



THE Health Connection



Abilene-Taylor County Public Health District Newsletter

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Your Health Department at Work

2nd Quarter - (Apr-Jun)	Lab Services Provided: 3,112
Birth Records Filed: 653	Dental Patients: 237
Death Records Filed: 408	Medical Services Provided: 5,882
Immunizations Given: 1,634	Restaurant & Food Related Inspections: 636
WIC Participants Served: 10,617	Nuisance Complaint Investigations: 79

Events & Programs

National Breastfeeding Month: by Mary McIntosh, IBCLC

During the month of August, the nation celebrates National Breastfeeding Month. This is a time to acknowledge moms for their decision to breastfeed and give their babies the best possible start in life. Health professionals and community workers use this time to advocate, support, and encourage breastfeeding as the BEST feeding choice for moms and infants.

A mother's milk provides all the necessary nutrients, calories, vitamins, and minerals needed. Breastmilk is far more than nutrition. It provides babies with disease fighting antibodies, growth hormones, pre and probiotics, all which lay the foundation for a healthy child. The American Academy of Pediatrics makes this statement on their website: *"The AAP continues to support the unequivocal evidence that breastfeeding protects against a variety of diseases and conditions in the infant such as... diarrhea, respiratory tract infection, ear infections, urinary tract infection, late-onset sepsis in preterm infants, type 1 and type 2 diabetes,*

lymphoma, leukemia, and Hodgkins disease, childhood overweight and obesity" Breastfeeding also provides many health benefits for the mother. Moms who breastfeed have a reduced risk of breast, ovarian, and endometrial cancers. Breastfeeding moms are less likely to develop heart disease and diabetes. Moms can burn an extra 600 calories per day which can help her get back to pre-pregnancy weight much faster!

Breastfeeding is one of the single most important things a mom can do to increase positive health outcomes for herself and her infant. These positive health outcomes are seen throughout all demographics and socioeconomic backgrounds. If you know someone who is having a baby, the best gift you can give is the encouragement, support and information to help her be successful with breastfeeding. For more information, call a WIC Lactation Consultant or Breastfeeding Counselor at 325-692-1680 or visit www.breastmilkcounts.com.



MESSAGE FROM THE INTERIM DIRECTOR Annette Lerma

Americans "live shorter and sicker lives compared to those living in all other rich democracies". This was part of a report recently published by the Human Rights Council of the UN. It is baffling to public health officials that in a country where we have access to quality health care, sanitary living conditions and abundant opportunities for education and employment, that there is a stark contrast to the reality of health outcomes for Americans against such a favorable backdrop. Abilene is not immune to the disheartening trend. According to the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, Taylor County's premature death rate is higher than the state average. We also fare worse in obesity, adult smoking, diabetes monitoring and drug overdose deaths. No matter what your political views are, we all have a common desire for ourselves and our families to be healthy and thrive. Communities that experience the best health outcomes are ones that collaborate across all sectors of the community to work together to ensure every citizen has access to housing, sanitary and safe environments, healthy food and important medical and social services and has input to decisions being made. Each of us has a role in developing plans to improve the quality of life for all Taylor County citizens. If you're interested in learning more, go to http://www.healthyard.org/content/sites/healthyard/From_Vision_to_Action_2015_Report_-_Robert_Wood_Johnson_Foundation.pdf

The HEALTH CONNECTION

Employee Spotlight - Michael Parsons, WIC Nutritionist



Q. What is your role at the health department? My role as a Nutritionist is to do nutrition assessments for WIC families. That involves reviewing their medical history, obtaining their current height, weight, and doing a finger stick to screen for low

iron. The goal of each assessment is to help clients come up with a plan to improve their health. This is accomplished by answering my clients' questions, addressing any health concerns, giving nutrition education, and referring them to other health related programs. To summarize; The family comes in with health concerns and leaves with a plan to help improve their health.

Q. What is the most rewarding part of your job? I have a friend who is well educated and after several years of working in a corporate environment, doctors told him his blood pressure was too high. He asked me what he could do about this. We looked in his refrigerator and his food choices consisted of hot dogs, cheese, flour tortillas, and canned chili. With a little nutrition education, he was able to make changes to his eating habits and maintain his blood pressure without medica-

tion. This is an example of what I get to do for thousands of families in Abilene. That is the most rewarding part of my job!

Q. What are some fun facts about you?

I think the most fun fact about myself is my diversity. Some examples are: living my life serving God, traveling across the world to Japan, performing Mexican dances for quinceaneras, being an Eagle Scout, studying Kajukenbo martial arts, being a video game designer, worked at LEGOLAND California as my first job, studied physiognomy, speak Spanish, write poetry, and am a good cook. "Live life to the full", that is a quote that stands strong in my heart. My adventurous spirit is always excited to try something new.



Social Media & Mental Health

By: Julia Agawu, Epidemiologist

With over 80% of adults on at least one social media platform, it has become a staple in our lives. Social media is continuously shaping our society, and the effects on everyday life and mental health are becoming apparent. While we have seen disturbing shifts in mental health over the years, a clear connection to Social media has yet to be established due to its positive and negative aspects.

Positive effects

- Social media easily connects millions of people allowing users to learn and share new ideas, views and cultures.
- Research has shown that increased social connections, even online, can alleviate feelings of loneliness and anxiety.
- While positive events can be celebrated across the world instantaneously, tragic and political events can help raise resources and support in minutes.

Negative effects

- In a study at the University of Michigan, students who scrolled through Facebook for 10 minutes reported being in a worse mood than students who actually interacted with friends.
- Increased time spent on social media has been linked to depression and sleeping problems.
- Filtered pictures and overall presentation of perfect lives has been linked to jealousy, depression and decreased self-worth.

So what's the verdict?

Well, it's really how you use social media that dictates how it will affect you. But first it's important to understand what you're up against. Social media is designed to be as addictive as possible. Many of the original social media developers have since exposed the ways that companies are keeping users hooked.

- Humans are wired by our dopamine system to be in search of unexpected rewards. Social media is designed to feed this system by offering a continuous variety of information so that we're always in search of our next favorite post (i.e. dopamine hit). One enjoyable post is all we need to form the habit of expecting more rewards.

- Ever seen the spinning wheel when you refresh a feed on Facebook? How about the brief loading page right when you open Twitter? Former Google designer Tristan Harris mentions that it's the same tool used in Casino slot machines to keep your attention. This tactic makes you feel like something exciting is coming next, keeping you on the app longer.
- Former Facebook designer Justin Rosenstein explained that while the like button was originally a way to make positivity easy, it also feeds into our desire for attention from others.

So, how can we make social media a positive aspect of our life? Think of it as the communication tool it was initially designed to be. Understanding that it should be used to communicate with friends and family and actively consuming important information can prevent you from going to social media to just pass time. Unless you utilize Facebook for your business, turn off push notifications and visit social media platforms at dedicated times. While social media can be used for entertainment, remember that it is designed to keep you engaged for hours at a time so limiting its use is necessary. At the end of the day, WE have the power to choose how social media affects our lives!