

HEALTH wise

SEPT. 2009

THE SAFER PATH

Getting Our Water off Drugs

By Laurine Brown Ph.D.

What medicines are you taking? Frankly, you may be clueless. Disturbingly, recent studies suggest that by simply hydrating yourself with water — an absolute daily necessity — you may unknowingly medicate yourself with trace amounts of dozens of discarded drugs, including *antidepressants, antibiotics, birth control pills, painkillers, blood pressure medications, cancer treatments and more.*

Concerns began to rise about medications contaminating our watersheds after a 2002 U.S. Geological Survey found various pollutants (including drugs) in 80 percent of 139 streams sampled across the country. More recent studies found traces of drugs in the “treated” drinking water supplies of at least 41 million Americans from coast to coast. Currently, the federal government doesn’t require any testing; of 62 major water providers surveyed around the country, only 28 had even tested drinking water for drugs. Of these, 89 percent detected at least one drug, suggesting contamination is common. Suppliers may screen for only one or two drugs, thus more could be present. Philadelphia, for example, tested for 72 human and veterinary pharmaceuticals and found traces of 56 in the drinking water. Officials tell us that bottled water is no better because it has, no testing requirements or standards. In fact 40 percent is simply tap water.

How did water get so drugged? We’re a medicated nation, purchasing some 3.7 billion prescriptions (a 12 percent rise in five years) and 3.3 billion over-the-counter drugs. People often flush unused drugs down toilets (*indeed, we’ve been told to do this to keep others from finding and abusing them*), and human excreta can contain incompletely metabolized meds.

Conventional sewage and water purification systems, though good at cleansing water of germs, are not well-equipped for pharmaceutical removal. Thus, drugs can pass intact through treatment facilities, into waterways, lakes and even aquifers, ending up in our water glasses

and further downstream. Also, medications tossed in the trash end up in landfills, posing a threat to underlying groundwater if they leach. Another significant source is runoff of contaminated sewage from farm animals ingesting hormones, antibiotics and other veterinary medicines (e.g., nearly half of all antibiotics used in the U.S. are fed to livestock.) And manure containing traces of drugs can be spread as fertilizer on farm fields, potentially leaching into surface water, and even groundwater.

Should we be concerned? No one quite knows the health effects of these tiny amounts of drugs (as in parts per billion or trillion) or the interactive effects of mixed mystery drug cocktails in our water, but scientists tell us there is reason to be concerned. After all, our own hormones exert effects in tiny amounts and research indicates some drugs can cause cellular effects at scant concentrations that cannot be seen at higher levels. Furthermore, though effects on humans are uncertain, evidence is mounting of disturbing effects on aquatic life forced to live in our country’s medicated water, including feminization of fish, reduced and damaged sperm and poor wound healing. While research continues to sort out the health implications, precaution is warranted.

Getting Water Off Drugs

Currently, there’s not a national strategy to deal

— CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Have You Subscribed to Health Wise?

Health Wise is the monthly Wellness newsletter containing information about different programs and services offered throughout the year, as well as, providing current information and articles on health and wellness-related topics.

For those of you who have previously subscribed to *Health Wise*, you will continue to be on our mailing list. However, **if you are a new faculty/staff member or have not yet subscribed**, you will not receive another issue after this month unless you let us know you would like to continue receiving future newsletters.

If you’re not a current subscriber and would like to continue to receive *Health Wise*, please send an e-mail to wellness@iwu.edu, and let us know if you would like to receive the newsletter in print or as an e-version in PDF format. If you would like the print copy, we need to know your name and department, or home address. If you would like to receive the e-version, please make certain that we have your correct e-mail address.

For more information about the IWU Wellness Program, visit our Web site at www.iwu.edu/~wellness.

We hope you enjoy *Health Wise*.

Missy Smock, Director of Wellness

www.iwu.edu/~wellness



Illinois Wesleyan
UNIVERSITY

WELLNESS



Recipe of the Month

Roasted Poblano and Tomato Salsa



This salsa pairs well with tortilla chips, steak, chicken, and tacos. Store chilled for up to three days.

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| 2 poblano chiles | 1 tablespoon fresh lime juice |
| 3 cups chopped seeded tomato | 1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil |
| ½ cup finely chopped onion | ½ teaspoon salt |
| 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro | |

Preheat broiler.

Place chiles on a foil-lined baking sheet; broil 3 inches from heat for 8 minutes or until blackened, turning after 6 minutes. Place in a heavy-duty zip-top plastic bag; and seal. Let stand 15 minutes. Peel and discard skins; chop chiles. Combine chiles, tomato, and remaining ingredients in a medium bowl; toss well. Yield: 12 servings (serving size; ¼ cup).

Source: *Cooking Light*, August, 2009

Adult CPR Certification

Monday, October 19, 6:00-8:00 p.m.
Shirk North Classroom

The Wellness Program will be offering Adult CPR training again this spring. Please let us know if you are also interested in receiving child and infant certification.

Please contact Wellness to reserve a space at x3334 or wellness@iwu.edu. Family members are welcome to participate in this session, space permitting.

Don't Miss this year's Homecoming 5K!

Ryan A. Beaupre '95 5K Run/Walk

For Faculty/Staff, Family Members, Students, Alums & Friends!

Saturday, October 10, 2009, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Participation Fee: \$15,

Participation Fee with t-shirt: \$20

The race starts at the IWU track at Wilder Field. Proceeds benefit the Ryan Beaupre Scholarship Fund. This is the sixth anniversary of the death of Ryan Beaupre who was a United States Marine Corps Captain. He was the first Illinois soldier to give the ultimate sacrifice in "Operation Iraqi Freedom."

To register for this event or for more information, contact Connie Vail, event coordinator at (309) 556-3093.

GETTING OUR WATER OFF DRUGS —

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

with drugs in water — no effective mandates to test, treat, limit, or even advise the public. Some legislation is in the works, but in the meantime there's plenty you can do to stop the mass medication of our water at the source.

1. Dispose of unused, expired, or unwanted medications safely:

- **Do NOT flush medications down the toilet or sink** — Yes, we were taught to do this for years, but now we know the medications are ending up back in our drinking water. Also, never incinerate medications at home since this can create toxic air pollutants. There are safer ways to dispose of them.

- **Permanent Collection and Take-Back Programs** — Best choice. When possible, take unused medications and over-the-counter drugs to a permanent facility. These offer a secure site for storage and guarantee the drugs received will be destroyed (often through controlled incineration), keeping them out of the hands of potential abusers, including teens. Call your city or county government's household trash and recycling service to see if a take-back program is available in your community. In Illinois these can include police stations, county health departments, pharmacies, and hazardous waste facilities (**see page 3 for new on-campus drug disposal program drop-box**). Keep medications in original containers, if possible, but scratch out identifying information on labels like your name and address.

Alternatively, one-day collection events, such as hazardous waste collections which include pharmaceuticals, are held in a variety of places with different groups acting as sponsors. In Illinois, see www.epa.state.il.us/land/hazardous-waste/household-haz-waste/hhwc-schedule.html or <http://prairierivers.org/articles/2008/09/pharmcollection/>. Elsewhere see www.fda.gov.

- **Toss in Trash** — As a last resort, toss them in household trash. **But first:** Take the drugs out of the original container and put them in a leak proof plastic bag. Mix with kitty litter or coffee grounds (making it unpalatable to kids, pets, wildlife). Then, put in a second sealable plastic bag (or other container) to prevent leakage, seal well, and throw in trash. Remove labels from original medication container or scratch out any personal information, including the Rx number, and discard or recycle when possible.

2. **Reduce pharmaceutical use** — this helps keep our waters clean by reducing the overall supply and demand for unnecessary medications.

- **Only purchase medications you need** and can use by their expiration date. Don't take samples unless you're going to use them. And put all meds in one location so you know what you have. Use all antibiotics prescribed by your doctor to help prevent antibiotic resistant strains from surviving.

- **Support organic methods for livestock and dairy production** which reduce or eliminate the use of antibiotics, hormones and other veterinary medicines.

References available at www.iwu.edu/~wellness

NEW — Drug Disposal Program comes to Illinois Wesleyan

In order to make it convenient to dispose of both prescription and over the counter drugs properly, IWU now has a drop-box located in the entry of the Security building at 110 E. Graham St. The drop-box site is open 24/7.

Guidelines for Disposal

Take unused and unwanted prescription and non-prescription drugs to IWU Security or other drop-off locations. Keep medications in original bottles or packaging if possible. Mark out your name and address on prescription labels.

Drop-off sites routinely send collected medications to be incinerated as part of the ecological and safe disposal protocol. (*Incinerated medications are able to create energy that is used to power homes and businesses.*)

For more information please contact Wellness at x3334 or wellness@iwu.edu.

HEALTH STUFF AND MORE

What is novel H1N1? Novel H1N1 (referred to as “swine flu” early on) is a new influenza virus causing illness in people. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization signaled that a pandemic of novel H1N1 flu was underway.

Prevention & Treatment

What can I do to protect myself from getting sick? There is no vaccine available right now to protect against novel H1N1 virus. However, a novel H1N1 vaccine is currently in production and may be ready for the public in the fall. As always, a vaccine will be available to protect against seasonal influenza. There are everyday actions that can help prevent the spread of germs that cause respiratory illnesses like influenza.

Take these everyday steps to protect your health:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. Alcohol-based hand cleaners are also effective.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, the *CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone* except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should be gone without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.) Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.

These are general guidelines to help protect your health, for more complete information go to The Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Web site:
<http://www.cdc.gov/H1N1flu/qa.htm#antibacterial>

FALL HEALTH SCREENINGS

Cholesterol, Blood Lipids, Metabolic Panel, Iron & PSA Screening

Tuesday, October 13, 7:30-9:00 a.m.

Davidson Room, Memorial Center

The screenings listed above will be available for employees of Illinois Wesleyan who are participants in the health insurance plan.

If you would like to participate, you will need to reserve a space by calling the Wellness office at **556-3334**, no later than Friday, October 9.

Participants of the IWU health plan are covered for these services. If you or an immediate family member are not insured by IWU and wish to participate in the screening, payment is required at the time of the service.

Cholesterol and Lipid Panel

A 12-hour fast is required prior to the cholesterol and lipid panel; nothing to eat or drink except water.

Blood Pressure Screening: If you have not had your blood pressure checked recently, please take a moment to update yourself on this information. You can do it in less time than it takes to call a friend for lunch.

Note: The results of all screenings are strictly confidential and can be sent directly to your physician, if requested at the time of the service.

WELLNESS WORKSHOPS

To register for the Wellness Workshops, please call 556-3334 or e-mail wellness@iwu.edu.

Bird Walk

with Professor Given Harper

September 12, 2009, 8-10 a.m.

Ewing Park



IWU Wellness would like to invite you to join Professor Given Harper for a bird walk in Ewing Park on September 12 from 8-10 a.m. This is just in time for the beginning of the fall migration. We will meet in the Ewing Park parking lot off Towanda, just north of the Ewing Castle. Hope to see you there! To register please contact Wellness at 556-3334 or wellness@iwu.edu.

Saucy Salsa Throwdown!

Tuesday, September 15 Noon-1:00 p.m.

Davidson Room, Memorial Center

IWU Wellness and Multicultural Student Affairs are teaming up to bring you a Saucy Salsa Throwdown! Use up the last of those summer tomatoes, put together your best salsa or salsas, and enter to win a gift certificate to your favorite local Hispanic restaurant.

To register your salsa, call 556-3334 or e-mail us at wellness@iwu.edu by September 11.

PREVENTION is A Cure Week



Healthy Environment. Healthy People
September 16-September 24, 2009
Collaborative Educational Campaign

This Campaign Works To:

- Raise Awareness** on environmental impacts on health.
- Encourage a precautionary approach** to lifestyle and community policy
- Celebrate actions** that create a healthy environment for all.

In conjunction with the Prevention Campaign, IWU Wellness will host:
Don't Rush to Flush! Pharmaceuticals in Our Waterways
with Cecily Smith, Prairie Rivers Network
Tuesday, September 22 Noon-1:00 p.m.
Davidson Room, Memorial Center

Learn about pharmaceuticals entering our waterways, concerns about these contaminants, and ways citizens can prevent these compounds from entering our rivers.

To register, please contact Wellness at x 3334 or wellness@iwu.edu

Film: Homo Toxicus

Thursday, September 23, 7:00-8:30 p.m.
Beckman Auditorium, The Ames Library

A global-wide experiment is in progress, and we are the guinea pigs. Everyday, tons of chemicals are released into the environment, without knowing how toxic they are in the long term to the living organisms. Moreover, the majority of the 100,000 molecules developed since World War II which used in daily products have never been tested. In a hard—hitting investigation, (carried out with intelligence and humor) director, Carole Poliquin, has her own blood tested and explores the links between those toxic substances and some rising health problems such as cancer, allergies, hyperactivity and infertility.

Please go to the Wellness Web site www.iwu.edu/~wellness to learn about the other workshops that will be presented throughout the week in various locations around the Bloomington/Normal community.