

# FOCUS

## On Public Health

### Cherokee County Health Department

#### Resolutions for Healthy Living in 2009

By: M.A. Bone, MD



Why not make some resolutions for healthy living for the New Year as suggested by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality? Many factors affect your health. Some you cannot control, such as your genetic makeup or your age. But you can make changes to your lifestyle. By taking steps toward healthy living, you can help reduce your risk of heart disease, cancer, stroke and other serious diseases. For example:

- See your doctor for regular screenings, not just when ill

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Eat a variety of healthy foods, limit calories and saturated fat
- Be physically active
- Control your blood pressure and cholesterol
- Don't smoke
- Protect yourself from too much sun
- Take steps to reduce stress in your life

Let each birthday remind you that it is time for your yearly medical examination and celebrate by scheduling a checkup! Discuss with your health care provider what screening tests are appropriate for you and what immunizations are recommended to keep you healthy. Take an active role in your health care by following these resolutions for healthy living for 2009.

Don't delay, begin today!

#### Inside this Issue

Salmonella Outbreak Investigations	2
Immunization Awareness	3
Handy Hints	3
Cervical Cancer Prevention	4
Disease 101: Lead Poisoning	5
Heart Health	6

#### Comments from the Public Health Preparedness Coordinator

By: Rhonda Jones

With the holidays well behind us, it is now time to get back to the work of preparedness. No one plans to have a disaster, but they still happen. Trains derail, 18 wheelers wreck and spill chemicals, and the threat of a terrorist attack is still very real. Although its not in the news

much any more, a pandemic flu will happen sometime in the future. And looming ahead in the not so distant future is hurricane season.

So I ask you this. Does your family know what to

do in the event of a disaster? If shelves are empty in the grocery store, could you still feed your family? If a sudden evacuation is called and your family is separated, would you know how to locate them? If not, there is no time like the (Continued on page 4)

## Salmonella Outbreak Investigations: Timeline for Reporting Cases

By: Charlotte Sanders

There have been many possible nationwide foodborne illness outbreaks that have occurred in just the last year. These have included problems with tomatoes, salsa, peppers, and peanut butter. I thought it might be a good time to explain the investigational process and timeline normally involved with the investigations.

Most of this information has been obtained from the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta in conjunction with this most recent *Salmonella* outbreak possibly involved with peanut butter.

To find cases in an outbreak of *Salmonella* infections, public health laboratories serotype the *Salmonella* bacteria and perform a kind of “DNA fingerprinting” on *Salmonella* laboratory samples. When they serotype, they are looking for a group of closely related microorganisms distinguished by a characteristic set of antigens which can be done with other microorganism in addition to *Salmonella*.

Investigators determine whether the “DNA fingerprint” pattern of *Salmonella* bacteria from one patient is the same as that from other patients in the outbreak and from

the contaminated food. Bacteria with the same “DNA fingerprint” are likely to come from the same source. Public health officials conduct intensive investigations, including interviews with ill people, to determine if people whose infecting bacteria match by “DNA fingerprinting” are part of a common source outbreak.

A series of events occurs between the time a patient is infected and the time public health officials can determine that the patient is part of an outbreak. This means that there will be a delay between the start of illness and confirmation that a patient is part of an outbreak. Rarely is the test results obtained in a matter of hours as often depicted on doctor or crime investigation programs seen on television. The timeline is as follows:

**1. Incubation time:** The time from eating a contaminated food to the beginning of symptoms. For *Salmonellas*, this is typically 1-3 days, sometimes longer.

**2. Time to contact with health care provider/ doctor:** The time from the first symptom until the person seeks medical care, when a diarrhea sample is collected for

laboratory testing. This time may be additional 1-5 days, or longer.

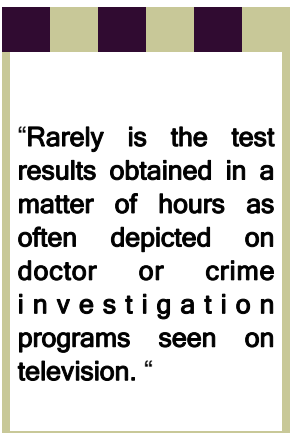
**3. Time to diagnosis:** The time from when a person gives a sample to when *Salmonella* is obtained from it in a laboratory. This may be 1-3 days from the time the sample is received in the laboratory.

**4. Sample shipping time:** The time required to ship the *Salmonella* bacteria from the laboratory to the state public health authorities that will perform serotyping and “DNA fingerprinting”. This can take 0-7 days depending on transportation arrangements within a state and the distance between the clinical laboratory and the public health department.

**5. Time to serotyping and “DNA fingerprinting”:** The time required for the state public health authorities to serotype and to perform “DNA fingerprinting” on the *Salmonella* and compare it with the outbreak pattern. The “DNA fingerprinting” can be accomplished in 2 working days (24 hours). However, many public health laboratories have limited staff and space, and experience multiple emergencies at the same time. Thus, this process

may take 1-10 days for both serotyping and “DNA fingerprinting” together.

The time from the beginning of the patient’s illness to the confirmation that she or he was part of an outbreak is typically about 2-3 weeks. Case counts in the midst of an outbreak investigation are therefore always preliminary and must be interpreted within this context.





## Immunization Awareness

By: Serena Perez



**Question:** If the diseases that vaccines prevent are now rare, why should my child still get vaccines?

**Answer:** Although several of the diseases that vaccines prevent have been dramatically reduced or eliminated, vaccine are still necessary for several reasons:

- **To prevent common infections**

Some diseases are so common in this country that a choice not to get a vaccine is a choice to get infected. For example, choosing not to get the Pertussis (whooping cough) or Varicella (chickenpox) vaccines is a choice to risk serious and occasionally fatal infections.

- **To prevent infections that could easily re-emerge**

Some diseases in this country continue to occur at very low levels (for example, measles, mumps, and Haemophilus Influenzae type B, or HIB). If immunization rates in our schools or communities are low, outbreaks of these diseases are likely to occur. This is exactly what happened in the late 1980s and early 1990s when thousands of children were hospitalized with measles and more than 120 died. Children are much more likely to catch measles if they aren't vaccinated.

- **To prevent infections that are common in other parts of the world**

Although some diseases have been completely eliminated (polio) or virtually eliminated (diphtheria) from this country, they still occur commonly in other parts of the world. Children are commonly paralyzed by polio in India or killed by diphtheria in Russia. Because there is a high rate of international travel, outbreaks of these diseases are only a plane ride away.

Vaccines are available through the Cherokee County Health Department in Rusk and Jacksonville. For children with Medicaid, there is no cost for vaccines. For children without Medicaid the cost is as follows: one vaccine is \$7.00 and multiple vaccines are \$10.00. These vaccines are offered

to the public through the Texas Vaccine for Children program. We also have many vaccines that are available for adults. Influenza and pneumococcal vaccines are available for \$20.00 each or Medicare Part B is accepted. Please contact either office for more information.

Rusk 903-683-4688

Jacksonville 903-586-6191

## Handy Hints for Preparedness

- We are in the habit of changing our smoke detector batteries when we change our clock settings for daylight savings time. This is also an excellent time to rotate your stock of emergency food and water supplies

- Keep a corded landline phone in your home for use during power outages.

- In the contacts list of your cell phone, enter the name and phone number of the person emergency services should call on your behalf and label it as ICE. ICE stands for In Case of Emergency. Paramedics know what ICE means and look for it immediately.

- Complete an emergency contact card for each member of your family to carry with them. Make sure to include an out-of-area contact.

- In some emergencies you may be required to shut off the utilities to your home. Adult family members need to know how to do this.



## Cervical Cancer Prevention

By: Pam Davis



### *Cervical Cancer Screening Saves Lives, yet...*

- In the United States, about 10,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer each year and about 3,700 of them will die from the disease.
- 6 out of 10 cervical cancers occur in women who have never had a Pap test or have not been tested in the past five years.

The main cause of cervical cancer is the human papillomavirus (HPV), a common virus that also causes genital warts. There are about

forty types of genital HPV. HPV can be passed from one person to another during sex. Many women are unaware of what HPV is or that it causes cancer.

Gardasil is a cervical cancer vaccine that protects against 4 types of HPV: 2 types that cause 70% of cervical cancer cases and 2 more types that cause 90% of genital warts cases. Gardasil is only for girls and young women ages 9 to 26 because the clinical trials for Gardasil included females within this age group. Gardasil was initially studied in this age group because the majority of women who have HPV are exposed to

it in their teens and 20s. Call the Health Department in Rusk or Jacksonville for more information about Gardasil vaccinations.

Since the 1940's, the Pap test has reduced cervical cancer rates in the United States by more than 70%. The Pap test is the single most effective cancer screen in the history of medicine. Women who have received Gardasil vaccinations need to continue having regular Pap test. At this time, Gardasil only protects against 70% of the potential cervical cancer cases.

**Early detection saves lives.**

It is recommended that a woman have a Pap test at least every three years; however your physician or clinic will direct you to your own personal life style schedule. The Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening (BCCS) program through Cherokee County Health Department is available to provide Pap tests and clinical breast exams to women who do not have health insurance and are low income. Please call 903-683-4688 in Rusk or 903-586-6196 in Jacksonville for more information about the BCCS program.

## Comments from the PHP Coordinator Continued

present to start working on your family disaster plan. You do not want to wait until a disaster strikes to decide what to do.

The following steps will help you prepare your family:

- Begin to stockpile ready-to-eat foods and water. Purchase a little

extra with each trip to the grocery store and stash it away.

- Begin collecting extra flashlights, batteries, medical supplies, and special needs items.
- Make copies of important papers such as insurance documents, immunization records, birth certificates, etc. and

keep them in a large zip-lock bag so you can grab it and go quickly.

- Keep a list of your medications, doctor's names and phone numbers, and allergies with important documents.
- Have local and out-of-area contact numbers that separated family

members can call to reconnect with family.

- For online help with preparing your family disaster plan go to: [www.texasprepares.org](http://www.texasprepares.org)

Let's hope for the best but prepare for the worst.

## Disease 101: Lead Poisoning

By: Rhonda Jones

In the United States, over 300,000 children between the ages of 1 and 5 have blood lead levels greater than the level recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, or CDC. Because lead poisoning often has no obvious symptoms, it frequently goes unrecognized. Unfortunately, lead poisoning can result in learning disabilities and behavioral problems. And at very high levels, it can cause seizures, coma, and even death.

Even though lead based paints were banned for use in houses in 1978, they are still the major source of lead exposure for our children. Millions of housing units inhabited by children have deteriorated leaded paints and elevated levels of lead-contaminated house dust. Other sources of lead include:

- making stained glass windows
- recycling or making automobile batteries
- some traditional home remedies using azarcon or greta (for upset stomach or indigestion) and pay-

loo-ah (for rash or fever)

- Tap water - most lead in tap water usually comes from the plumbing in your house, not the local water supply

Children from all social and economic levels can be affected by lead poisoning. However, children living at poverty level or in older homes have a greater risk. Also, children under the age of six are at an increased risk because they tend to put their hands or other things in their mouths.

Lead poisoning can be prevented by removing sources of lead from a child's environment. Some other methods of preventing or reducing blood lead levels are:

- \* Make sure children do not have access to peeling paint or chewable surfaces painted with lead based paint
- \* Pregnant women and children should not be present in a home built before 1978 that is being renovated.

- \* Create barriers between living/playing areas and lead sources until they can be removed and cleaned up.

- \* Regularly wash children's hands, toys and pacifiers. Household dust and exterior soil can both be sources of lead.

- \* Wet-mop floors and wet-wipe windowsills every couple of weeks.

- \* Prevent children from playing in the bare soil. If possible, cover soil with grass, wood chips, or put in a sand box.

- \* Use only cold water from the tap for drinking, cooking, or making baby bottles. Hot water is more likely to contain higher levels of lead.

- \* After exposure to lead based products during hobbies or working take a shower and change your clothes.

- \* Avoid eating candies imported from Mexico

- \* Make sure cookware, tableware, and containers are lead free.

If you are concerned about your child being exposed to lead, talk to your doctor. A simple blood test can rule out or diagnose an elevated blood lead level.



**Let's Keep Our  
Children Healthy and  
Lead-Free**



# Cherokee County Health Department

## Focus on Public Health Contributors

Judith Beck, R.N.  
Director  
jbeck@texashan.org

M.A. Bone, MD  
Medical Director

593 North Main  
Rusk, TX 75785  
Ph: 903-683-6142

510 E. Commerce  
Jacksonville, TX 75766  
Phone: 903-586-6191

Mary Bone, MD  
CCHD Medical Director

Rhonda Jones, LVN  
Public Health Preparedness Coordinator  
Disease Surveillance

Charlotte Sanders, RS  
Sanitarian

Serena Perez  
ImmTrac/Pics Immunization Outreach

Pam Davis, RN  
BCCS Coordinator

Marcia Morgan, RN  
Public Health Nurse

### On-line Resources

- [www.cchdtexas.org](http://www.cchdtexas.org)
- [www.cherokeeflu.com](http://www.cherokeeflu.com)
- [www.dshs.state.tx.us](http://www.dshs.state.tx.us)
- [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
- [www.texasprepares.org](http://www.texasprepares.org)

## Heart Health By: Marcia Morgan

Heart disease is the nation's leading killer. The statistics are grim. Seventeen percent of Americans die of cardiovascular disease before turning 65. Twenty-nine percent of all U.S. deaths are a direct result of heart disease. That's 700,000 people a year. Heart disease is also a major cause of disability.

So how can you improve your heart health? Well first of all, let's remember the old adage, "you are what you eat." By eating a healthy diet, you can help prevent or reduce the risk

of heart disease.

Next, healthy adults should be getting at least thirty minutes of moderately intense exercise five times a week. A good way to achieve this is to participate in the **Walk Across Texas Program** created by the Texas Agrilife Extension Services. For more information see [walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu](http://walkacrosstexas.tamu.edu)

The most preventable risk factor of heart disease is smoking. Cigarette smokers are two to three times more likely to die

from heart disease than non-smokers. Today, there are many stop smoking resources, tools, and medications. Check with your doctor.

Your heart health is a very personal matter. Take responsibility for your habits, diet, and exercise. See your doctor about health risks.

Don't forget about your children. They will carry habits learned in childhood into adulthood. Teach them about good diet and exercise by example.

### Make Sure Your Heart Is Healthy



Not Sick And Broken

