



Healthy Aging in Neighborhoods of Diversity across the Life Span

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The Healthy Journey

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WHAT IS THE HEALTHY JOURNEY?

For our new readers, we want to take a moment to tell you about our newsletter *The Healthy Journey*. *The Healthy Journey* is our way of connecting with people who are participating in the HANDLS study. Four times a year we assemble information that we think will interest our participants. We tell you what neighborhoods we are visiting, feature HANDLS staff and participants, and pass along helpful health tips. Some of the topics we have covered already include high blood pressure, diabetes, and depression. You have made an investment by taking the time to be part of our study, and one way we want to express our gratitude is to provide additional information to you about health issues. Look for us at neighborhood association meetings, health fairs, and other community gatherings.

HANDLS IN SOUTH BALTIMORE

Since the middle of August, we have been at the corner of Woodall Street and Fort Avenue near the new fire station. We talked with some of you at our Open House in June and again at the community fair at the ball fields in July. We thank everyone who agreed to take part in the study when our field staff knocked on your door. We examined 53 participants over 6 weeks. Our weekend hours have been a success because they allowed many of you who are not available during the week to become part of our study. It has been a pleasure working in the South Baltimore community.

MOVING ON!

Every three months we move the HANDLS Mobile Research Vehicles to a new location. We will move

to the Reservoir Hill neighborhood in West Baltimore in the beginning of November. Keep a look out for our white trucks as you travel to different areas of Baltimore over the coming years.

STAFF NEWS

Who's knocking on your door?

We are pleased to welcome CODA as our field research team to recruit participants from the neighborhoods of Baltimore. CODA is a research organization with offices in Silver Spring, Maryland, and Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. CODA staff is trained in many different types of research. They are experts in field research in urban neighborhoods such as Baltimore City. CODA's team manager is Brenda Esprit. She is the team leader for interviewers who will help HANDLS reach its recruitment goals. Brenda's career includes many years of project management experience, including state and county studies in Florida, and nation-wide studies conducted in the mid-Atlantic, New England and the Southeastern regions of the United States. Brenda has a Masters of Science in Management from Troy State University and her Bachelor of Science degree in Public Relations from the University of Florida.



Brenda says, "Although you may never see me when you participate in HANDLS, it's important to me for you to know that I feel a connection to the Baltimore community. As the field team manager, I will work hard to make sure your home visit runs smoothly. It has

been a challenge as well as a pleasure to coordinate the participation of residents of the neighborhoods of Sharp-Leadenhall, Locust Point, Federal Hill, and the greater South Baltimore area. In the coming year, I look forward to working with other residents of Baltimore located in Reservoir Hill, Cherry Hill, Govans, Forest Park, and Park Heights area.”

FOCUS ON HEALTH—HEPATITIS A TO E

It's no alphabet soup

Hepatitis is a disease that many people have heard about, but few people know much about how it is caused or how it affects the body. In the city of Baltimore, the number of reported cases of Hepatitis C has been on the rise from 2000 to 2004. There were 160 reported cases of Hepatitis B per 100,000 persons in Baltimore City and 476 reported cases of Hepatitis C per 100,000 persons in Baltimore City between January and September 2004. Based on the 2000 census, this translates into approximately 960 cases of Hepatitis B and 2,850 cases of Hepatitis C.

In this newsletter, we will introduce the different types of hepatitis and provide some basic information to help you better understand and prevent this important disease process.

Infectious hepatitis is a disease of the liver caused by several different viruses. The viruses are named hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E. All of the viruses cause a short-term illness by inflaming the liver, but hepatitis B, C, and D can also cause chronic hepatitis. There are also other rare viruses that cause hepatitis, but the main ones are A, B, C, D, and E. There are special blood tests used to find the hepatitis virus. If you have chronic hepatitis or serious liver damage, a liver biopsy may be required. A biopsy is a procedure in which a needle is inserted into the liver to remove a small amount of tissue. Medications, chemicals, alcohol, and street drugs can also cause hepatitis.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of viral hepatitis vary. Some people may not have any symptoms, but when symptoms occur, they are the same for all types of hepatitis.

These symptoms include:

- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Fatigue
- Abdominal pain
- Nausea, loss of appetite
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Low grade fever
- Headache
- General muscle aches
- Dark brown urine
- Stools that are white or light yellow and may be looser than normal

A*Hepatitis A* virus can affect anyone. It is found in the stool of persons with the hepatitis A virus. The virus is usually spread by consuming food or water that has been contaminated by an infected person. Hepatitis A usually goes away without treatment. After people recover from hepatitis A, they cannot get it again. Good personal hygiene and proper sanitation can help prevent hepatitis A. We can prevent hepatitis A infection with a vaccination. People traveling to countries where hepatitis A is common or people with chronic liver disease should be vaccinated against hepatitis A.

B*Hepatitis B* is a serious disease in which the virus attacks the liver. It may cause lifelong infection, cirrhosis of the liver, liver cancer, liver failure, or death. The disease is spread when people come in contact with an infected person's blood or body fluids. The most common ways to spread hepatitis B are by having unprotected sex with an infected person, by sharing needles or “works” when “shooting” drugs, by needle sticks or sharps sticks by those who work in healthcare facilities. It is also possible for a mother with Hepatitis B to pass the infection to her baby during birth. Everyone should know that getting a body part pierced or getting a permanent tattoo with contaminated equipment can lead to hepatitis B infection.

Some people who get hepatitis B stay infected for life and can spread the virus to others. A vaccine is available to prevent infection with the hepatitis B virus.

People on chronic kidney dialysis, people who have multiple sex partners or sexual contact with infected partners, and people who share works or needles should be vaccinated against hepatitis B.

C *Hepatitis C* is spread by contact with the blood or body fluids of an infected person. It can also be transmitted by sharing needles, or “works” when “shooting” drugs and through needle sticks or sharps sticks by those who work in healthcare facilities. It can also be spread by sex, but less often than by needles. Most people who get infected will carry the virus for the rest of their lives, and may have some liver damage, but many do not feel sick. Some people may develop cirrhosis of the liver and liver failure, which may take years to develop. There is no vaccine to prevent infection with hepatitis C. The only way to prevent hepatitis C is to reduce the risk of exposure. Hepatitis C may be treated in some patients by a drug called interferon.

D *Hepatitis D* is a defective virus that needs the hepatitis B virus to exist. Hepatitis D virus is spread by contact with infected blood. The Hepatitis B vaccine is effective in preventing Hepatitis D for people not already infected with Hepatitis B.

E *Hepatitis E* is spread in much the same way as hepatitis A virus through food or water contaminated by feces from an infected person. Hepatitis E does not occur often in the United States. There is no vaccine for Hepatitis E, and the disease usually resolves on its own over several weeks to months.

Who should get tested?

- People using or who have used illegal drugs by injection
- People who now or have ever had chronic kidney dialysis
- People who received blood products produced before 1987
- People who were recipients of blood transfusions or organ transplants before July 1992

Tips for protection

- Get vaccinated against hepatitis A and B
- Limit the numbers of sex partners
- Use condoms and dental dams correctly, every time you have sex
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water
- Don't share items that may have blood on them such as needles, toothbrushes, or razors.
- If you have hepatitis, you should not drink alcohol. The risk of serious liver damage increases greatly if you continue to drink alcohol.

Treatment

Medications are available to treat both hepatitis B and C. Treatment may or may not be started at the time the virus is found, but may be started when a person has symptoms that show that the liver has signs of damage.

SOURCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Infectious Diseases
Division of Viral Hepatitis
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1-404-371-5900

National Minority AIDS Council
1931 13th Street, NW
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The Quarterly Newsletter for the HANDLS Community Healthy Aging in Neighborhoods of Diversity across the Life Span

The purpose of this study is to learn about changes in health over time. Using our medical research vehicles, we want to study as many people with different backgrounds as we can. We want this study to help us understand healthy aging by examining the affects of different backgrounds on changes in health over time. The information that we gather will help improve health and prevent disabilities. We want to do this for people from all backgrounds, particularly those in poor and minority communities.

For information about our study call 1-866-207-8363
or visit our website hands.nih.gov



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