

Health & SCIENCE



Influenza Immunization Urged

The Adult Immunization Coalition, a group of private and government health organizations, is launching its annual "Knock Out the Flu" campaign for 1995.

Influenza is a contagious respiratory disease which, combined with pneumonia, ranks as the sixth leading cause of death both in Oregon and nationally. About 33 percent of Oregon's high-risk individuals are not vaccinated against influenza.

"Flu vaccines are a simple, effective way to prevent illness and save lives. Thanks to their availability, the number of deaths and disability caused by the flu can be substantially decreased," said Dr. Grant Higginson, state health officer.

Higginson also notes that flu vaccines are covered by Medicare. He recommends getting vaccinated between mid-October and mid-November since flu

since flu season arrives in late fall and persists throughout the winter months. This allows sufficient time for antibodies to build up before the peak of flu season.

Those at greatest risk from severe effects of the flu are: healthy people who are 65 or older, adults and children with chronic disorders of the heart and lungs, including children with asthma and residents of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities.

People who live and work around high risk patients also need to be vaccinated because they can transmit influenza to high risk persons. Influenza strains differ each year, so the coalition advises citizens to get their flu shot annually.

Contact your health care provider, county health department or 1-800 SAFENET for flu clinics in your area.



Ebony McKinney is in recovery after being diagnosed with a life-threatening disorder of the immune system.

Never Underestimate The Power Of A Wish

Anyone who thinks wishes don't come true hasn't talked to Ebony McKinney.

The 19-year-old college sophomore from Pittsburgh, Penn., has seen two big wishes come true in her life and hopes one day she can help grant wishes to others through the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

As a pre-teen, McKinney was diagnosed with a life-threatening disorder of the immune system. She spent many years in constant pain and the medications made her feel uncomfortable and unattractive. Although she was an excellent student, she missed a lot of school because of her illness. In on bleak moment she considered suicide.

But never underestimate the power of a wish or two wishes for that matter. McKinney certainly doesn't.

When she was 10, she told

the Make-A-Wish Foundation she'd like to meet her favorite pop singer star Whitney Houston. Having her wish actually come true, at a concert in Los Angeles in 1986, "helped me start believing in things again, in other people and in myself," McKinney said.

Today, McKinney's disease is in clinical remission and she recently started her second year at Chatham College for women in Pittsburgh, where she is majoring in English with a minor in communications.

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the founding of Make-A-Wish. Since 1980, the organization has grown to 83 chapters in the United States, with 13 international affiliates.

Foundation volunteers have granted more than 33,000 wishes to children with terminal illnesses.

Good Diet, Exercise Slows Heart Disease

A scanning technique used primarily for investigating brain disorders has confirmed that diet and exercise can moderately reverse heart disease, according to a new report.

A number of studies in the past few years have shown that low-fat diets and exercise can stop the progression of heart disease or even partially reverse it but the degree to which that happens has been difficult to demonstrate, researchers at the University of Texas Medical School said.

In a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, they reported on

the use of positron emission tomography (PET) scans on a group of 35 patients observed over a five-year period who had been diagnosed with coronary artery disease. Fifteen of the patients ate a vegetarian diet consisting of 15 percent protein and 75 percent complex carbohydrates, stopped smoking if they had been, practiced stress management techniques for an hour daily and did mild-to-moderate aerobic exercises three hours a week. Forty-five percent of the patients not on the diet and exercise program had a worsening of the build-up of plaque on artery walls, while 50 percent in that group showed no change. "By comparison most of

the patients in the experimental group (all but 1 percent) showed improvement or no change. The difference in these changes between control and experimental groups was significant," the report said.

The scanning technique produces three-dimensional images of blood flow through the circulatory system. Such scans have primarily been used in medicine for probing brain disorders.

The researchers said the technique is also much cheaper and less invasive than using angiograms — currently the most common method for checking on blocked or clogged arteries.

Is It A Cold Or The Flu?

When people say they have the flu, do they really?

Influenza is caused by one of two virus strain types A or B and it is only prevalent during the fall and winter months.

The flu is characterized by a sudden high fever, head and muscle aches and sore throat. People can expect to feel sick usually 5-10 days. The flu has very little to do with any nausea, vomiting or diarrhea.

A cold is an upper respiratory infection caused by hundreds of vi-

ruses. It can last five to seven days and appears any time of the year. A flu shot does not prevent a cold, but it's 70 percent effective in fighting the flu virus in healthy persons.

"The flu is considered a preventable infectious disease, says Dr. Adrianee Feldstein, internist and director of Kaiser Permanente's Occupational Health Services Department. "I highly recommend one (a flu shot) for the elderly, chronically ill, or anyone who wants to decrease their chance of getting the virus this win-

ter." The U.S. Centers for Disease Control say October is the time to get a flu shot. This gives the body enough time to build up immunities needed to fight the virus during the flu season, which usually runs November through February.

For more information on where to get flu vaccinations, people should contact their health care provider or call 1-800-SAFENET for a listing of flu clinics in the community.

Needle Exchange Slow Spread Of AIDS

Needle exchange programs can slow the spread of AIDS among drug users and the federal government should lift a ban on helping to fund them, an influential medical advisory panel has said.

The joint panel of the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine also concluded that needle exchange programs do not encourage more people to use drugs or lead drug abusers to take even more drugs.

The panel, which gives non-binding but influential advice to the government, did not call for a mandatory national needle exchange program, but said communities should be free to establish them without federal obstacles or fear of losing federal funding.

AIDS initially, mainly affected gay men, who accounted for about

three-fourths of the cases, but only half the cases are now linked to male homosexual sex.

At the same time, the proportion of cases involving people who inject illegal drugs, often sharing needles contaminated with HIV, the deadly AIDS virus, rose from 12 percent in 1981 to 28 percent in 1993.

That in turn has led to increasing numbers of women and children infected with HIV, either through drug use by the women or their having sex with partners who were drug users. Infected women can pass the virus to unborn babies.

The book-length report says needle exchange programs are preferable to just using bleach to sterilize needles, although bleach is better than nothing at all.

"Needle exchange programs in-

crease the availability of sterile injection equipment," the report said. "The lower the fraction of needles in circulation that are contaminated, the lower the risk of new HIV infections."

Although the act of giving a clean needle to a drug addict "has a powerful symbolism that has sparked fears" that it will encourage drug use, the reverse may be true, it said.

"These programs often result in more referrals to drug abuse treatment," said panel chairman Lincoln Moses, a health policy professor emeritus at Stanford.

The panel recommended more long-term monitoring on drug use patterns, saying experience with needle-exchange programs is limited.

Pain may be eliminated for millions

(SPECIAL)—A new drug has been approved that is exciting researchers in the treatment of pain. This material has been formulated into a new product known as "Arthur Itis™" and is being called a "Medical Miracle" by some, in the treatment of debilitating conditions such as arthritis, bursitis, rheumatism, painful muscle aches, joint aches, simple backache, bruises, and more. Although the mechanism of action is unclear, experiments indicate that Arthur Itis™ relieves pain by first selectively attracting, and then destroying the messenger chemical which carries pain sensations to the brain, thus eliminating pain in the affected area. Arthur Itis™ is an odorless, greaseless, non-staining cream and is available immediately without a prescription and is guaranteed to work.

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