
ElderVoices

Newsletter of the National Indian Council on Aging, Inc.

Spring 2001

Brooke Mosay Ammann

HEALTH AND THE OLDER WOMAN

Grandmothers, Mothers, Wives, Aunties, Daughters, Sisters, Nieces, Friends. No matter what relationship we have with them, women play important roles in our communities. This season of growth and re-birth is a good time to take notice of the special health concerns that women face, especially those of elder women. Some health issues most commonly associated with elder women are osteoporosis, menopause and heart disease. However, this article will discuss some different health issues that the elder woman should know about.



Clearly, Indian women must be aware of the risk of developing diabetes. Elders should encourage young women to be aware of this disease, especially during pregnancy. Many Indian women develop diabetes while they are pregnant, a condition called "gestational diabetes." Though gestational diabetes may go away after delivery of the child, there is still a risk

that the mother, and possibly even the child, will develop the disease later on. Tips for preventing diabetes by lowering sugar intake are enclosed.

Elder women can share these health care reminders with daughters and granddaughters. Monthly breast self-examination and annual mammograms are two

vital issues for women. Though American Indian women have a lower risk of developing breast cancer, the risk increases with age, regardless of race. In fact, the two biggest risk factors for developing breast cancer are being a woman and aging. Elder women need to continue to do breast self-examination every month. Since most guidelines for self-exams plan around the monthly cycle, older women should allow one day each month

to perform this important exam. Pairing a self-examination with an annual mammogram can help women find breast cancer early enough to survive it.

Though most elders do not consider themselves 'drug abusers,' taking too many medications at the same time is a major health risk for older people. Many drugs, both prescription and non-prescription, can be harmful and cause illness if used together. As people

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Eating Less Sugar

HEALTHY HABITS

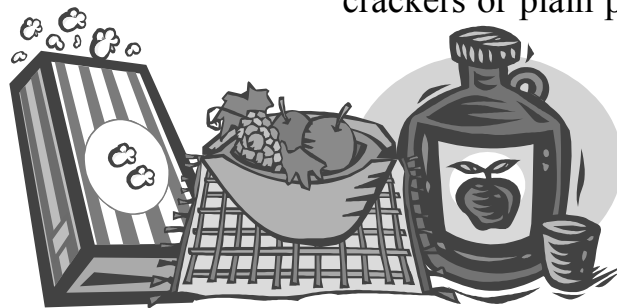
Eating healthy foods and getting regular exercise are good habits to develop, whether you have diabetes or not. Here are some things to know about making healthy changes to daily life.

Most people eat too much sugar because it is added to processed foods. Some foods that are high in added sugar are soft drinks, cakes and candy. In addition to adding too much sugar to your diet, these foods add extra calories and may cause weight gain. It is okay to have some sugary treats every once in awhile, but not every day. Here are some ways to exchange processed foods with added sugar with low sugar foods:

INSTEAD OF . . .

TRY...

- | | |
|--|--|
| • fruits canned in heavy syrup | • fresh fruits or fruits canned in natural juice |
| • presweetened cereal | • plain cereal topped with fruit |
| • fruit punches, ades, soft drinks | • water, 100% fruit juices |
| • coffee or tea with sugar | • coffee or tea with sugar substitute |
| • candy, bars, cookies, cakes, pies, pastries, chips | • diabetic desserts with sugar substitutes, low sodium crackers or plain popcorn |



NICOA Conference
September 4-6, 2002
Albuquerque, New Mexico

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get older, it becomes harder for the body to use and get rid of the chemicals in medications. This can put extra stress on organs like the heart and kidneys. A good way to prevent harmful mixes of medications is to take every prescription to an appointment and have your doctor make sure that a medication mix is not causing illness. Developing a good relationship with a pharmacist is another good way to avoid this problem. Pharmacists know a lot about medications that do not mix well. Finally, remember that traditional plant and root medicines should be considered non-prescription medication (even though a traditional doctor may have prescribed them). If it is appropriate, include these in a medicinal evaluation.

One topic that can be uncomfortable to talk about sometimes is urinary incontinence, or bladder control. Embarrassment and shame often keep elders from mentioning this type of problem to their doctor. Some elders even avoid going out with friends and family because of this condition. However, bladder control is a very common problem for women of all ages. The special changes that women experience throughout their lives, such as pregnancy and menopause, can affect the way the bladder works. Discuss this subject with your doctor because bladder problems can sometimes be a sign of another medical condition. It is not just a 'normal' part of getting older. There are ways to improve bladder control, but the first step is to overcome embarrassment and ask for help. Some of the treatments include special exercises, therapy, medications or other aids.



The final topic of health awareness is the loneliness and depression that often result from the death of a loved one. An elderly woman typically outlives her spouse, but there are ways to deal with the resulting loneliness and associated health concerns. Loss of a life partner can put tremendous stress on any person, regardless of age, and it is vital to deal with grief to maintain mental and physical health. Some suggestions for dealing with loss are:

- Spend time with people. Being alone too much can worsen grief.
- Stay busy and active. Invite friends or family over for a healthy meal, take a walk or care for a houseplant.
- Find out details on eligibility for widowed persons benefits and Medicare.
- Be cautious in making life decisions. Put major decisions off for a few months, or until you have had enough time to deal with loss.

Though these suggestions may seem obvious, at a time of intense grief it can be hard to maintain healthy attitudes about life. There are many other elders that deal with loneliness and grief on a daily basis. Some of the best sources of strength for elders already exist in the community, such as tribal wellness programs and elderly nutrition sites.

Though the issues mentioned here are focused on women, elder men play a role in keeping their special ladies healthy and happy. In addition, seeing an elder take charge of her health can set a good example for the rest of the family. Indian elders are very important to our communities and should take every possible step to ensure they are here to teach the future generations.

Tammy Sixkiller

Born in Sells, Arizona, Tammy moved with her family to Gila River when she was still a child. She loves to dance, and this activity helps her stay fit. She often watches basketball and baseball, sports she enjoyed playing earlier in her life. Her favorite activity, however, is spending time with her grandchildren. She explains that they are straight A students, and is proud of the excellent lines of communication she has with them. She enjoys answering their many questions and shares stories with them on their travels together.

A charter member of NICOA, Tammy Sixkiller has served her elders in various roles for more than 23 years. This Gila River Pima and Tohono O'odham lady is a great source of information on the history of NICOA. Tammy remembers the

change from the 39 member NICOA council of elders to the current 12 member board of directors. She has seen NICOA through many changes and extensive growth since it was founded in 1976.

In addition to her volunteer work with NICOA, Tammy continues to dedicate her professional life to improving the lives of elders. As an Aging Specialist, she gained a greater understanding of the beliefs, traditions and customs of many different tribes. She feels honored and privileged to work with her treasured elders.

Tammy attributes her appreciation of elders to grandmothers who helped raise her. They taught her how to care for others, but especially to care for elders. She would like to see elders utilize their benefits and entitlements, whether these come from the tribe or federal government, in order to enjoy a better quality of life.

Fresh berry season is coming up. Here is a healthy, low-sugar dessert recipe:

BERRY CRISP

Yield: 6 servings

1/2 c	Rolled oats;	1/4 ts	Ground cinnamon;
2 tb	Reduced-calorie butter;	2 tb	Reduced-calorie butter;
1 1/2 pt	Blueberries; rinsed		or butter substitute, cut into small pieces
1 pt	Raspberries; picked over, -or cleaned strawberries;		
1/4 c	Unsweetened apple juice; -concentrate, thawed		

Optional Topping:

6 tb Orange Chantilly or nonfat yogurt



**Apple juice concentrate has all the sweetness of apples with no sugar added. For a tasty substitute, mashed ripe bananas make an ideal sweetener.*

When toasting oats, spread them in a single layer on an ample-sized baking sheet.

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Place the rolled oats on a baking sheet and toast them in oven for 15 minutes, shaking the pan once during baking. Set aside. Leave oven on. Lightly butter an 8x8" baking pan. Gently combine the berries in a bowl with apple juice concentrate. Spoon into the prepared pan. Combine toasted oats and cinnamon and sprinkle evenly over berries. Dot butter substitute all over the top. Bake for 30 minutes. Cool to room temperature. If desired, serve with a dollop of Orange Chantilly or yogurt on top.

***Do you know someone who would like to join NICOA?
Would your tribe benefit from NICOA membership?
If so, have them apply for membership today!***

Membership benefits include:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| -Quarterly Newsletter | -Legislative Updates |
| -NICOA Conference Information | -Educational Materials |

NICOA Membership Application

**Complete form and mail to: NICOA Membership
10501 Montgomery Blvd. NE, Suite 210
Albuquerque, NM 87111**

Name: (Please Print) _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Tribal Affiliation: _____ **Date of Birth:** _____

Tribal Roll or Census #: _____

Membership type: (please check one)

- VOTING MEMBER** (\$10): Qualified voting members are any Indian 55 years of age or older who is an enrolled "member of an Indian tribe, band or combination of tribes and bands, recognized by the United States Department of the Interior."
- ASSOCIATE MEMBER** (\$40): Any Indian under age 55, or non-Indian individual may become a non-voting associate member of NICOA upon payment of dues.
- ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBER** (\$100): Any organization (including tribes) may become a non-voting organizational member of NICOA upon payment of dues.

PAYMENT ENCLOSED: Check # _____ Money Order # _____ Cash _____

FOR VOTING MEMBERS ONLY

Copy of Tribal Roll/Census # Attached? YES NO

Please attach a copy for proof of enrollment. Fill out the following if a copy is not available.

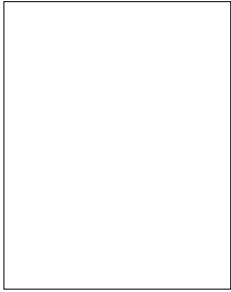
I hereby attest that (print name) _____ is a member of the
(tribe) _____ of (state) _____.

Enrollment # _____

Certified by _____ Title _____

Frances Duran

Every morning Frances Duran travels in her trusty Indian ride to the NICOA offices in Albuquerque, where she is a Records Compliance Clerk. Starting out two years ago as a SCSEP trainee, Frances eagerly learns new skills to help her do her job. Her main responsibilities at NICOA are to complete trainee files by assisting NICOA field offices complete forms and make corrections. Frances offers support to the Arizona, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska field offices, the second largest caseload.



Frances says she learns a lot from the challenges at work. Her most recent challenge was learning a new SCSEP

program and explaining it to the states she supports. She also admits to being a little anxious using the computer at first, but has excelled in her computer skills. She also appeared as a guest on Native America Calling, a nationwide radio show, speaking on health and wellness for elders. Frances enjoys the challenges and the friendly people she encounters in her work.

Frances was born and raised in San Felipe Pueblo and her favorite weekend activity is spending time with her granddaughter. She also loves sports, and played many when she was younger. Her favorite sports to watch are basketball, football and baseball. On Sundays after she takes her granddaughter home, Frances stops by the local casino to try her luck at bingo.

Frances treasures the values she learned from her parents and has passed them on to her sons. As the mother of three boys, she says they may not see the importance of her lessons right now, but that they will someday. The most important thing she learned from her parents is to respect everything, especially yourself. She is also grateful that her parents taught her to have faith and be kind and helpful to others, virtues that show every day in the way she treats her fellow NICOA employees.

Calendar

September 12-14, 2001. Working Together for Diabetes Prevention: Exploring the Benefits and Challenges of Participatory Research Conference. The National Diabetes Prevention Center Southwest will sponsor its third annual conference in Gallup, New Mexico. For more information contact Laura Kesselman at (505) 266-0552.

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