



Public Health Bulletin

A Publication of the Public Health Department, Gregory Thomas, M.D., Director • www.slopublichealth.org
2191 Johnson Avenue • P.O. Box 1489 • San Luis Obispo, CA 93406 • (805) 781-5500 • (805) 781-5543 fax

Gregory Thomas, M.D., M.P.H.



Health Director Notes...

This year, National Public Health Week is April 7-13, 2003. The year's theme is overweight and obesity. The goal is to educate American adults and children about the health risks associated with this fast-growing epidemic and to present communities and individuals with ways to "shape up their future."

Today, approximately two-thirds of all American adults are overweight or obese. The proportion of children who are overweight has tripled since 1980. This epidemic is not limited to any particular age, race, ethnic group or gender.

We can all play a role in tackling obesity by helping to:

- Increase physical fitness opportunities for kids;
- Promote healthier living through better community design, including more walking paths, bike lanes and parks;
- Offer better opportunities for fitness and healthy eating in the workplace;
- Serve up more nutritious options in schools; and
- Provide healthier dining options in local restaurants and markets.

Talk to your patients and family – say NO to "super sizing" your meal!!

continued on page 3

Facts about Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS)

SARS first arose in November in mainland China and spread to Hong Kong. Since that time, SARS has spread throughout the world via travelers. It is important to recognize that while almost 20 countries have reported SARS cases, only four are considered "affected" areas, where secondary transmission is occurring.

SARS is believed to be a new strain of coronavirus (a virus with a "corona" envelope). SARS is believed to be transmitted through close contact, and the majority of cases have occurred in family contacts of those who are ill, or in health care workers providing aid.

Signs and Symptoms

For a person to be considered a suspect case, they must have the following symptoms:

- A fever of 100.5° F **and**
- One or more clinical findings of respiratory illness (e.g. cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, or hypoxia) **and**
- Travel within 10 days to any of

the following areas: mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Hanoi, Vietnam **or**

- Close contact within 10 days of onset of symptoms with either a person with a respiratory illness who traveled to a SARS area or a person known to be a suspect SARS case.

Spread of SARS

SARS appears to be spread through droplet transmission; namely, when someone sick with SARS coughs or sneezes droplets into the air and someone else breathes them in. At this time, it is believed that a person is not infectious until they develop signs of illness, thus it is not appropriate to wear a mask or place a mask on a patient just because they have traveled to an affected area.

The incubation period for SARS ranges from 2-10 days, so someone who returned from Hong Kong two weeks ago and has shown no symptoms would not be considered at risk.

continued on page 3

Highlights in this Issue:

Health & Wellness Events Set for May 17	2
Public Health Department Implements Privacy Standards	2
Stop Smoking Help for Pregnant Women	3
HIV Reporting by Non-Name Code Regulations Trainings	3
Communicable Disease Table	4

Health & Wellness Events Set for May

The fifth annual Health & Wellness Conference will be held Saturday, May 17 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Embassy Suites in San Luis Obispo. A Wellness Fair will follow from 12:30 to 4:00 p.m.

The conference is a means to educate the community about the “wellness” model and give community members a chance to hear leading speakers in that field.

The featured speaker will be Dr. Emmett Miller, one of the pioneers in the mind/body, holistic health movement. Dr. Miller is a physician, musician, poet and master storyteller who has taught his methods of healing as a lecturer at Stanford University and at the University of California. He is a founder and medical director of the Center for Healing and Wellness.

In addition, local favorite Chris O’Connell will continue his exploration of the healing nature of music. Chris employs storytelling to complement his assortment of eclectic instruments.

The conference is presented by the San Luis Obispo Community Health Foundation with the support of the AIDS Support Network; Cottage Outpatient Center of San Luis Obispo; Doug Bing, LMFT; Hospice of SLO County; the National M.S. Society of Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo; and Organizational Coaching.

Continuing education units will be offered for RNs, MFTs, LCSWs and MDs. Seating will be limited. Call the Community Health Foundation at 544-3892 for information and registration.

Public Health Department Implements Privacy Standards

As the April 14 privacy standards compliance deadline approaches, the San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department is making sure its business practices reflect HIPAA privacy requirements.

The department has always tried to give its clients the highest quality of health care. As a part of the promise to care for them, we promise to keep information about their health private. Until now, this promise was simply part of health care’s code of ethics. But under the new HIPAA national law, it will be illegal to violate this code.

Many substantial changes in policy and procedures governing patient specific health information have been made, including:

- Formation of a HIPAA Action Team, which meets monthly and is represented by each division in Public Health.
- Designation of a Public Health Privacy Official.
- Development and implementation of a training program for all Public Health employees.
- Creation and approval of Public Health Confidentiality Guidelines.
- Creation of a whole new set of HIPAA policy and procedures (currently in the process of being approved).
- Distribution of Business Associate Contract language to Public Health for all new and amended contracts.
- Adoption of a Notice of Privacy Practices.

Administrative, technical and physical safeguards to protect client privacy have been implemented including:

- Confidential records are kept in locked files.
- Confidential records are secure from casual access while in use.
- Computer access is password protected.
- Access to employee passwords is limited to need-to-know personnel.
- Computers are shut down or locked when not in use.
- Fax cover sheets now include an HIPAA confidentiality disclaimer.
- Confidential information is shredded or filed after faxing.
- Fax machines are kept in secure locations.
- All e-mail access is password protected.
- HIPAA confidentiality disclaimers are included in county e-mails.
- Confidential written phone messages are secure from casual access.
- Confidential recorded phone messages are secure from casual access and listening.

If you or any of your staff have any questions about the HIPAA compliance efforts of the Public Health Department, please call Privacy Officer Karen Turner at 237-3105.

Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (cont.)

What to do if you have a suspect case

Any County department that sees patients should have a screening program in place to quickly identify SARS cases. If you do not, call the Public Health Department for help in developing a protocol.

If you do have a person at your site that could be a SARS case, call the Public Health Department immediately (781-5500) and ask to speak to the Health Officer. If he is not available, ask to speak to someone about SARS, and your call will be directed appropriately. Make sure you speak to a person, do not just leave a message.

If you believe you have been exposed to SARS, the Public Health Department will make recommendations about isolation after an investigation.

Current Status of SARS in California and the United States

As of April 4, there are 100 suspected cases of SARS in the U.S., with no deaths. California is reporting 24 cases, with no cases yet reported in San Luis Obispo County.

Stop Smoking Help for Pregnant Women

The Tobacco Control Program's **Baby's First Breath Program** is specifically designed to assist pregnant women in quitting smoking. One of the advantages of the program is how services are tailored to fit the needs of the client and their readiness to quit. Counseling is **free** and there is no limit to the number of smoking cessation sessions a client can receive.

The Tobacco Control Program provides stop smoking classes and individual counseling at sites countywide. Call 781-5564 for more information.

ANNOUNCING

HIV Reporting by Non-Name Code Regulations Trainings

in San Luis Obispo County

Learn How You or Your Agency/Laboratory Can Meet Reporting Requirements

ETR Associates is pleased to announce training opportunities for health care providers and laboratory staff to ensure compliance with the HIV Reporting by Non-Name Code Regulations that became effective in California on July 1, 2002.

Health Care Provider Training

June 4, 2003 10 a.m. - 12 noon

Laboratory Training

June 4, 2003 1 p.m. - 3 p.m.

For more information regarding these trainings, visit the California Office on AIDS web site at www.dhs.ca.gov/AIDS and click on the ETR link, or call (831) 438-4080 ext. 352 and ask about the HIV Reporting by Non-Name Code Trainings.



Health Director (cont.)

Viruses

Virology seems to be the career in the limelight this month! Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is being monitored closely, as well as West Nile Virus and smallpox (response to vaccination). These issues are changing so fast that a quarterly Public Health Bulletin will be outdated within a few days of issue.

The web sites of the CDC (www.cdc.gov) and the California Department of Health Services (www.dhs.ca.gov) contain reliable, up-to-date information for health care providers.

The San Luis Obispo County Public Health Department web site (www.slopublichealth.org) contains information and links to other important sites.

San Luis Obispo County Reported Cases of Selected Communicable Diseases - 2003

Disease	January	February	March	Total 2003
AIDS	1	1	0	2
Amebiasis	0	0	0	0
Campylobacter	3	5	3	11
Chlamydia	47	49	38	134
Coccidioidomycosis	3	9	1	13
Cryptosporidiosis	0	0	1	1
E. Coli 0157:H7	0	0	0	0
Giardia	1	2	0	3
PPNG	0	0	0	0
Gonorrhea	8	4	1	13
Hepatitis A	0	2	0	2
Hepatitis B	0	0	0	0
Hepatitis C Acute	0	0	0	0
Hepatitis C Chronic	78	27	42	147
Hepatitis, Unspecified	0	0	0	0
Measles (Rubeola)	0	0	0	0
Meningitis - Total	1	1	1	3
Meningitis - Viral	1	1	1	3
Meningitis, H-Flu	0	0	0	0
Meningococcal Disease	0	0	0	0
Pertussis	0	0	2	2
Rubella	0	0	0	0
Salmonellosis	1	1	0	2
Shigellosis	0	2	1	3
Syphilis - Total	0	0	3	3
Tuberculosis	0	0	3	3



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