

Good Health

A FREE MONTHLY HEALTH e-NEWSLETTER

August 2019



Battle the Opioid Overdose Epidemic

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Tackle Pain Without Opioids

Millions of people across the world suffer from pain. For some, pain is minimal or lasts only a short time while for others, pain is unbearable and chronic. Doctors have long prescribed opioids to help ease or reduce the perception of pain. [learn more...](#)

August is National Immunization Awareness Month

This annual observance raises awareness of vaccine importance and their role in the prevention of serious, sometimes deadly, diseases. [learn more...](#)

What is Cleft Lip and Palate in Children?

Cleft lip and palate are openings or splits in the upper lip or roof of the mouth (palate). A child can be born with a cleft lip, cleft palate, or both. [learn more...](#)

A photograph of a man and a woman in a kitchen. The man is kissing the woman on the cheek. They are both smiling and looking at something on the counter. There are various kitchen items like a cutting board, a knife, and some vegetables visible.

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Tackle Pain Without Opioids

Millions of people across the world suffer from pain. For some, pain is minimal or lasts only a short time while for others, pain is unbearable and chronic. Doctors have long prescribed opioids to help ease or reduce the perception of pain. When used properly and under a health care provider's order, opioids can help. However, they can also cause side effects and be misused, which can lead to dependence and addiction.

In recent years, opioid medications (i.e. Hydrocodone, Oxycodone, Morphine, Codeine, and Fentanyl) have come under heavy scrutiny and gained national attention for heavy abuse and a large number of opioid-related deaths. "Opioid misuse is a challenge," says Summit Medical Group Arizona's Chief Physician Executive, [Dr. Kent Johnson](#). He adds, "In order to truly grasp the severity of this national epidemic, it's critically important to understand how these pain medications affect the body."



How do opioids work?

Opioid receptors are present in the brain, spinal cord, GI tract, and several other organs. Opioids attach to these receptors blocking the transference of pain signals. In addition, they also create feelings of calm or an intense rush of pleasure or a "high", which is a feeling that can be very addictive. When naturally occurring opioids are not enough to stop pain, synthetic opioids, such as the ones mentioned above, may be prescribed by a doctor.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an average of 130 Americans die each day from an opioid overdose. "This is a true medical crisis," says Dr. Johnson. "One that needs attention placed on safer prescribing practices," he adds.

The CDC created guidelines to help clinicians manage chronic pain, targeting safety and effectiveness of opioid therapy. These guidelines encourage providers to start with non-opioid medications (i.e. Tylenol or topical pain relievers) before prescribing opioids. Alternatives also include chiropractic medicine, physical therapy, massage therapy, meditation, or joint injections. The CDC guidelines also target improving communication between providers and patients considering the risks and benefits of opioid treatment for each individual case of chronic pain. Additionally, the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP) is an electronic, state-run database that allows providers to track the dispensing and prescribing of controlled medications. This program has proven to be one of the most promising interventions to inform providers and protect patients. Through this system, pharmacists and providers can more easily identify patients who are at risk for potential abuse.

Overall, when used as prescribed, opioids can be an effective way to treat intense and chronic pain. However, the recent increase in opioid abuse has established a significant need for stricter regulations. If you have questions about pain relief or opioid use or abuse, speak to your provider. It's never too late.

International Overdose Awareness Day - August 31st

Prescription opioid abuse has become a severe problem over the years, turning into a true national health epidemic. At SMGAZ, we are doing all we can to raise awareness of the risks associated with opioid misuse and promote safe and effective non-pharmacologic options to relieve pain. International Overdose Awareness Day, a global event held on August 31st each year, aims to raise awareness of overdose and reduce the stigma of drug-related deaths.

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August is National Immunization Awareness Month

This annual observance raises awareness of vaccine importance and their role in the prevention of serious, sometimes deadly, diseases. Through vaccine compliance, you have the power to protect yourself and your family against certain diseases and illnesses. Higher immunization rates protect vulnerable children who are too young to be vaccinated as well as those who cannot be vaccinated for medical reasons. Click [here](#) to see how Arizona compares with national rates.

Now is the time to ensure you, your child, and your family are up to date on recommended vaccines. We also encourage you to review the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Interactive Vaccine Guide](#), which provides information on vaccines recommended during pregnancy and throughout you and your child's life.



The Flu shot is your best defense against the flu this season!



FLU SHOT

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What is Cleft Lip and Palate in Children?

Cleft lip and palate are openings or splits in the upper lip or roof of the mouth (palate). A child can be born with a cleft lip, cleft palate, or both.

A cleft lip may be as mild as a notch of the lip. Or it may be as severe as a large opening from the lip to the nose.

A cleft palate may leave an opening that goes into the nasal cavity. Cleft palate is not as noticeable as cleft lip because it is inside the mouth. The cleft may:

- Involve one or both sides of the palate
- Go from the front of the mouth or hard palate, to the throat or soft palate
- Include the lip



Causes and Complications

Cleft lip and cleft palate happen when a baby develops in the womb. A cleft lip and cleft palate can be diagnosed during pregnancy during a routine ultrasound exam. Or they may be seen during the first exam by your baby's health care provider. Researchers don't know the exact cause of cleft lip and palate. It can be caused by genes passed on from parents, as well as environmental factors. Environmental factors include taking certain medicines during pregnancy, smoking or drinking alcohol during pregnancy, infections, and too little vitamin B and folic acid during pregnancy. Parents who have cleft lip, cleft palate, or both, or who have other kids with the problem are at an increased risk of having babies with the defect.

Beyond the visual aspects of a cleft lip and palate, other possible complications include feeding trouble, ear infections and hearing loss, speech and language delay, and dental problems.

Treatment

Both cleft lip and cleft palate can be fixed with surgery. The first surgery for cleft lip is usually done before a baby is one year old, but as early as possible. The first surgery for cleft palate is usually done within the first 18 months after birth, but again as early as possible.

Your baby's health care provider will help you figure out how to best care for your baby. The health care team may also refer your child to other specialists unique to your child's condition.

Steps for Prevention

Cleft lip and cleft palate can't always be prevented. But there are things you can do to reduce the risk. They include:

- Get a pre-pregnancy exam to make sure you are healthy before you get pregnant
- Get regular and complete prenatal care during pregnancy
- Take folic acid if you are trying to get pregnant
- Take daily prenatal vitamins that include folic acid during pregnancy
- Don't smoke
- Don't drink alcohol during pregnancy

Consider genetic counseling if other members of your family have had cleft lip and palate.