



Doug Wirth, CEO

HAPPY SPRING

Spring is a great time to "check-in" with yourself. Ask yourself the following questions and make important decisions about how you are *LIVING YOUR LIFE*.

"Am I happy with my medical providers? Do I trust them enough to tell them what is really going on with me? If not, did I tell them what I'm not satisfied with, or have I asked them for what I want/need?" Don't "break-up" with your provider without first trying to improve the relationship. Read 'Connected or Not' on page 2 for more information.

"What steps can I take to improve my own health and well-being?" A little exercise goes a long way to improving how you feel, both within your body and emotional life (see pg 5). Eating good foods and enough of them will help keep you strong and energized for your days. Did you know that meal programs at ADHC programs can supplement your home cooking and help you meet new friends? Check out the list of programs in the Provider Directory or website listing at www.vidacare.org/.

The rest of the newsletter provides important information on key health matters that we all need to pay attention to: Asthma, STDs, Heart Disease, Lead Poisoning, Family Planning and Harm Reduction. Check them out. Feel free to call Member Services with any questions and/or for more information at 1-800-556-0689. Happy Spring and remember to **LIVE YOUR LIFE!**



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Upcoming VidaCare Live Your Life Events For Members Only (+1 Guest)

April 14th, 3-5pm ~ Accessing Inner Peace
Miranda is back by popular demand. Please come and join us for an afternoon of finding Inner Peace.

Lifeworks Center 150 W 28th St. Suite 1104

May 20th, 3-5pm ~ Sacred African Dance
Our own Naffissa is back for another afternoon of African Dance. Come and us for an afternoon of fun and movement!

Lifeworks Center 150 W 28th St. Suite 1104

June 17th, 3-5pm ~ Building Healthy Relationships
Learn simple techniques of how to have healthy relationships with James Brace, LCSW. Using Core Energetics, find ways to express your true feelings.

Lifeworks Center 150 W 28th St. Suite 1104

July 18th and 22nd, 3-5pm~Drum Making
Join Terry Tafoya for an exciting new LYL program. Learn how to make your own drum from start to finish!

***Please note this event is in 2 parts.*

VidaCare 248 West 35th St

Call **1-800-556-0689** to reserve your place & reconfirm the event locations. **Members only (plus one guest)!**



Do You Feel “Connected” or Not?

A recent study published in a medical journal looked at “connectedness” as a measure of the patient-doctor relationship. Researchers looked at factors like how long it had been since the patient last visited the doctor and whether or not primary care providers considered the patient as “my patient,” as a patient shared with practice partners, or as one to whom they had merely been assigned.

The investigators studied over 155,000 patients. The good news is that about 60 percent of patients studied had the kind of relationship with their primary care providers that could be considered “connected.” But a lot of patients did not. About one in three patients were merely “connected” to an entire practice of physicians but not a single doctor; and just over 5 percent of patients were not “connected” at all.

So why does it matter? Because, the researchers found that those patients with the strongest relationships to their primary care providers were also more likely to receive recommended tests and preventive care. For persons living with HIV preventative care is *very* important. As the treatment of HIV has improved primary care for PLWH has changed. Primary Care Providers are more concerned with preventive care than ever before.

Your HIV Primary Care Provider should be comfortable asking questions about substance and alcohol use or different sexual behaviors. Preventative care includes eye exams, dental care, an assessment of mental health and substance abuse issues, TB testing, cervical pap smears for women and anal pap tests for men who have sex with men. Preventative care includes education regarding; safer-sex practices, substance use counseling, tobacco use, reproductive health counseling and diet and exercise. Are you talking to your PCP about these issues? Do you feel comfortable discussing everything that is going on with you? Give your provider a chance – ask him or her about what is really on your mind. Remember that your provider is there to help you, not judge you.

Consider how connected you are to your primary care provider and what you can do to get and stay more connected. Your health may depend on it.

*Sources: The New York Times, Pauline W. Chen, M.D. March 26, 2009;
<http://www.hivguidelines.org/GuidelineDocuments/a-primca.pdf>*



For information about VidaCare’s Primary Care Providers (PCP’s) or to change your PCP, call VidaCare Member Services toll-free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 1-800-556-0689.

Asthma

Asthma is a common disease among New York City’s children and adults. People with asthma have chronic lung inflammation and episodes of airway tightening that cause symptoms such as wheezing, coughing, and shortness of breath. Although we do not yet know how to prevent asthma, we do know that asthma can be controlled both by avoiding exposure to triggers and by taking anti-inflammatory medicines. With good control, almost all people with asthma can lead normal, active lives.



The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene encourages individuals with asthma to understand and manage it: **KICK Asthma**

Know what worsens your asthma.

Inform your doctor about frequent asthma symptoms.

Control frequent symptoms by using long-term control asthma medicines (inhaled corticosteroids are the most effective) and by avoiding tobacco smoke and other triggers.

Keep regular doctor’s visits, and ask your doctor for a written Asthma Action Plan.

Call 311 to request asthma brochures and other materials.

Free & Confidential STD Clinics

Although we understand that most individuals may want to be examined and if necessary treated by their primary care provider, the City Health Department does provide free and confidential STD clinics to the public. These clinics are available to non-enrolled sexual and needle sharing partners for free.

NOTE: Minors do NOT need parental consent for examination and treatment. For additional information, call 311. These clinics are located in all five boroughs, with some having Saturday hours.

IMPORTANT!!!!!!! EAT before your clinic visit. It is not necessary to fast before testing.

What You Can Expect During a Visit to an STD Clinic

Upon arriving at the Clinic, you will be asked to fill out a form with information about yourself and your reasons for coming to the clinic. Your medical records are confidential, meaning no one has access to them except authorized Health Department personnel. On this form, a number will be written. To ensure your confidentiality, you will be called by that number throughout your clinic visit. During registration, you will be called and seen by a clinician. Our medical staff is made up of doctors who have been practicing the specialty of diagnosing and treating STDs for some time. Please be accurate and detailed when providing information, so that we can provide you with the best medical and counseling services, when discussing your medical history with the clinician.

During the medical exam, a clinician will take specimens, some of which will be tested at our on-site lab. A microbiologist will perform the lab tests and share the results with your doctor. If indicated by those results, you will receive medication before you depart the clinic. Some specimens though may be sent to an outside lab for testing. The clinic staff will let you know how and when to get those results so you can come in for additional treatment and follow-up if required.

Viral hepatitis services are offered at several clinics. Hepatitis C screening is available for patients at risk of infection. There is no vaccine for Hepatitis C. Vaccine for Hepatitis B is available to ALL patients who have not been vaccinated or infected in the past. Vaccine for hepatitis A is available to patients at high risk of infection. Hepatitis A vaccine will NOT be provided for travel purposes.



Clinics are located in all five boroughs. For locations, phone numbers, hours of operation, and any additional information, please **call 311**.

Source: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/std/std2.shtml>

Diabetes

There have been several small studies that linked the use of protease inhibitors with diabetes. For some people, diabetes can occur after months or years of using these drugs. If you have a family history of diabetes, are obese and sedentary, your chances to get diabetes are increased. Talk to your doctor about your blood sugar. Some people have to start an exercise program, see a dietitian for diet change, take diabetes drugs, and/or switch HIV medications to manage the problem.



NYC Diabetes Quick Facts

- 700,000 New Yorkers have diabetes - almost a third don't know they have it.
- More than 100,000 New Yorkers with very poorly controlled diabetes are at high risk of heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, blindness, and amputations.
- If you have diabetes, keeping your blood sugar, blood pressure and cholesterol in check, and not smoking, will help prevent complications.
- Talk to your doctor about how you are doing. Regular physical activity, a healthy diet, and taking medications are very important for control of diabetes.

*Sources: <http://www.thebody.com/Forums/AIDS/Nutrition/Archive/Diabetes/Q145973.html>;
<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/diabetes/diabetes.shtml>*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT ~ EATING WELL MATTERS!



First, eat more of the right foods. Extra muscle weight will help you fight HIV. This is very important. Many people want to lose weight, but for people with HIV, it can be dangerous. Make sure you eat plenty of protein and starches, with moderate amounts of fat.

1. **PROTEIN** helps build and maintain your muscles. Meats, fish, beans, nuts, and seeds are good sources.
2. Carbohydrates give you energy. **COMPLEX CARBOHYDRATES** come from grains, cereals, vegetables, and fruits. They are a “time release” energy source and are a good source of fiber and nutrients. **SIMPLE CARBOHYDRATES**, or sugars, give you quick energy. You can get sugars in fresh or dried fruit, honey, jam, or syrups.
3. **FAT** gives you extra energy. You need some — but not too much. The “monounsaturated” fats in nuts, seeds, canola and olive oils, and fish are considered “good” fats. The “saturated” fats in butter and animal products are “bad” fats.

A moderate **EXERCISE** program will help your body turn your food into muscle. Take it easy, and work exercise into your daily activities. *For more help with nutrition/exercise, try an AIDS Day Health Care program. Listing available on www.vidacare.org or in the Provider Directory.*

Drinking enough **LIQUIDS** is very important when you have HIV. Extra water can reduce the side effects of medications. It can help you avoid a dry mouth and constipation. Remember that drinking tea, coffee, colas, chocolate, or alcohol can actually make you lose body liquid.

PRACTICE FOOD SAFETY

It's very important to protect yourself against infections that can be carried by food or water.

Be sure to wash your hands before preparing food, and keep all of your kitchen tools and work areas clean. Wash all fruits and vegetables carefully. Don't eat raw or undercooked eggs or meat, and clean up juices from raw meat quickly. Keep leftovers refrigerated and eat them within three days. Check the expiration date on foods. Don't buy them or eat them if they're outdated.

Some germs are spread through tap water. If your public water supply isn't totally pure, drink bottled water.

WHAT ABOUT SUPPLEMENTS?

Some people find it difficult to go shopping and prepare meals all the time. Supplements can help you maintain your body weight and get the vitamins and minerals you need. Don't use a product designed to help you lose weight, even if it says it contains everything needed for good nutrition! Your health care provider can help you choose a supplement that's right for you.

THE BOTTOM LINE

- ◆ Good nutrition is very important for people with HIV. When you are HIV-positive, you will need to increase the amount of food you eat and maintain your lean body weight.
- ◆ Be sure to eat a balanced diet, including plenty of protein and whole grain foods, with some sugar and fat. An exercise program will help build and maintain muscle.
- ◆ Drink plenty of liquids to help your body deal with any medications you are taking.
- ◆ Practice food safety. Keep your kitchen clean, wash foods, and be careful about food preparation and storage. If your tap water isn't pure, drink bottled water.
- ◆ If you feel you need to use nutritional supplements, be sure to get some expert advice from your health care provider.

Source: http://www.aidsinonet.org/fact_sheets/view/800?lang=eng

LET'S MOVE IT TO IT!!! (a little sweat goes a long way!)

But Don't Over Do It!

A moderate exercise program will help your body turn your food into muscle. Take it easy, and work exercise into your daily activities.

Work up to a schedule of at least 20 minutes, at least three times per week as long as you are feeling better. This can lead to significant improvements in your fitness level and you may feel better.

People with HIV can improve their fitness levels through training like those who do not have HIV. However, people with HIV may find it harder to continue with a training program because of fatigue.

Start exercising while you are still healthy. This can help you hold off symptoms of HIV that make you feel bad. Keep your exercise fresh. Find new ways to keep yourself motivated to maintain your exercise program.

Your fitness level may be different than it used to be. It is very important that you work your way into an exercise program to avoid injury.

Eat and Drink Correctly

Drinking enough liquids is very important when you exercise. Extra water can help you replace the fluids you lose. Remember that drinking tea, coffee, colas, chocolate, or alcohol can actually make you lose body liquid.

Don't eat when you exercise. In fact, it's best to wait up to 2 hours after a full meal before an exercise session. Also, wait about an hour after a workout before you eat your next meal.

Proper nutrition is also important. With increased activity, you may need to eat more calories to avoid losing weight.

Choose Something You Enjoy

Choose activities that you like. Whether it is yoga, running, bicycling, or another sport, doing something you like will encourage you to maintain your program. Don't get into a rut! Change your activities if you need to so that you stay motivated.

If your fitness level is good, you can compete in competitive sports. Taking part in competitive or team sports does not pose a risk of spreading HIV to other athletes or coaches.

If you get hurt and you're bleeding, the risk of HIV being spread to other people is very small. However, if you bleed during a sport, you should get out of the game and cover your injuries before returning to the game.

Exercise with Weights

Weight training (resistance exercise) is one of the best ways to increase lean body mass that may be lost through HIV disease and aging. Working out three times a week for an hour should be enough if done well. Combining weight training with 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise may be the best way to improve body composition and keep your blood lipids and sugar down. Cardiovascular exercise means working large muscle groups continuously for at least 30 minutes. Activities such as brisk walking, jogging, bicycling or swimming can be cardiovascular exercise.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Exercise can improve strength, fight fatigue and depression, improve endurance, increase cardiovascular fitness, help to reduce stress and promote muscle strength. It may also help the immune system work better.

Source: http://www.aidsinfonyet.org/fact_sheets/view/802

***CHECK OUT the LIVE YOUR LIFE Programs on
Page 1 for Exercise & Movement Programs !!!***



HIV & Cardiovascular Disease



WHAT IS CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE (CVD)?

CVD includes a group of problems related to the heart (cardio) or to blood vessels (vascular), such as;

- coronary heart disease (heart attacks);
- cerebrovascular disease (problems with blood vessels in the brain);
- high blood pressure (hypertension);
- peripheral artery disease (blocked blood vessels in the legs);
- rheumatic heart disease (a complication of a throat infection);
- congenital heart disease (due to a birth defect); and
- heart failure.

WHY SHOULD PEOPLE WITH HIV CARE ABOUT CVD?

Because HIV medications are so effective, people with HIV are living longer. Some studies show that CVD is the cause of 20% of deaths of people with HIV. People with HIV have higher rates of CVD than the general population. HIV infection by itself increases some CVD risk factors. Antiretroviral therapy (ART) can also increase CVD risk.

HOW CAN YOU REDUCE THE RISK OF CVD?

The most important things you can do to reduce your CVD risk are to reduce the normal risk factors. Stopping smoking has the greatest impact. Also, changing eating and exercise habits can reduce levels of cholesterol, triglycerides and glucose (sugar.)

WHAT ABOUT CHANGING MEDICATIONS?

Some people with HIV have changed their medications in order to lower their cholesterol. There is no evidence that this is effective. A recent study showed that it is risky to stop taking anti-HIV medications. People who stopped taking medications had more health problems than people who continued their drugs.

Source: <http://img.thebody.com/nmai/652.pdf>

High Blood Pressure

High Blood Pressure is also called: HBP, HTN, and Hypertension. Blood pressure is the force of your blood pushing against the walls of your arteries. Each time your heart beats, it pumps out blood into the arteries. Your blood pressure is highest when your heart beats, pumping the blood. This is called systolic pressure. When your heart is at rest, between beats, your blood pressure falls. This is the diastolic pressure.

Your blood pressure reading uses these two numbers, the systolic and diastolic pressures.

Usually they are written one above or before the other. A reading of

120/80 or lower is normal blood pressure

140/90 or higher is high blood pressure

High blood pressure usually has no symptoms, but it can cause serious problems such as stroke, heart failure, heart attack and kidney failure. You can control high blood pressure through healthy lifestyle habits and taking medicines, if needed.



Source: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/highbloodpressure.html>

Lead Poisoning Prevention

Lead poisoning remains a significant health problem in New York City (NYC). In young children, exposure to lead can result in long-lasting neurological damage, including learning and behavioral problems and lowered intelligence. Most people with lead poisoning show no clinical symptoms. Blood lead tests are routinely required for diagnosis. New York State (NYS) law requires blood lead testing for every child at both 1 and 2 years of age and for other children found to be at risk.

A pregnant woman with an elevated Blood Lead Level (BLL) can pass the lead to her developing fetus; children born with elevated BLLs may suffer cognitive and developmental problems as a result of prenatal exposure.

Risk Reduction for Pregnant Women

- Avoid using health remedies, spices, foods, or cosmetics from other countries;
- Avoid using clay pots and dishes from other countries to cook, serve, or store food and do not use pottery that is chipped or cracked;
- Never eat non-food items such as clay, soil, pottery, or paint chips;
- Stay away from any repair work being done in the home; and
- Avoid jobs or hobbies that may involve contact with lead, such as home renovation or working with glass, ceramics, or jewelry.

Risk Reduction for Children

- Keep your child away from peeling paint and home repairs that disturb lead paint;
- Report peeling paint to your landlord. If your landlord does not make repairs, call 311;
- Frequently wash hands, toys, pacifiers, bottles, and other items your child puts in his or her mouth;
- Clean floors, windowsills, and dusty places often with wet mops and wet cloths;
- Use caution when using candies, spices, snack foods, and children's toys and jewelry made in other countries. These items may contain lead; and
- Use only cold tap water for making baby formula, drinking, and cooking. Let the water run for a few minutes before use.

For more information about the services provided by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Lead Poisoning Prevention Program or what you can do to help prevent lead poisoning, call **311**.

Source: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/chi/chi26-3.pdf>; and <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/>

Early Intervention Program

Do you know or care about a child under age 3 that:

- is the child of a teenage mother
- is the child of a mother who did not receive prenatal care
- had a birth weight of less than 1501 grams (3 pounds, 5 ounces)
- has missed or failed an initial newborn hearing screening
- is small for their age
- has been exposed to homelessness or domestic violence

Approximately 15% of U.S. children have some form of developmental delay that affects their ability to communicate, learn, interact with others or regulate their behavior. Only 30% of those delays are identified before a child reaches school age. Finding and addressing developmental delays earlier can play a significant role in helping children reach their full potential.

Call 311 and ask for Early Intervention

Source: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/earlyint/dmu-doctor-brochure-online.pdf>



Children at Home? Keep them safe.

In New York City, injuries are also a leading cause of death and disability. In 2002, injuries ranked in the top 10 leading causes of death for all New Yorkers. For teens and young adults aged 15 to 34 years, injury ranked first as the cause of death. Injuries ranked second as the cause of death for children aged 1 to 14 years.



Many accidents are preventable. With children it is important to anticipate their developmental stage to help prevent injuries.

Some Tips to prevent injury include:

Avoid Bed Sharing (including sleeping with an infant on a couch) This is not considered safe for small infants (<12 weeks especially). Infants are at an increased risk for asphyxia and suffocation when sharing a sleep surface with adults and/or children.

Window Guards should be in place and intact in all households where children under 11 years old reside. The New York City Health Code [§ 131.15] requires owners of multiple dwellings (3 or more apartments), to provide, install, or maintain window guards.

Burns prevention. Water heater temperatures should be set at no more than 120 – 125° F. Ideally, infant and child baths should be no more than 100°F. Smoke detectors must be installed by landlords in multiple dwelling homes but tenants are responsible for upkeep.

Medication and chemical safety. Keep all household chemicals (including cleaning supplies), all medications and vitamins safely stored out of the reach of children.

Source: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/hca/compendium/section2-child-safety.pdf>



Family Planning/Birth Control



You have choices:

- 1. Preventing pregnancy**
 - ◆ You can use almost any family planning method.
- 2. Preventing infection**
 - ◆ Condoms help prevent both pregnancy and infection.
- 3. Having a healthy baby**
 - ◆ You can have a baby. There are special issues to think about before you decide.

Remember that VidaCare members can obtain family planning services from both in-network providers and out of network providers that accept Medicaid. For more information about where to get family planning services contact VidaCare Member Services at 1-800-556-0589. You can also discuss your needs with your Primary Care Provider, Nurse Care Coordinator or Community Case Manager.



Source: http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/publications/fphiv_flipchart/index.htm



Protect Yourself and Others from HIV & STDs

If you are sexually active — or if you still inject IV drugs — think about how to avoid passing HIV to others. HIV infection is like a chain from one person to another. You can break that chain and help others avoid infection. If you are sexually active:

Always wear a condom. Wear a latex male condom or polyurethane female condom every time you have sex.

Avoid getting re-infected with HIV. It is possible to be infected again if you are exposed to HIV again. Re-infection makes your HIV worse and slows your treatment progress.

Avoid STDs.

When you have HIV plus another STD, you have more HIV in your semen or vaginal fluid. That makes it easier to pass the virus to someone else if you do not use a condom. Remember, you can get STDs through oral sex.

If you inject drugs:

- Use a new, sterile needle and syringe and sterile water each time you inject.
- If you reuse injection equipment (“works”), always use your own — don’t share your works with other people.
Clean your needles and syringes with bleach and water.
- Get new needles and syringes from a drugstore without a prescription.

**HIV infection is like a chain from one person to another.
You can break that chain and help others avoid infection.**



Source: http://www.health.state.ny.us/publications/patient_resource_guide.pdf

Harm Reduction / Needle Exchange programs that are part of VidaCare’s Supportive Services

AIDS Service Center NYC

41 E. 11th Street
New York, NY 10003
Phone: (212) 645-0875

Citiwide Harm Reduction

260 East 143rd Street
Bronx, NY 10451
Phone: (718) 292-7718

Harlem United

123-125 West 124th Street
New York, NY 10027
Phone: (212) 531-1300

306 Lenox Avenue, 2nd Fl
New York, NY 10027
Phone: (212) 803-2893

Housing Works

130 Crosby Street
New York, NY 10012
Phone: (212) 966-0466

320 West 13th Street
New York, NY 10014
Phone: (212) 645-8111

743-749 E9th Street
New York, NY 10009
Phone: (212) 677-7999

2640 Pitkin Avenue
Brooklyn, NY 11208
Phone: (718) 827-8700

