some side effects, such as insomnia. Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding should ask their doctors before taking any allergy medications; some are not safe during pregnancy, and some may be passed through breast milk to nursing infants. One completely safe treatment is to rinse the nasal passages with salt water; this can be done with a saline spray, pre-mixed sinus

rinses, or a "Neti Pot," a small container for mixing water and salt with a spout for pouring. These help wash away the pollen from the nose and sinus passages, which can reduce the need for medication.

For people who suffer severe allergies, allergy shots (immunotherapy) are available from physicians who specialize in the treatment of allergies. These are usually used only when a person suffers from allergies for many months of the year, cannot tolerate allergy medications, or develops asthma as a result of allergies. The shots make a person less sensitive to the effects of pollen by helping their immune system become increasingly resistant to it. To be effective, injections must be given on a regular basis over the course of three to five years.

If you experience seasonal allergy symptoms, talk to your doctor or mid-level practitioner.

## The Most Preventable Birth Defect: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome By Wendy Blocker, MSN

One out of every 33 babies is born with a birth defect in the United States. A birth defect is a problem that happens while a baby is developing in its mother's womb. Most birth defects happen during the first 3 months of pregnancy.

Heavy drinking during pregnancy can cause significant birth defects including Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). Rates of FAS are four times as high in AI/AN populations than in the general population. Studies have found alcohol consumption rates among AI/AN women of childbearing age to be higher than average. AI/AN women were also found to have less knowledge of the harmful effects of alcohol on developing fetuses than non-AI/AN women.

FAS is a permanent condition and is the leading known cause of mental retardation. Children with FAS have abnormal facial features, growth retardation, and central nervous system problems. They may exhibit learning disabilities, social and behavioral problems, memory and

attention span difficulties, and vision and hearing deficiencies.

***There is no degree of alcohol consumption which has been determined to be safe for a pregnant woman.***

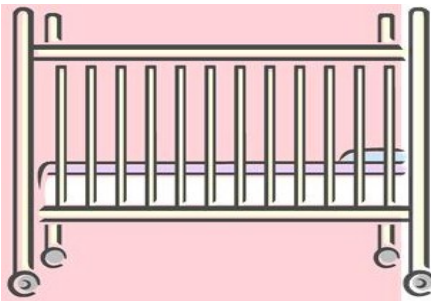
According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, FAS can be prevented completely if a woman does not drink alcohol while she is pregnant. There is no degree of alcohol consumption which has been determined to be safe for a pregnant woman. If she is already pregnant, the sooner a woman stops drinking, the better it will be for both her baby and herself. If a woman is not able to stop drinking, she should contact her doctor, local Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), or local alcohol treatment/rehabilitation center. Even if she is not pregnant, if a woman is sexually active and is not using an effective form of birth control, she should not

drink alcohol, as she could become pregnant and not know it for several weeks or more.

Screening with intervention has been shown to be effective in reducing alcohol use during pregnancy and to reduce the incidence of FAS. The prevention of FAS is a priority for the Indian Health Service. The Indian Health Service (IHS) monitors alcohol screening rates for women of childbearing age at IHS and tribal facilities throughout the nation. In FY 2010, 43% of women aged 15-44 were screened for alcohol use at tribal sites in California, compared to 41% in FY 2009 and 25% in FY 2008.

If you or someone you care about has an alcohol problem, please know that it is not a moral weakness or a character problem; it is a disease. Alcoholism is treatable. Alcohol treatment today will prevent FAS. All of the tribal and urban Indian health programs within California have alcohol/substance abuse treatment services.

## Crib Safety: Creating a Safe Sleeping Environment for Your Baby By Christine Brennan, MPH



Infants spend much of their time sleeping. Creating a safe sleeping environment is one of the best ways to protect your baby from injury. The first step in making sure your baby has a safe place to sleep is to purchase a crib that is safe. In December 2010, the federal government banned the sale of drop side cribs due to the deaths of more than 30 infants in the past ten years. Make sure if you are

purchasing a crib, the sides are fixed. This is especially important if purchasing or using an older model crib. Before using a crib, check the Consumer Product Safety Commission website to check for crib recalls at [www.cpsc.gov](http://www.cpsc.gov). Also, check to be sure the crib slats are 2 and 3/8 inches apart or less (about the width of a soda can).

The crib mattress should be firm and fit snugly in the crib, and sheets should fit snugly on the mattress. There should be nothing in the crib but your baby. Blankets, pillows, and stuffed animals can be a hazard if they cover the baby's face as they could block your baby's airway. The crib should be positioned in the room so it is away from windows and window blind cords.

Lastly, infants should be placed in their crib on their backs to sleep. Placing babies on their backs to sleep is one of the best ways to prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

For more information visit:

- Home Safety Council at <http://www.homesafetycouncil.org/index.asp>
- U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission at <http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/5030.html>
- Healthy Children Organization at <http://www.healthychildren.org/>

## National Infant Immunization Week *(continued from page 1)*

Vaccines are available to protect against the following diseases:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Measles, Mumps, Rubella
- Polio
- Diphtheria, Pertussis (whooping cough), Tetanus
- Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B
- Pneumococcal diseases
- Influenza (flu)
- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Human Papillomavirus (HPV)
- Rotavirus
- Zoster (shingles)

During this designated week in April is the time to talk with the members of your communities, including family,

friends, and co-workers, to make sure children are up-to-date on their immunizations. Communities are encouraged to plan local health screenings or fairs, media events, and other related immunization outreach efforts during this week to promote the benefits of infant immunization.

Indian Health Service (IHS) staff work closely with tribal and urban immunization staff to support and promote immunization education, training opportunities, and other resources to enhance their work in the area of immunization practice. Work in partnership with your medical providers, nurses, and other health care staff to ensure that children are given appropriate vaccines, at

appropriate ages and time intervals, in order to protect against vaccine-preventable disease. Such partnerships are essential for healthy outcomes for our children and our communities.

For information related to IHS California Area Office (CAO) Immunization Improvement Initiatives, please contact Susan Ducore at [susan.ducore@ihs.gov](mailto:susan.ducore@ihs.gov).

For additional information on infant immunizations, we encourage you to visit the NIIW CDC web site at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/events/niiw>. At this site you will find resources that promote infant immunizations and NIIW.

## Osteoporosis By Susan Ducore, RN, MSN

Calcium is essential for building strong, dense bones early in life and keeping bones strong and healthy later in life. About 99 percent of the calcium in our bodies is in our bones and teeth. Calcium also helps blood clot, nerves send messages, muscles contract, and other important body functions.

Each day, we lose calcium through our skin, nails, hair, sweat, urine and feces. Our bodies cannot produce calcium thus it's important to take in calcium through the foods we eat. When the body's calcium requirements are not met, the body looks to the bones for calcium. This may result in osteoporosis or "porous bone", a disease of the skeletal system characterized by low bone mass and deterioration of bone tissue. Osteoporosis leads to an increased risk of bone fractures typically in the wrist, hip, and spine. Although men and women of all ethnicities and ages may develop the disease, persons with the following characteristics may be at higher risk for osteoporosis:

- Female
- White/Caucasian
- Post menopausal women
- Elders
- Small in body size
- Eating a diet low in calcium
- Physically inactive

Food is known to contain the best source of calcium. The following are some food items that have been identified as good sources of calcium:

- Dairy products, such as low-fat and non-fat milk, yogurt and cheese
- Certain green leafy vegetables such as broccoli and bok choy
- Nuts such as almonds

Calcium-fortified foods and calcium supplements may be recommended for some persons. Some juices, breakfast foods, soymilk, cereals, snacks, breads and bottled water have added calcium.

In addition to eating calcium rich foods and/or taking calcium supplements, vitamin D and weight-bearing physical activity are important

to bone health. Vitamin D, such as in milk, helps with the absorption of calcium. Weight-bearing physical activity, such as walking, jogging, playing tennis, stair climbing, weight lifting, and dancing, is essential to keeping bones healthy.

People who get plenty of calcium and exercise may still be at risk for bone loss and osteoporosis due to a variety of factors. Factors that are known to elevate such risk are vitamin D deficiency, family history, smoking, alcohol abuse, and certain medications and medical disorders known to cause bone loss.

If you fall into a category of increased risk or feel that you may be at risk due to other circumstances, please talk with your health care provider to determine the best approach to prevention and/or treatment. If a calcium supplement is called for, be sure to discuss with your medical provider or pharmacist the possible interactions between prescription or over-the-counter medications and calcium supplements.



## Spring Forward for Health By Beverly Calderon, RD, CDE

Each spring brings a time for renewal, planting gardens, and getting outside. This is a time to focus on the importance of making smart food choices, developing good eating habits, and being physically active. Americans continue to have an increased interest in leading more healthful lifestyles and improving their diets. Despite this, childhood obesity in America is now a national health crisis, and it disproportionately impacts AI/AN children. One study among four-year-olds found that obesity was more than two times more common in AI/AN (31%) than among white (16%) or Asian (13%) children. The prevalence and risk of type 2 diabetes among AI/AN further demonstrates a need to take action. As part of the national *Let's Move!* initiative, *Let's Move! in Indian Country* will bring a focus to this crisis.



*Let's Move! in Indian Country* has set four main goals.

1. Creating a Healthy Start on Life: By promoting breastfeeding; one proven strategy for reducing the risk of childhood obesity
2. Developing Healthy Schools: Because the school environment can have a strong impact on behavior, health and well-being of children
3. Increasing Physical Activity: By promoting regular physical activity five days a week
4. Fostering Healthy, Comprehensive Food Systems Policies: By recommending that communities establish food policy councils, which help stakeholders come together to tackle the problem of improving access to affordable, healthy foods

Healthy lifestyles and healthy food choices are part of tradition. Many today continue to lead by example, and more are working to renew healthy traditions and lifestyles. One example is the national *Just Move It* campaign and accompanying California Area annual *Just Move It - California Challenge*. They partner with tribal and urban Indian organizations to promote what works at the local level and encourage the sharing of success stories on the national *Just Move It* website. The number of *Just Move It* partners in the state continues to grow, from only twenty partners in 2005 to sixty-nine in early 2011.



### Helpful Links:

Let's Move! and Let's Move! in Indian Country:

<http://www.letsmove.gov/about.php>

<http://www.bia.gov/idc/groups/public/documents/text/idc013049.pdf>

Just Move It campaign:

<http://justmoveit.org/jmi/home.htm>

The President's Challenge and the Presidential Active Lifestyle Award (PALA):

<http://www.presidentschallenge.org/>

<http://www.presidentschallenge.org/challenge/active/index.shtml>

USDA Pyramid tips on how to add color to your diet:

<http://www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/TenTips/GoingGreenTipsheet.pdf>

