

# Health & Science



## Fighting AIDS

The Urban League of Portland is increasing its efforts to help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Portland area, particularly in the African American community. The League has created an HIV/AIDS Community Outreach Office to provide prevention education and connect people who are HIV positive with appropriate services.

"Our goal is to be aggressive the awareness of HIV/AIDS in the African American community and to partner with other agencies and organizations in this important work," said League President and CEO Lawrence J. Dark. Mr. Dark serves on the American Red Cross National HIV/AIDS Education Review Panel, which reviews all HIV/AIDS related materials produced by the Red Cross for the Centers of Disease Control.

Urban League staff members Ameera Saahir, Cecil Prescod and Terry Durst assist with outreach and education efforts. A total of six Urban League staff members have received training in teaching HIV/AIDS education to communities of color. In September several Urban League staff will discuss their work before the first annual African American Wellness Conference in Portland.

National and local statistics indicate a rising number of HIV/AIDS cases in communities of color. The



Urban League of Portland HIV/AIDS outreach staff (from left) Cecil Prescod, Ameera Saahir and Terry Durst.

Urban League is focusing its outreach efforts on groups within the African American community. "Different groups in our community have different needs," said the League's Terry Durst. "Women who are HIV Positive need a support system that is appropriate for their culture. Young people who are HIV positive are often cut off from their families. The rate of infection for African American men is nearly five times greater than for white men."

The Urban League has developed a number of HIV/AIDS education/prevention and client services programs. One goal is to encourage people who are HIV+ to utilize available health services, with a special

emphasis on communities of color. Research indicates that people of color with HIV are less likely to know about and utilize health services. The Urban League is working to develop a sense of community and individual responsibility for the risk of HIV infection.

For more information about Urban League programs, contact Ameera Saahir or Cecil Prescod at 280-2643.

The Urban League of Portland is a non-profit, community-based human service, economic and social justice agency serving youth and families, students, job seekers, and seniors in the metro area.

## Pregnant? Don't eat peanuts

More and more children are becoming allergic to peanuts and this could be because more pregnant women are eating them, sensitizing their unborn babies, British doctors said Friday.

Allergy to peanuts is the most common cause of fatal allergic reaction to food. In severe cases just a tiny amount of peanut is needed to set off a reaction.

Dr. Jonathan Hourihane and colleagues at Southampton General Hospital tested 622 adults and children with known or suspected peanut allergy. They found it is more common than believed.

Reporting in the British Medical Journal, they said just over one percent of the British population was

allergic to peanuts, while seven percent of brothers or sisters of someone allergic to peanuts were also allergic.

Mothers of allergic children were also more likely to be allergic than fathers, and the researchers said they found a tendency for allergy to run in families.

"It has been suggested that before first exposure to peanut foods some infants have been sensitised to peanut by infant milk formulas that contain peanut protein or peanut oil," they wrote.

"Our simple survey of peanut consumption during pregnancy and breast feeding by mothers of these children with peanut allergy may suggest that they are being exposed

to peanut allergens in utero or via breast milk."

They suggested that pregnant and breast-feeding women avoid peanuts — especially if they have other allergies.

In a second study, Dr. Syed Tariq and colleagues at St. Mary's Hospital in Newport found that one in 100 children can become allergic to peanuts by the age of four.

Tests on 1,200 children showed that those born to families with allergies were much more prone to peanut and nut allergies and should avoid both.

They also found that children with peanut allergies always had some other allergy, such as eczema or asthma.

## Drug from flower still useful

Digitalis, a popular heart drug derived from a common garden flower, still stands up pretty well against sophisticated modern pharmaceuticals, doctors said Monday.

Heart specialists attending the European Congress of Cardiology in Birmingham debated just what aspects of heart disease digitalis was good for — but they agreed the old-fashioned treatment still had its uses.

The artist Vincent van Gogh was prescribed digitalis and painted his doctor holding the foxglove plant from which it is extracted. But the drug has been subjected to few clinical trials, perhaps because of its venerable reputation.

Richard Gorlin of the Mount Sinai Medical Center in New York headed a study of 8,000 patients given a drug derived from digitalis, called digoxin, for congestive heart failure — when the heart does not pump effectively and blood backs up in the system.

He said digoxin had little effect on deaths. "There was no impact on mortality," he told a news conference.

But, he said, 25 to 30 percent fewer patients had to be hospitalized for congestive heart failure — indicating that the drug was doing some good. Patients were, however, hospitalized for other problems at the same rate as heart patients not given digoxin.

William Littler, chief of cardiology

at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, said digoxin made patients feel better even if it did not lengthen their lives.

## Make the most out of your physical

The next time you go for a complete physical exam, "brown bag" it.

"Sweep all prescription and over-the-counter medications from the bedside table and medicine cabinet into a paper bag and take them to your physician," said Dr. Isaac Kleinman, associate professor of family medicine at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston.

"This is especially important when you're accompanying elderly family members who are treated by several specialists to be sure their drugs are not incompatible, unnecessary or outdated," he said.

Also, take along notes on your health history. Make a list of major illnesses, surgeries and immunizations you have had and the years they occurred, and note serious health problems that have run in your family.

"The patient's medical history is the most important part of a health checkup," Kleinman said. "Most di-

agnoses are based on this information."

During the physical exam, your doctor should:

- Note weight, blood pressure, pulse and temperature
- Inspect the eyes, ears, nose and throat
- Listen to the heart and lungs for unusual sounds
- Test for sensation in fingers and feet
- Check reflexes and balance
- Check the abdomen, lymph nodes and breasts for swelling or lumps
- Inspect the skin for lesions, rashes or other abnormalities
- Do a rectal exam (including check for prostate cancer in men)
- Order a blood and urine analysis
- Check for blood in the stool.

Women should also have a Pap smear, pelvic exam and mammogram. Men should have a testicular exam.

Remember that your life-style, age and other health problems will affect

which lab tests the physician requests and the need for additional procedures, such as sigmoidoscopy (viewing the lower colon through a tube inserted in the rectum).

Kleinman recommends that healthy adults get a full physical every five years, starting at age 20.

A blood-pressure check, Papsmear and breast exam should be done every year.

Starting at age 40, you should have a rectal exam and a test for blood in the stool every year and get your eyeball pressure checked for glaucoma every two years.

Starting at age 45, women should have a mammogram annually.

"Always ask your doctor to explain anything you don't understand," Kleinman said. "Be sure to find out whether your lab results will be reported to you by phone, letter or in person during your next visit. Don't assume there's nothing wrong if you don't hear from your doctor."

## Red wine for your heart

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the same rate as heart patients not given digoxin.

William Littler, chief of cardiology at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Birmingham, said digoxin made patients feel better even if it did not lengthen their lives.

"Digoxin clearly improves symptoms," he said.

He said the nature of heart disease had changed in the 200 years since digitalis was first prescribed by an

English doctor intrigued by the success of an old woman herbalist.

There were fewer cases of rheumatic heart disease arising from fevers and more cases of coronary heart disease, which is often related to a high-fat diet.

He said digoxin was still one of the best drugs for heart arrhythmias, or irregular heart-beat rhythms, which affect 15 percent of westerners over the age of 70.

## Healthvan cruises your neighborhood

The Adventist Medical Center Healthvan travels to various Portland-area locations each month, offering free and low-cost health testing, screenings and education.

Services are open to the public at each site.

**-Sept. 6--United Way DAY OF CARING.** Pioneer Courthouse Square, 701 SW 6th Ave., 11:15am-1:30pm. 228-9131.

**-Sept. 8--Race for the Cure.** Waterfront Park, Front Avenue. 423-2365.

**-Sept. 10--Fringe Benefits Fair.** David Douglas High School, 1500

SE 130th. 261-8225.

**-Sept. 15--American Heart Walk.** Springwater Corridor Trail, 1200 N Main, Gresham, OR. 233-0100.

**-Sept. 20--"Spirit Summit" Regional Drug Initiative.** Salvation Army (Moore Center), 5335 N Williams Avenue. 294-7074.

**-Sept. 22--Fujitsu Classic 8K Benefit Run.** Main City Park, Gresham, OR. 251-6162.

**-Sept. 24--Hollywood Senior Center.** 1820 NE 40th. 288-8303.

**-Sept. 26--Value Village.** 82nd & SE Foster. 771-5472.

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The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation

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**Sunday, September 8, 8am**  
Waterfront Park, Portland

KOIN, The Oregonian, Chevron, K123, Purdy, etc.

Photo courtesy of Avid Source

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**Make Self Care A Priority**

Making a personal commitment to take time out for you may mean reshuffling priorities.

With our unique roles as mother, wife, sisters, career women - and sometimes all of the above - our schedule is already full.

Cherish your body for the great gift that it is, and give it the best of care.

It is recommended that women 40 and older get annual health exams. Early detection saves lives.

If you are 40 or older you may qualify for a free Women's Health Check, which includes a pap test and mammogram.

Sign Up for the Race For The Cure September 8th, 1996

For more information call 795-3908

Multnomah County Breast and Cervical Cancer Partnership BCCP

Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation

MULTNOMAH COUNTY OREGON