

A Guide to WIC Services

The Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) provides basic nutrition food to over eight million low-income women and children throughout the United States. WIC serves pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women; infants and children up to five years of age who are at nutritional risk. Low-income pregnant women, infants and children who have medically documented nutritional risk conditions are most vulnerable to the effects poor nutrition and most likely to benefit from WIC nutritional supplementation.

As a WIC participant, women and children learn about good nutrition, and they are encouraged to seek and maintain appropriate medical care (i.e. immunizations, family planning, EPSDT and prenatal care). The combination of supplemental goods, nutrition education, and referrals to health care has proved effective in preventing and improving nutrition-related health problems of thousands of Georgia WIC participants.

A major study in recent years has found that WIC participation resulted in improvements in a variety of factors associated with positive birth outcomes, including increased birth weights and increased duration of pregnancies. WIC participants were also shown to be more likely to register for prenatal care in their first trimester, and to obtain preventive health services, including immunizations, for their children. In a study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there was evidence of an improvement in height and weight, increased attention to nutrition and health, and a declining trend of anemia among low-income children.

Physicians and health care professionals can make a difference by referring potentially eligible clients and patients to their local WIC agency. WIC clinics can be located in your county's health department. Physicians can also accept referrals from WIC for health care and social services.

Factors for eligibility:

1. Must reside within the State's service area;
2. Must be at nutritional risk. This risk may be determined on the basis of medically related conditions such as anemia, underweight, maternal age, or dietary conditions such as inadequate food intake; and
3. Family's income must not exceed the State's standards. The maximum income standard for Georgia is 185 percent of the U.S. Poverty Income Guidelines.

The assessment of nutritional risk is made at no cost to the applicant by a physician, nurse, nutritionist, or other health professional. WIC accepts medical data from private physicians or health care providers as documentation of nutritional risk.

Currently the Georgia WIC program is serving more than 267,000 women, infants, and children. Within the South Health District, close to 10,000 are being served in the ten county area. For more information on WIC, call your local health department or South Health District at (229) 333-5290.

Reminder: Notifiable Disease Reporting

Reporting diseases that have been deemed notifiable by the Georgia Division of Public Health (GDPH) is vital to public health preparedness. State, district and local public health agencies rely on health care organizations to report these diseases so they are able to follow up on disease outbreaks or anything that could possibly affect the public's health.

Health care workers and laboratories are mandated by Georgia State Law to report over seventy notifiable disease conditions to the Georgia Division of Public Health. There are multiple ways to report diseases, including calling your local health department, filling out form 3095 and faxing or mailing to the appropriate address, using the State Electronic Notifiable Disease Surveillance System (SendSS), or calling the district office at (229) 333-5290. Each organization should decide which route of reporting is easiest for them to be consistent. For more information on notifiable disease reporting, please contact Courtney Sheeley at (229) 245-6436 or cdsheeley@dhr.state.ga.us.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Georgia Immunization Study 2007

In connection with the GDPH's Immunization Program, South Health District is in the process of gathering immunization records for selected children born in January 2005 for the Georgia Immunization Study. The entire process has been greatly simplified this year due to the high number of children listed in the Georgia Registry of Immunization Transactions & Services (GRITS). Thank you to all of the offices that have responded to requests for records. We are over 75% complete due to your help either by entering the correct information into GRTIS or by answering requests.

Georgia Rabies Control Manual

The fifth edition (2007) of the Georgia Rabies Control Manual has been released by the GDPH's Epidemiology Branch. A hard copy has been sent to veterinarians in the district. The manual can be found online at the GDPH's website, <http://health.state.ga.us/>. If you would like to request a hard copy of the manual, please contact Courtney at (229) 245-6436 or cdsheeley@dhr.state.ga.us.



Lowndes County Health Department offers Nutrition Services

The Lowndes County Health Department is now offering nutritional services to the community. The staff consists of a qualified nutritional professional that is committed to providing the latest information in nutrition and wellness to help you and your family make lifestyle choices to stay health, attain optimal wellness and performance, and experience a better quality of life.

Nutritional Counseling for Children & Adults

The nutritional counseling refers to education on wellness across the life span from pregnancy through the dying process. Medical nutrition therapy is offered for various health conditions including cancer, diabetes, gestational diabetes, HIV/AIDS, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, obesity, osteoporosis, and weight management. Nutritional counseling for eating disorders, sports nutrition, and breastfeeding issues or concerns is also offered.

Health Education & Promotion

A series of four classes is offered every Thursday in January, March, May, September, and November from 5:30-8 pm on diabetes. The class is held at the Lowndes County Health Department. Community Health Classes are offered throughout 2007. The classes are also held at the health department from 6-7:30 pm and are listed below: June 14: *Smart Snacking for Summer* October 11: *Fats & Oils: The Good, The Bad & The Ugly* December 13: *Food for the Holidays*.

Fees

Fees are charged on a sliding scale, based on income. At this time, Medicaid, Medicare, and private insurance cannot be billed for the service; however, we hope to be able to bill them by 2008.

Scheduling an Appointment

To schedule an appointment call the health department at 229-333-5257. Health care workers can fax a referral to:

Lynn Bell, PhD, RD, LD

Clinical Nutritionist

Lowndes County Health Department

229-245-2341 (Fax)

*please refer to the Medical Nutrition Therapy Referral Form found at www.southhealthdistrict.com

Public Health Awareness Day planned for June 30

The Infectious Disease Program will once again sponsor Public Health Awareness Day at Southeast Elementary School and Scott Park on June 30 from 10 am to 3 pm. There will be lots of information on programs in Public Health and also outside agencies will display information about their programs for the public to view. Samples and prizes will be given away throughout the day along with lunch. There will be also be various free health screenings such as blood pressure and blood sugar checks.

If your organization is interested in entering a booth in the event, please call (229) 245-8711 and talk to Brenda or Patrina. There is no cost associated with setting up a booth; however, if you are interested please make prior arrangements at the above number.

In connection with Public Health Awareness Day, South Health District will be celebrating National HIV Testing Day on June 27. Activities will be hosted by the Infectious Disease Program throughout the week. The activities will be posted on the South Health District website at www.southhealthdistrict.com when they are announced.

Thank you to our co-sponsors of Public Health Awareness Day:

Valdosta * Lowndes RPCA and Southeast Elementary School!

Health Risks Associated with Georgia Wildfires

Many, if not all counties in the South Health District have dealt with the dense smoke since the start of the Georgia wildfires. The effects of smoke range from eye and respiratory tract irritation to more serious disorders, including reduced lung function, bronchitis, exacerbation of asthma, and premature death. One concern that may be raised by the members of the general public is whether they run an increased risk of cancer or other long-term health impacts of exposure to wildfire smoke. People exposed to toxic air pollutants at sufficient concentrations and durations may have slightly increased risks of cancer or of experiencing other chronic health problems. However, in general, the long-term risk from short-term smoke exposure is quite low.

Most healthy adults and children will recover quickly from smoke exposures and will not suffer long-term consequences. Certain sensitive populations may experience more severe short-term and chronic symptoms from smoke exposure. Persons with asthma and other respiratory diseases may experience difficulty in breathing. The elderly may also be more affected than younger people because important respiratory defense mechanisms may decline with age. Particulate air pollution can compromise the function of alveolar macrophages, cells involved with immune defenses in the lungs, potentially increasing susceptibility to bacterial or viral respiratory infections.

Children, even those without pre-existing illness or chronic conditions, are considered a sensitive population because their lungs are still developing, making them more susceptible to air pollution than healthy adults. Several factors lead to increased exposure in children compared to adults: they tend to spend more time outside, they engage in more vigorous activity, and they inhale more air (and therefore more particles) per pound of body weight. Studies have shown that particulate pollution is associated with increased respiratory symptoms and decreased lung function in children, including symptoms such as episodes of coughing and difficulty breathing. These can result in school absences and limitation of normal childhood activities.

People who smoke, especially those who have smoked for many years, have already compromised their lung function. However, due to adaptation of their lungs to ongoing irritation, smokers are less likely to report symptoms from exposure to irritant chemicals than are non-smokers. However, they may still be injured during wildfire smoke. Therefore, some smokers may unwittingly put themselves at greater risk of potentially harmful wildfire smoke exposure, believing they are not being affected.

Recommendations for your patients

This is a list of recommendations for your patients that may visit or call for information on the wildfires.

1. Stay indoors as much as possible.
2. Set your air conditioner to re-circulate air instead of brining in outdoor air.
3. Have a several-day supply of nonperishable groceries that do not require cooking, since cooking can add to indoor pollutant levels.
4. If you develop symptoms suggestive of lung or heart problems, consult a health care provider as soon as possible.
5. Be alert to PSAs being broadcast by South Health District.
6. Be aware that outdoor events, such as athletic games or competitions, may be postponed or cancelled if smoke levels become elevated. Reducing physical activity is an important and effective strategy to lower the dose of inhaled air pollutants and minimize health risks.
7. Persons with chronic illness should have an adequate supply of medication on hand.
8. Persons with asthma should have a written asthma management plan.
9. Reduce other sources of indoor pollution such as cigarettes, gas, propane and wood-burning stoves and furnaces, and activities such as cooking, burning candles and incense, and vacuuming.
10. Persons may want to buy a room air cleaner as they can be effective at reducing indoor particle levels, provided the specific air cleaner is adequately matched to the indoor environment in which it is placed.
11. Persons may choose to wear a mask; however, in general, wearing a mask is not an effective exposure reduction strategy during a smoke event. In order for a mask to provide protection, it must be able to filter very small particles and it must fit well, providing an airtight seal around the wearer's mouth and nose.
12. Persons can reduce the amount of smoke in their vehicles by keeping the windows and vents closed. The car's ventilation system typically removes a small portion of the particles coming in from outside. Most vehicles can re-circulate the inside air, which will help keep the particles levels lower.

Health advisories for the South Health District can be found at www.southhealthdistrict.com.

More information on the Georgia Wildfires can be found on the Georgia Forestry's website at www.gatrees.org.



Source: Wildfire Smoke, A Guide for Public Health Officials

South Health District Website **Renovated**

www.southhealthdistrict.com

The South Health District website received a make over within the past month. The website has a new face and is easier to navigate. New pages on the website have been created to educate people on pandemic flu, healthy lifestyles, and much more. A new page was created that is devoted to the health care community that touches on aspects of public health preparedness, HIPAA, notifiable diseases and much more information.

Along with the other additions, on the front page there is a site that is "Just for Teens". The site will post information that teens deal with today. Short video clips of announcements, poems and skits are coming soon!



Influenza Sentinel Provider **Surveillance**

It is almost that time of year again...we start looking for providers that would be interested in participating in the sentinel provider surveillance program through the Georgia Division of Public Health. This program allows Public Health to determine when the flu season begins and ends.

Providers conduct surveillance for influenza-like illnesses in collaboration with state health departments and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC).

If you would be interested in participating in the 2007-08 season, please call Courtney or Geneine at (229) 333-5290.



Public Health Liaison

312 North Patterson Street

PO Box 5147

Valdosta, GA 31603

PRSR STD
U.S.POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #54
31603