



California Area Indian Health Service

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Area Director's Message Ms. Margo Kerrigan, MPH



Stop the Spread of HIV/AIDS

As we enter into the new year, we should pause to address the growing spread of HIV/AIDS. Internationally 33 million people are living with HIV, with nearly 7,500 new infections occurring each day. In the United States, it is estimated that about 1.1 million people are living with HIV. As the number of people living with HIV grows, so does the opportunity for those with HIV to pass the virus on to others.

HIV/AIDS is a growing problem among American Indians and Alaska Natives. In 2005, American Indians and Alaska Natives had the 3rd highest rate of HIV/AIDS diagnosis after Blacks (including African Americans) and Hispanics.

One in five persons living with HIV in the United States is unaware of his or her infection and may unknowingly transmit the virus to others. Since anyone can be at risk for HIV, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

recommends that adults and adolescents between the ages of 13 and 64 years of age be routinely screened for HIV. Pregnant women in the U.S. should be screened for HIV infection as part of their routine prenatal testing.

Since 2005, when the Indian Health Service first began tracking HIV screening rates of pregnant women the prenatal HIV screening rate has increased by 22 percentage points, from 54% in 2005 to 76% in 2009.

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An Oral Cancer Screening Just May Save Your Life! By Steve Riggio, DDS

Early detection is the key.

During a dental examination your dentist will check your neck and oral tissues for lumps, red or white patches or recurring sores. Screening for early changes in the oral tissues can help detect cancer at the early stages when it can be more successfully treated.

Since early detection is so important, it is a good idea to check your mouth when brushing or flossing. If you notice any changes in the appearance of your mouth such as the following, contact your dentist:

- A sore or irritation that bleeds easily and does not heal
- Color changes such as the development of red or white lesions

- Pain, tenderness, or numbness in your mouth
- A lump, thickening rough spot, crust or small eroded area
- Difficulty chewing, swallowing, speaking or moving the jaw or tongue

Smoking, especially when combined with heavy alcohol consumption (30 drinks a week or more), is the primary risk factor for oral cancer. In fact, this combination accounts for about 75% of the oral cancers diagnosed in this country. Other lifestyle and environmental factors may also increase your risk of developing oral cancers. Smokeless tobacco products have been linked to oral cancer development and exposure to sunlight for long periods could be a factor in lip cancer development.

You may also be able to protect yourself by modifying your diet. Studies suggest that a diet high in fruits and vegetables may help prevent precancerous lesions. In summary; look for changes in the soft tissues of your mouth, eliminate known cancer risks like tobacco and alcohol and visit your dentist to have an oral cancer screening.



Discoloration on the tongue

Why Do We Eat? By Beverly Calderon, RD, CDE

While some people eat to live, others live to eat. Identifying which group you fall into can help in setting realistic nutrition goals for improved health. Daily food choices are affected by many factors, such as age, gender, genetics, occupation, lifestyle, family, friends and culture. Eating is influenced by many factors too, such as self-image, building relationships, expressing friendship. Emotions influence many of us to eat; for example, we may use food to cope with stress or to reward ourselves for a job well done. Like many aspects of behavior, eating is influenced by both what we are born with (biological) and what we live with (environmental). Food habits begin early in life and working to change unhealthy ones involves becoming consciously aware of what we need to change. Often we pick foods automatically, without taking the time to consider why we pick a particular food. If improving your nutrition is a personal goal, consider these factors when choosing what to eat.



- **Appeal:** Taste and Smell, Texture, Appearance
Focus on fresh foods with lots of color, high fiber and with little processing or frying
- **Cognitive:** Learned food habits, Social factors, Emotional needs, Health benefits, Advertising
Focus on minimizing bad habits, being pressured to eat, or using food as an emotional crutch
- **Culture:** Traditions, Economics, Environment
Focus on healthy traditions; look at the economics of what you eat and your food environment

Preventing Foodborne Illness By Christine Brennan, MPH

Did you know each year in the United States there are approximately 76 million cases of foodborne illness also known as food poisoning? Most of these cases are mild, resulting in illness lasting a day or two, but some cases are more severe and can lead to hospitalization and death, especially in the elderly, the very young, or those with other illnesses that reduce the ability of the immune system to function properly. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are approximately 325,000 hospitalizations and 5,000 deaths that occur each year due to foodborne illnesses.

Many of the cases of foodborne illness can be prevented by proper handling

of food in the home. Below are some tips for safe handling of food to help prevent food poisoning:

- Use a cooking thermometer to make sure food has heated to recommended temperatures. Minimum cooking temperatures can be found here: <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/mintemp.html>
- Do not eat food that has been stored past the recommended storage times. Use food storage guidelines found here: <http://www.foodsafety.gov/keep/charts/storagetimes.html>
- Wash all produce, including fruits and vegetables (even those that will be peeled), under running water just before eating, cutting or cooking
- Separate different types of foods when preparing a meal. Always wash hands, utensils, and cutting boards after they have been used on one type of food, especially meat and poultry
- Refrigerate leftovers promptly. Bacteria grows very well at room temperature so be sure to refrigerate any leftover items that will not be eaten within four hours of preparation

For additional food handling and safety tips, visit:

<http://www.foodsafety.gov>

<http://www.homefoodsafety.org>

Wash hands often.



Stop the Spread of HIV/AIDS (continued from page 1)

Here are some steps that each of us should take this year to help prevent the further spread of HIV/AIDS:

- **Get tested for HIV.** To find a testing site center near you, visit www.hivtest.org or, on your cell phone, text your zip code to Know IT (566948)
- **Stand up** against stigma, racism, and other forms of discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS
- **Donate** time and money to HIV/AIDS organizations

Over 1 million people are living with HIV in the United States.



For more information, visit:

World AIDS Campaign:

<http://www.worldaidscampaign.org>

National Native American AIDS Prevention Center:

<http://www.nnaapc.org/index.htm>

Preventing Home Fires By Lisa Nakagawa, MPH

Fires are the leading cause of unintentional deaths in the home for American Indians and Alaskan Natives (AI/AN). Most home fires occur late at night or early in the morning due to the increased use of wood-burning stoves during the winter months.

The most efficient smoke alarms in AI/AN communities have been photoelectric detectors.

In order to prevent fire related injury it is important for you to install smoke detectors on every floor of a home and outside or inside each sleeping area/bedroom. Smoke detectors can provide early warning of a fire and reduce the risk of residential fire

deaths by 40% or more. However, many smoke alarms installed in homes are either disabled or the batteries have expired and no longer work. Listed below are some routine maintenance tips to help ensure that your smoke alarms are working properly:

- Select the appropriate types of detectors
- Place/install smoke detectors correctly
- Conduct monthly testing
- Plan and practice fire escape routes
- Conduct fire-safety education
- Replace batteries at daylight savings time, and standard time each year

The three types of smoke detectors found in most stores are heat detectors, photoelectric detectors and ionization detectors. Heat detectors

respond to temperature changes. Photoelectric detectors respond to smoldering fires and are less sensitive to cooking vapors and ionization detectors respond more quickly than photoelectric, making it good for fast burning fires and early alarm. The most efficient smoke alarms in AI/AN communities have been **photoelectric detectors** because residents are less likely to accidentally disable them when cooking.



Wellness and Mental Health By Dawn M. Phillips, RN, CDE



Taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking care of your diabetes, especially for American Indians/Alaska Natives (AI/AN). Depression rates are higher among some Native Americans tribes as compared to the general population. For people with diabetes the incidence of depression rises, according to the 2006 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), the rate was 27.8% (Li, 2008). People with any other chronic disease frequently develop depression. Other risk factors associated with depression include low income levels, language barriers,

prevalence of substance abuse and alcohol dependence.

Kenneth Johnson, MD states that depression is the number one cause of year-round disability and is the most common illness for adults of working ages (Medical Moment, 2003). American Indians/Alaska Natives encounter barriers to treating depression and seeking help. A few of these barriers are inability to pay for psychotherapy; lack of resources to obtain medication; and stigma attached to being diagnosed depressed. But there are ways to cope with depression and lead healthy productive lives.

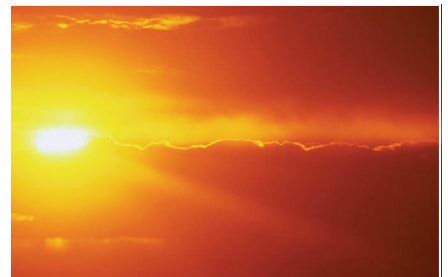
Develop your mental health tool box:

- Reach out and talk with someone you trust and ask for help and support
- Take a walk outside and expose yourself to sunlight every day. Lack of sunlight can make depression worse (Help Guide). Also, regular exercise acts as a natural antidepressant and has been found to increase energy levels
- Read a good book or watch a funny movie. Listen to music and/or take a long bath

- Be sure to get at least eight hours of sleep each night and avoid people who have negative attitudes

Depression is not your fault.

If you develop your tool box and find these interventions are not helpful, then contact a professional who can assist you with depression. Most of the Indian clinics throughout the state have trained professionals who can help. Remember that depression is not your fault and taking care of your mental health is just as important as taking your pill for high blood pressure.



Reducing “Fall” Risk; Medication Management By Susan Ducore, RN, MSN



Some medications are known to have side effects such as dizziness or confusion and can lead to increased risk for falling in patients who are using them. Patients may be taking such medications due to a chronic health problem or condition that alone places them at increased risk for falling.

In addition, taking several medications can increase your risk for falls. People who take four or more prescription drugs have a greater risk of falling than do people who take fewer drugs. Be sure to check with your doctor or other health care professional if you are experiencing dizziness or unsteadiness. Your doctor can tell you which drugs, including over-the-counter medicines, might cause problems. It is very important that you talk with your doctor prior to changing or stopping your medication.