

HEALTHWISE

Personalized Medical Practice

Seth Coombs, MD

From the desk of Seth Coombs, MD

Dear Patient:

"Roll out those lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer. Those days of soda, and pretzels and beer" ... While this song was made popular by Nat King Cole in 1963, hopefully in 2013 our focus is more on healthy eating during these summer months and proactively staying healthy all year long.

In this issue of *HealthWise*, we review important information regarding adult inoculation updates, and discuss how to be prepared for a medical emergency, both at home and on vacation. We also explore some nutritional alternatives to "soda, pretzels and beer."

Wishing you and your family a happy and healthy summer!

Seth Coombs, MD



Seth Coombs, MD

8 Commons Street
Rutland, VT 05701

Office: 802.770.1806

Service: 802.747.1318

Fax: 802.773.4876

Email: mail@SCoombsMD.com

Be Prepared for a Medical Emergency

Pre-emptive planning for a medical emergency, both at home and while traveling, is an important preventive step that may assist in determining a better health outcome.

Most of us don't spend a lot of time planning what we would do if confronted with a medical emergency, yet an estimated 240 million calls are placed to 9-1-1 annually in the United States. While we know the importance of keeping medical phone numbers handy and making lists of family members' medications and dosages, most of us do not bother with this documentation. Although these advisements seem basic, it is not unusual in an emergency to become flustered, confused, and even unable to recall basic information that we use every day.

Keeping a fully stocked medicine cabinet in your home is seemingly elementary, and yet the vast majority of households do not have basic medical supplies. Take an inventory. For good preventive care, you should have the following items available if needed: a thermometer ♦ small scissors ♦ tweezers ♦ band-aids ♦ gauze pads and adhesive tape ♦ ace bandages ♦ antibiotic ointments (ex. Bacitracin or Neosporin) ♦ antiseptic solutions (ex. hydrogen peroxide and alcohol) ♦ anti-diarrhea medication (ex. Immodium) ♦ antacid medication (ex. Pepcid) ♦ general GI distress (ex. Pepto Bismol) ♦ over-the-counter oral antihistamine (ex. Benadryl) ♦ instant hot and cold packs ♦ petroleum jelly ♦ lubricating eye drops ♦ hydrocortisone cream ♦ aspirin and non-aspirin pain relievers.



Medications, both prescription and over-the-counter, should be checked annually for expiration dates. Many out-of-date medications are decreased in their efficacy if they are too old and should be discarded.

In the first quarter of 2013, more than 13 million Americans traveled out of the country and the number will increase during the summer months when more people take vacations. Your physician should be contacted for medical issues when traveling outside of the United States, however, it may be difficult to find the medications you need at the time that you need them. A personalized medication travel kit should contain, at a minimum, your essential prescription medications, pain relievers, band-aids, antibiotic ointment and antiseptic wipes. Always keep these items in your carry-on baggage during flight, or in a cool spot in the car rather than packed in the trunk during a road trip.

If a health emergency should occur when you are out of the country, the U.S. Embassy or Consulate office, if applicable, can usually provide assistance, such as recommending a hospital or emergency care center and even notifying insurers or family members.

Medical emergencies are stressful times. Being prepared with on-hand supplies, along with having a plan in place, allows you to react responsibly, and can even be life-saving.

Seth Coombs, MD

Personalized Medical Practice

Inoculations: Are You Up to Date?

Vaccinations are a vital part of preventive health maintenance beginning in infancy. Some vaccines that we received as children should be repeated in adulthood, and there are others that are specifically targeted for diseases that adults become susceptible to as they age. Additionally, some adults may not have received certain vaccinations as children and may now be advised by their physician to receive them.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends guidelines for when inoculations should be administered. At the top of their list is an annual influenza vaccine. The Mayo Clinic advises that adults receive a flu shot annually in fall as protection against this potentially serious viral infection. However, there are many adults who, because of their health history, should not receive a flu vaccine. Every year this option should be reviewed with your physician.

In infancy and early childhood, a series of vaccinations are typically administered which include protection for many different diseases. One of the vaccinations that children usually receive is the five-dose DTaP vaccine – diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough.) The DTaP has replaced the older DTP vaccine which was known to cause immunization reactions. This vaccination is also recommended for children older than seven years of age who did not receive their complete five-dose series of DTaP.

For adults, it is commonly known that a tetanus booster is needed every ten years. Maintenance of this tetanus booster is extremely important because it protects against serious infections from common medical incidents such as cuts, puncture wounds and bee stings, to name a few. Most of us do not even realize that along with the tetanus vaccine, we receive the diphtheria vaccine as well. This inoculation is called a



Td, and it protects against tetanus and diphtheria. However, with the more widespread outbreaks of pertussis in recent years, the CDC now recommends that protection against pertussis be included, at least once in adulthood. This vaccine is called the Tdap.

The CDC also recommends a single dose of the shingles vaccine for adults over age 60. Shingle occurs in 20% of people who have had chicken pox as a child. When a person contracts shingles, the chicken pox virus, which was lying dormant reactivates, often causing severe pain, tingling, and possibly an itchy rash or blisters that resemble chicken pox. Only someone who has had chicken pox or, in rare instances, someone who has received chicken pox vaccine, can contract shingles. For people with chronic illness, or those who are on immunosuppressant drugs, have severe allergies, or allergies to the components of the shingles vaccine, inoculation is likely *not* appropriate. Therefore, always discuss thoroughly with your physician before receiving any updated vaccines.

For adults who have never had chicken pox, the CDC does recommend being inoculated. While chicken pox might be uncomfortable and relatively harmless in children, adult chicken pox can pose more dangerous complications such as bacterial infection.

There is a vaccine which helps protect against types of bacteria called pneumococcus. This vaccine protects against illnesses including pneumonia, meningitis, the blood disease bacteremia, and middle ear and sinus infections. All of these are caused by pneumococcus bacteria. It is recommended that adults over age 65 receive the pneumococcal vaccine. This vaccine may also be recommended for younger adults who have a compromised immune system.

There are several other vaccines (such as Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B) that the CDC recommends only for adults with certain risks related to their health, job or lifestyle that put them at a higher threat for serious diseases. These risk factors should be discussed with your physician to determine what is appropriate for you.

If you are traveling outside the United States, there may be additional vaccines either required or recommended to safeguard you in your travels. Certain diseases, such as typhoid and yellow fever, are rare in the United States but are prevalent in other countries. Again, it is wise to check with your physician several months before leaving the country.

Many infectious diseases that once were serious health risks for infants, children and adults have decreased significantly or been eradicated in the United States. This is due to strong advocacy, general public education on the importance of maintaining vaccinations, as well as school requirements. Diligence in maintaining personal health records on inoculation history, combined with staying current on the recommended vaccinations helps prevent serious diseases, both for ourselves and the risk of passing on disease to others.



Nutrition Corner

Mooo-re Milk Options

Homogenized cow's milk has been a staple in most people's daily diet since early childhood. However, many individuals have allergies, are lactose intolerant, or simply don't like the taste. The good news, as displayed in the dairy section of most supermarkets today, is that many more options are now available.

Cow's milk contains a significant amount of the recommended daily allowance (RDA) of calcium as well as protein. Cow's milk comes in four options: whole, 1%, 2% and fat-free skim. Fat content, and therefore calories for each 8 ounce serving of milk varies as follows: whole milk, 8 grams of fat (136 calories); 2% milk, 5 grams of fat (120 calories); 1% milk, 2.5 grams of fat (102 calories). Skim milk is fat free and contains 87 calories per 8 ounce serving. It is important to note that only skim and 1% milk are considered "low fat". Consumption of this type of fat can raise LDL or "bad cholesterol" levels. Regardless of fat content, all varieties of cow's milk contain the same recommended daily allowance of nutrients.

Lactose-free milk is a good option for those who are lactose intolerant (the inability to digest lactose, a sugar found in cow's milk). Lactose-free milk is cow's milk in which the enzyme lactase is added. The addition of this enzyme helps to break down the lactose.

Lactose-free milk contains the same nutrients and calories as regular varieties of cow's milk.

Soy milk is also a good option for people who are lactose intolerant or have milk allergies. Derived from soybeans, soy milk contains similar nutrients to the same 8 ounce serving of any type of cow's milk or lactose-free milk. One cup averages about 100 calories. Soy milk also comes in different flavors, vanilla being the most popular.

Almond milk is made from ground almonds and water, and is a good alternative for those who have milk allergies or are lactose intolerant. However, it is important to note that almond milk is not suitable for people allergic to almonds or other tree nuts. Plain, flavored and sweetened varieties are available, which may alter the sugar and calorie content. Almond milk has far less protein than soy or cow's milk, but is richer in calcium.

Rice Milk is made from cooked brown rice and water. Depending on the brand, rice milk may contain added sweeteners, and most commercial brands are fortified with vitamins. Rice milk offers less than a gram of protein per cup, but is otherwise nutritionally similar to cow's milk.

Although nutrients may vary, the assortment of "milk" varieties available now provide choices for people with special dietary concerns, particularly for those individuals who have allergies, are lactose intolerant or who follow special diets.

