



What Could You Give Up for a Day?

Great American Smokeout

Nov. 16, 2006

If you were asked to give up one thing you loved, craved, couldn't live without for one whole day, what would it be? Scary thought, isn't it!

The Great American Smokeout is Nov. 16. Commercial tobacco users around the nation are encouraged not to use tobacco for a whole day.

A lot of people use this day as a **quit date** – a date to quit smoking and chewing for good!

Want to quit for more than one day? The Siletz Clinic pharmacy can provide free nicotine replacement therapy such as gum, patches, and lozenges for those who qualify for service after obtaining a prescription from a provider.

Quit kits are available at all Siletz Tribal area offices, the clinic in Siletz, or by calling the Oregon Quit Line at 1-877-270-7867.

Tooth Talk

by Mary Ellen Volansky, RDH, MS

Finding the Right Words for Better Health

The slogan for this year's International Health Literacy awareness celebration in October was "Finding the Right Words for Better Health."

Each time you come to this clinic, you step into a world of medical and dental words and experiences. Words we at the clinic use every day and are familiar with. Words you may not be so familiar with.

If I came to your workplace, would I understand what everyone around you was talking about? The words you use every day probably would have little meaning for me. I might give you a blank look, tell you I don't understand, and ask you to explain.

What if I **thought** I knew what you said? How would you know I did not understand? How would I know I did not understand?

Health literacy is about speaker and listener finding the right words, which sometimes are questions, not statements.

Everyone's words are important. How we speak them and the words themselves are one half of health literacy. How we listen and what we do with what we hear are the other half.

The word "literacy" can carry negativity, such as when someone doesn't know how to read, never learned, or has language differences.

My favorite synonyms for literacy are "comprehension" and "open-mindedness" (*Roget's New Millennium Thesaurus*, First Edition, 2006). If your mind is open to learning, you will increase your chances of comprehending what you need to know. This tells me it's not important whether someone knows how to read or thoroughly understands English. It's important that everyone tell me when I am not being clear.

With health literacy, health professionals' words are for providing health care information, for taking medications, on how to floss, instructions for sur-

gery, etc. The other half is to be sure you understand the information.

As important as the speaker is to any communication, the listener is equally important. Without the listener's feedback, the speaker has no way of knowing how successful the communication has been. So the listener has work to do with words as well.

The listener's role is to let the speaker know what they understand about what has been said. The listener can do this by asking questions.

What if the listener doesn't know that what she heard was not clearly understood? Here a general question like, "Does that make sense?" won't work. The speaker has to ask specific questions of the listener.

One method for checking with a listener is called "teach back." You are asked to repeat (or teach back) in the listener's own words what was heard. This is the listener's chance to choose words that further our exchange. Your words in the form of questions or statements further learning for both of us because what I learn with you, I will utilize with others.

The speaker can ask a specific question about the exchanged words. If I was talking about home care, I could ask, "Is brushing for cleaning the teeth, the gums, or both?" Or, "Does brushing clean all surfaces of all your teeth?"

In health literacy, it's the health care provider's job to turn health care mumbo jumbo into comprehensible words that will enable you to make a clear decision for your health.

It's my responsibility to be clear when we meet. It's your job to be clear about what you understand. If we both are clear in our words, you will make better choices for your oral health.

For more information on health literacy, check the Dental Web page. If you have comments or questions, write to toothtalk@ctsi.nsn.us.

Time to Get Your Flu Shot

by Laurel Johnson

With winter weather on the way, now is the time to take preventive measures to stay healthy during flu season. The fall months are the best time to get vaccinated, and the sooner the better according to Siletz Clinic Nurse Deb Shomaker.

Though it varies, as the Center for Disease Control (CDC) states, flu season can last as late as May. To guard against the flu, the Siletz Clinic will offer flu vaccinations to tribal members, tribal employees, and members of the community this month.

Shomaker indicates that a shortage of the vaccine is **not** expected and there will be enough for everyone who wants a flu shot.

Shomaker also notes that there are three ways to receive the flu vaccine:

- At your regular provider visit
- Schedule an appointment with a clinic nurse
- Participate in a walk-in clinic available from 10 a.m.-11 a.m. Monday through Friday, and 2 p.m.-3 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. The clinic is closed on Tuesday afternoons.

According to CDC, the flu can cause mild to chronic illness and can lead to death. More than 35,000 people die every year in the United States and more than 200,000 are hospitalized for flu complications. Some people, such as the elderly, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious flu complications.

The CDC notes that flu viruses are spread mainly from one person to another through the coughing or sneezing of those infected with the virus. People also can become infected by touching something containing flu viruses and then touching their mouth or nose.

The majority of healthy adults can infect others as early as one day prior to developing symptoms and up to five days after becoming ill. This means you can pass the virus to another person before you know you have the flu.

How Do You Know If You Have the Flu?

According to the CDC, flu symptoms include fever, headache, exhaustion, dry cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle aches, and stomach problems such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Flu complications can include bacterial pneumonia, ear infections, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes.

The flu shot, which is an inactivated vaccine containing killed flu virus, is given with a needle and is approved for persons 6 months of age and older, including healthy people and those with chronic medical conditions. Approximately two weeks after vaccination, antibodies develop to protect

against the flu. Flu vaccines will not, however, protect against flu-like illnesses caused by non-influenza viruses.

Infants between 6 and 35 months of age will receive one-half the normal dose of the flu vaccine, whereas children never immunized before who are between 6 months and 9 years old will be given two doses one month apart. Children who have received the flu vaccine in the past will only have to be vaccinated once a year after their first flu shot series.

All children 6 months to 5 years old should be vaccinated against influenza starting this fall. Also, all persons who have contact with children in this age group, especially those children who are between 5 and 18 years old – **and** who have household contact with children under 5 years old – **should be vaccinated.**

Additionally, certain people should get vaccinated each year either because they are at high risk of developing serious flu-related complications or because they live with or care for high-risk persons.

During flu seasons when vaccine supplies are limited or delayed, the following people should get vaccinated:

1. People at high risk for complications from the flu, including:
 - Children 6-59 months of age
 - Children and adolescents (6 months-18 years) receiving long-term aspirin therapy
 - Pregnant women
 - People age 50 and older
 - People of any age with certain chronic medical conditions
 - People in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
2. People who live with or care for those at high risk for complications from the flu, including:
 - Household contacts of persons at high risk for complications from the flu (see above)
 - Household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children less than 6 months old (these children are too young to be vaccinated)
 - Health care workers
3. Anyone who wants to decrease their risk of influenza

Some people should not be vaccinated without first consulting a physician:

- People who have a severe allergy to chicken eggs
- People who have had a severe reaction to a flu shot in the past
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within six weeks of getting a flu shot previously
- Children less than 6 months old
- People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen

For more information and/or to schedule a flu shot, contact Deborah Shomaker at the Siletz Clinic at 1-800-648-0449 or 541-444-1030, ext. 1604.