



California Area Indian Health Service

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Area Director's Message Ms. Margo Kerrigan, MPH



Mental Health Awareness

Mental illnesses are medical conditions that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, and daily life. Mental illness contributes to family and financial problems and may lead to crime. These problems affect the individual and those close to him/her.

Depression is a serious mental illness that affects all areas of an individual's life (work, family, sleep, etc). Common symptoms of depression occur almost every day for two weeks or more. If you feel you have any of the following symptoms, please contact your doctor immediately.

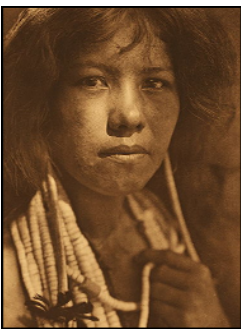
1. Depressed mood (e.g. feeling sad)
2. Lack of interest in previously enjoyable activities
3. Significant weight loss or gain, or decrease or increase in appetite

4. Inability to sleep or sleeping too much
5. Agitation, restlessness, irritability
6. Tiredness or loss of energy
7. Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, guilt
8. Inability to think, concentrate, or make decisions
9. Recurrent thoughts of death or suicide

Fortunately, most people diagnosed with a serious mental illness can experience relief from their symptoms by actively participating in an individual treatment program. The best treatment for depression is the combination of antidepressants and counseling. Treatments are effective 60 to 80% of the time. Recovery can be difficult and may require the help of the whole community. The availability of transportation, diet, exercise, sleep, and friends contribute to recovery.

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Managing Diabetes: You're Worth It! By Helen Maldonado, PA-C, CDE/California Area Diabetes Consultant



A new campaign by the National Diabetes Education Program has the following slogan: *"Managing diabetes. It's not easy, but it's worth it."* Diabetes is hard to deal with. It's difficult to make

changes in our choices of food, what we do for exercise, and how we handle stress.

While I worked in a diabetes clinic, I heard many of my patients refer to themselves as "bad" because they ate some pie or other food item that greatly increased their blood sugar level. Sometimes they would not check their blood sugar using their glucometer because they did not want to see the result. As a medical provider and diabetes specialist, I would work as a

partner with my patients. We would work on the idea that the choices they made did not make them "bad," but would result in a consequence. Managing diabetes is all about making choices. If you choose to eat a large piece of apple pie with ice cream, your blood sugar level will be high and you may not feel well afterward. If you eat only a small piece of pie or none at all and walk for 10 to 15 minutes in the fresh air, you will notice a lower blood sugar level, lower blood pressure, and you will feel better. Try this as an experiment.

The second part of this slogan is something to think deeply about... *"but it's worth it."* First, think about how great you can feel if your body is in better balance when your blood sugar is in normal range. It may have been a long time since you experienced this and will be difficult to remember how that felt, but you will feel much better. As Native people, we know

that wellness exists when our bodies, minds, and spirits are in balance. Second, think about your children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, brothers, sisters, and all your relations. They want you to feel well too. It is not selfish to take care of yourself. In reality, if you take care of yourself, you are thinking of others who depend on you to be around for a long time.

Think of the slogan again; *"Managing diabetes. It's not easy, but it's worth it"* and see if you can make it yours.

Additional Resources:

National Diabetes Education Program
<http://ndep.nih.gov/>

IHS/Division of Diabetes Treatment and Prevention
<http://www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/Diabetes/>

Food Safety By Beverly Calderon, RD, CDE/California Area Health Promotion Disease Prevention Consultant



It's that time of year...back to school, holiday feasts...when we should remind ourselves about the importance of food safety. Children, people with chronic illnesses or compromised immune systems, and elders are at higher risk for foodborne illness. They

can have more severe reactions too.

Four tips that can help you prevent foodborne illnesses:

Wash hands and food preparation surfaces often.

- Wash the front and back of hands and wrists, between fingers and under fingernails too
- Wash between tasks, like when handling raw meat and then preparing vegetables
- Use hot, soapy water to keep kitchen surfaces, appliances, countertops, cutting boards and utensils clean
- Remember that bacteria live and grow in damp conditions, and a smelly dishcloth, towel or sponge should not be used

Separate raw meats and ready-to eat foods.

- Use separate cutting boards: one only for raw meat, poultry and seafood; another for ready-to-eat foods like breads and vegetables
- Throw away old cutting boards with cracks, crevices and lots of knife scars
- Keep raw meats, poultry and seafood on the bottom shelf of the refrigerator to prevent juices from dripping onto other foods
- Keep washed vegetables in clean containers, not the ones they came in from the store

- Clean scissors blades before opening bags of food with them
- Wear latex gloves if you have a sore or cut on your hand

Cook to proper temperatures.

- Buy a meat thermometer, calibrate it, and use it
- Wash the thermometer stem thoroughly in hot, soapy water after each use
- Cook to the recommended safe minimum internal temperatures. Find these online at: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/Keep_Food_Safe_Food_Safety_Basics/index.asp

Refrigerate foods quickly and at the proper temperature.

- Two hours is the maximum time leftover foods should stay out of refrigeration, and this time decreases to one hour when the weather is hot
- Check to make sure your refrigerator is set below 40°F to keep foods out of the temperature "danger zone"
- When in doubt, just throw it out
- Follow the recommendations for food storage. Find these online at: http://www.fsis.usda.gov/factsheets/basics_for_handling_food_safely/index.asp



Visit the ADA's Home Food Safety It's in Your Hands for useful food safety topics, including a quiz to help you decide just how safe is your kitchen:

<http://www.homefoodsafety.org/index.jsp>

Dental Care for Special People By Steve Riggio, DDS/California Area Dental Consultant

If you provide care for someone with special conditions, such as Down's syndrome, Alzheimer's disease, stroke, multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injury, arthritis or genetic disorders, oral health is essential.

Many people with special conditions have physical disadvantages that limit their ability to brush and floss. Here are a few suggestions that may help:

- Attach the toothbrush handle to the hand with an elastic band
- Wrap the tooth brush handle to make it bigger and easier to manipulate
- Lengthen the handle by attaching a piece of wood or similar object
- Place the head of the toothbrush at 45-degree angle to the gums
- Move the brush gently back and forth
- Be sure to brush the outside, inside and chewing surfaces of the teeth
- Be sure to brush the tongue

If the person is not capable of brushing their own teeth, the following are effective brushing techniques:

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Mental Health Awareness (continued from page 1)



The first step to treating mental illness is to diagnose it. The Indian Health Service (IHS) recognizes the importance of screening for depression and tracks the number of patients screened for depression at each IHS, Tribal, and Urban facility. The percent of all adults age 18 and up screened for depression at reporting

IHS and Tribal facilities nationally has increased from 15% in 2006 to 52% in 2010.

Don't wait to be asked about your symptoms of depression. Be proactive about your health.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.cdc.gov/aging/mentalhealth/depression.htm>

Understanding Your Health Care; What "Health Literacy" Means By Susan Ducore, RN, MSN/ California Area Nurse Consultant

Your medical providers, nurses, pharmacists, as well as other staff, both in the clinic and in the community health setting, all play a role in helping patients better understand and use health information. This process of understanding is frequently referred to as "Health Literacy".



Health care is complicated and the health care system can be confusing. Everyone can have trouble sometimes, especially when they are sick or

have just received news that they have a disease. Not fully understanding your health care needs and prescribed medical treatment can literally harm your health. If you have trouble understanding instructions, you may have a hard time managing a health condition or taking your medicines correctly. Misunderstandings of this type can lead to increased hospital admissions and length of stay, increased money spent on health care, and ultimately poorer health. Having limited health literacy can also decrease your chances of getting important tests, like mammograms, or helping a loved one with his or her care.

Frequently, health care professionals and other care providers forget that they are speaking a medical based language that may be unfamiliar to their patients.

The following steps are recommended by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) for you to become more "Health Care Literate":

- **Ask questions.** Then, make sure you understand the answers. If you don't understand, ask the doctor or nurse for more information. Visit the following link for a list of questions to use as a guide for discussions with your medical provider, the pharmacist, or the hospital: <http://www.ahrq.gov/questionsaretheanswer/questionBuilder.aspx>

- **Repeat information back to your doctor or nurse.** After your doctor or nurse gives you directions, repeat those instructions in your own words to ensure proper understanding



- **Bring all your medicines to your next doctor's visit.** Ask your doctor to go over all of your drugs and supplements, including vitamins and herbal medicines. You may discover some mistakes, such as two drugs that shouldn't be taken together
- **Bring another adult with you.** This might be especially important when you expect to receive important information
- **Let the doctor's office know if you don't speak or understand English very well**

For additional information pertaining to "Health Literacy", visit the California Health Literacy Initiative website at <http://www.cahealthliteracy.org/index.html>.

Dental Care for Special People (continued from page 2)



If the person is not capable of flossing their own teeth, the following tips may help:

- Take a piece of floss about 18 inches long and wind it around one of your fingers. Wind the remaining end around the same finger on your opposite hand

- Holding the floss tightly, use a gentle sawing motion to guide the floss between the teeth
- Curve the floss against the curve of the tooth
- Gently scrap the side of the tooth
- Repeat the process on each tooth

When assisting with brushing and flossing, find a well-lit location. If the person is uncooperative or uncontrollable, try to calm them and choose a time of day that is less stressful. Move in a calm, slow and reassuring manner. Be sure to offer praise. Many people are unable or unwilling to keep their mouth open; a mouth prop can help with this so check with your dentist. Your dentist can offer techniques and tips when assisting wheelchair or bed ridden individuals.

Medications can affect the mouth and teeth, causing different problems, such as teeth staining, bleeding and enlarged

gums, and a dry mouth which can lead to serious dental decay. Medications that can lead to a dry mouth include certain types of sedatives, barbiturates, antihistamines and drugs used for muscle control. If a medication is causing a problem in the mouth, it should be discussed with the physician, who may be able to prescribe an alternative medication.

Daily cleaning and regular dental visits are also necessary for people with dentures. Dentures need daily cleanings to remove plaque and debris. The gums, tongue and palate should be brushed gently prior to inserting the dentures.

Good dental habits, including daily cleaning, a healthy diet and regular dental visits will help the person you care for to have healthy teeth and gums.

Healthy Homes By Lisa Nakagawa, MPH/California Area Injury Prevention Specialist

The condition of your house can significantly affect your health and well being. On average, people spend half of their time in their home, making it a very important environment for you and your family. Below are some tips that can contribute to a healthy home.

Asthma and Allergies

- Maintain a well-ventilated home that is free of pollutants such as tobacco smoke and carbon monoxide
- Use mattress pads and pillow covers and wash in water greater than 130°F weekly to kill dust mites
- Eliminate insects and pests by using gel baits, sealing cracks and eliminating sources of food and water

Mold and Moisture Control

- Vent clothes dryers and exhaust fans to the exterior
- Repair plumbing leaks and rainwater leaks
- Check and clean gutters on a routine basis

Lead Hazards (homes built before 1978)

- Repair peeling and deteriorating paint
- Keep children and pregnant women away from renovation due to possible levels of lead dust

Home Safety and Injury Prevention

- Install and routinely test smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms
- Eliminate tripping hazards by repairing stairs, using non-skid mats and rugs, and picking up potential hazards
- Install safety latches on cabinets that contain harmful products and keep medicine in a locked cabinet



Indoor Air Quality

- Service gas and oil appliances regularly to prevent inefficient burning
- Air out new carpets and furniture that can contain harmful fumes
- Avoid smoking in your home or car

For more information on Healthy Homes visit: <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyHomes/Introduction.html>