

"BE WISE — IMMUNIZE"



Donna E. Shalala, Secretary of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, with employees' children. Official HHS photo by Chris Smith.

By Donna E. Shalala, Secretary of Health and Human Services

In the 1940's and 1950's, when children developed a fever, it was often due to polio, or other infectious diseases. Parents were helpless as their children's bodies weakened. Many children died, and many more were disabled.

But since that time, we've

made progress.

Because of the development of lifesaving vaccines, parents breathe easier. So much easier, in fact, that millions of parents take their children's health for granted. We no longer hear about a 5-year-old girl confined to an iron lung in the hospital. We no longer see large numbers of children arriving to school on crutches, or in wheelchairs,

after being permanently disabled by an infectious disease.

But because we no longer see the pain and scars of these terrible diseases, we don't al-

eases.

In the African-American population, only 55 to 78 percent of two-years-olds are protected against many infectious

The Clinton Administration has taken strong action to protect our nation's children.

President Clinton greatly increased funds for state and

• Strengthen and expand the network of civic and community groups, business organizations, schools, local health officials, and the media, to ensure nationwide

April is African-American Health Awareness Month

H E A L T H

ways remember to protect our children. Just in the last few years, we have witnessed large outbreaks. During 1989-1991, more than 55,000 people came down with measles, and at least 132 people died—many of them children who had not been fully vaccinated against the disease.

In 1994, despite previous nationwide alerts and action to stop the resurgence of this disease, 58 cases of measles had been reported to the CDC by March 20.

It's a national tragedy that a 1-year-old child in the United States is less likely to be protected against polio than a child from most countries in the developing world. More than one-third of America's pre-schoolers are not adequately immunized against most preventable dis-

ease. Nationwide, millions of babies have not been properly immunized. And as a result, we've witnessed an alarming increase in infectious, potentially crippling diseases among America's youngest children.

Many parents don't know the facts: It's not good enough to wait to get the child's shots until just before entering kindergarten. To fully immunize a child, you have to take the baby back to a health professional for a series of four to five visits before her or his second birthday.

It's also critical that doctors and other health professionals use every opportunity to vaccinate the infants in their practice. Health care workers must check a baby's immunization status each time he or she visits the office or clinic, and vaccinate the child if needed.

local governments to enhance their vaccination programs. The President also fought for and won passage of a vital program that beginning October 1, 1994, will enable eligible children to get free vaccinations through private and public providers.

We're making a difference. To ensure full and proper immunization in 1994, the Clinton Administration's Childhood Immunization Initiative will also:

- Increase funds to the states to open clinics at more convenient times, and in more underserved areas. In the 1980's, the public health infrastructure eroded. We're rebuilding and strengthening it.
- Help states develop an automated, integrated record keeping system to offer health professionals a system for practical reminders.

participation in this effort to protect our youngest children.

Through this initiative, our nation will develop a sustainable immunization system so in the future, we will consistently reach our goal of immunizing our nation's children.

April 23rd to April 29th is National Infant Immunization Week. Make sure your family is protected. And help us get out the word to all parents and all communities.

It's critical that doctors, clinics, drug and vaccine companies, insurers, local governments and — above all parents — join forces to protect our children. The time to do this is now.

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HEALTHWIRE

JUST KICKIN' IT

PART I

By Kendra Lee

Shelly was 12 when she took her first puff on a real cigarette, "When we were younger, my friends and I always used to eat lollipops and keep the sticks hanging out of our mouths, you know, like cigarettes," she says. And really, at 12, she was getting a late start in the game. Both of her parent smoke. Her older sister smokes and all of her friends had already graduated from lollipop sticks to cancer sticks. "It made me feel grown up at a time when everyone around me was pointing out how young I was, she explains.

Now 15, and an aspiring soccer star, Shelly's up to a pack-and-a-half a day. And though she wants to quit, she's addicted

to the nicotine in the Newport that she carries with her everywhere. Shelly's not alone in her addiction. According to the report "Tobacco Use: An American Crisis," published by the American Medical Association (1993), over 4 million teenagers smoke regularly and more than 3,000 start the habit everyday. At least half a million males between the ages of 12 and 17 use smokeless tobacco.

A 1989 Teenage Attitudes & Practices Survey (TAPS) of 12-19 year olds revealed that 12% of Latinos and 6% of African Americans, compared to 18% of whites, had smoked within the past 30 days of the survey. And while African American and Asian adolescent males are less likely to use smokeless tobacco, it seems to be the tobacco of choice for Native American males and females who report higher rates of use than other adolescents of color.

Cigarette smoking has been proven to cause many serious diseases like lung cancer, emphysema and heart disease, not to mention yellow teeth, bad breath, smoky-smelling clothing and hair. In fact, cigarette smoking is not as popular as you may think. Studies show that teens prefer to date those that don't smoke. So why do it? Sometimes it's a social thing, as in the

case of Tina, 17. Pretty and popular, Tina's habit began two years ago in the bathrooms of her all-girl private high school. "It's just the thing to do," she explains. "And at parties, everybody smokes. I don't really like it and it makes my breath stink. Most of the time I just light my cigarette and carry it around, flicking ashes."

Some teens say they smoke because it reduces stress. Others, especially girls, use it for weight control. But many people, including U.S. Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders, say the reason so many teens are lighting up is because tobacco companies are aiming their marketing campaigns straight toward teens.

To be Continued.
Kendra Lee is Senior Editor of YSB Magazine

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CPR WORKSHOP

The Chuck Minker Sports Complex, 275 N. Mojave Road will host a CPR Workshop on Wednesday, April 27. The two-hour seminar begins at 6 p.m. and is designed for those 13 and up.

The cost is \$12, which includes testing for a one-year certification. Registration continues through April 26. The workshop is presented by CPR Plus and sponsored by the City of Las Vegas. Call 229-6563.