



TANG CENTER BEAR TALK

News And Information From University Health Services

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New protocol speeds access to bladder infection treatment

The Tang Center treats some 2,000 cases of urinary tract infections—commonly known as bladder infections—every year. And anyone who has experienced a bladder infection will tell you this: Getting relief is absolutely the first thing on your mind.

A new protocol makes it simpler and faster for female patients to get treatment. Patients can call the clinic nurse, be screened over the telephone, and be prescribed a course of

treatment without coming in for an appointment.

UHS Medical Director Dr. Peter Dietrich estimates that since this new service began last semester, well over half of patients calling with bladder infections have met the criteria for the

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Thermometer Giveaway!

See inside



From the Student Health Advisory Committee:

Is our access to health care in peril?

Of all the lessons we Cal students learn in our time on campus, perhaps the most important is learning how to manage our own health. The **Student Corner** of Bear Talk will feature topics of great importance to Cal students. This is a place where our student voice can be heard in the greater dialogue about health.

This column is authored by the Student Health Advisory Committee (SHAC), an independent group of undergraduate and graduate students advising University Health Services (UHS) on quality, affordability, and accessibility of

on-campus healthcare for Berkeley students. In this edition, we will discuss fundamental issues of access.

Access to on-campus health care is an important student concern. In a given year, the average Cal student visits the Tang Center 2.5 times. About three-quarters of Berkeley students use UHS at least once during the academic year. Because health care in the San Francisco Bay Area can be extremely expensive, preserving student access to *affordable*, high quality medical and

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Change in prescription medication benefit

Student Health Insurance Plan benefits remain the same for Spring 2005, with one exception:

Prescriptions filled **outside** of UHS after January 15, 2005 will be reimbursed at 70% of billed charges.

After you purchase a prescription, you may file a claim by sending or bringing your pharmacy medication receipt to the Student Health Insurance Office at the Tang Center.

If you have your prescription filled at the Tang Center pharmacy, you will pay only a \$10 co-pay for generic medications, or \$20 for brand-name medica-

tions, and UHS will file the insurance claim for you.

No prescription medications are subject to the annual plan deductible. The pharmacy benefit has an annual maximum of \$2,000 coverage per plan year.

Visit the UHS web site for a complete list of SHIP benefits (Click on Insurance in the A-Z directory; choose "SHIP Benefits.")

If you would like to speak with someone about SHIP, call the Student Health Insurance Office at (510) 642-5700.

New in Health Promotion: Men's Preventive Health Visits

Calling all men!

Start off the year by finding out how healthy you are—and, if needed, coming up with a plan to lead a more healthful life.

Health Promotion is now offering "Men's Preventive Health Visits." These confidential, one-on-one appointments are for men of all ages who are interested in taking a comprehensive look at their overall health.

The 30-45 minute appointment is designed to look at health issues such as exercise and diet, stress levels, vaccination history, etc.

Also, we will check your height, weight and blood pressure, and make recommendations for any needed medical follow-up.

Call 642-2000 and ask to make a "Men's Preventive Health Visit" with a clinical health educator.

Traveling Overseas?



Your travel package will include:

- Required and recommended immunizations based on your itinerary, personal history of immunizations, and planned activities during your trip
- Official International Certificate of Vaccination
- A detailed, computerized travelers report tailored to your itinerary, including information on malaria, other health risks, and other important information
- Prescriptions to prevent malaria and treat traveler's diarrhea, as appropriate
- General travel advice on precautionary measures for food, drink, and climate
- Tips for traveler's first-aid kit

The International Travel Clinic uses the most current information available from the Centers for Disease Control, the World Health Organization, and Shoreland's computerized Travel Health Information Services.

Call 643-7177 for appointments and fee information.

It's germ season: Is your medicine cabinet (or box) stocked?

Nearly all students experience occasional minor ailments or injuries — and every student room, apartment unit or house should have a well stocked “medicine cabinet” (a shoebox or a plastic container works fine) that includes the following:

■ For allergies: antihistamine (e.g. Benadryl, Claritin, Allegra).

■ For blisters, minor cuts and scrapes: band aids, antibiotic ointment or cream (e.g. Bacitracin, Polymyxin).

■ For itchy rashes, insect bites: hydrocortisone cream (1/2 to 1%) or calamine lotion.

■ For pain and fever relief: acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol); aspirin (e.g. Bayer or drug store brands); ibuprofen (e.g. Advil, Motrin).

■ For skin health: sunscreen, one with an SPF of 15 or more, and preferably one that offers UVA and UVB protection.

■ For upset stomach: an antacid (e.g. Tums, Mylanta)

■ **A thermometer.** If you call a Tang Center advice nurse, one of the first questions you will be asked is, “Do you have a temperature?” That’s a question you should be able to answer!

Before taking any over-the-counter medicines, always read the label and note the dosage information and warnings. Also, check the expiration date. Even though you might be on a budget, don't be tempted to save a few dollars by using expired medication. Some become toxic, while others lose or increase their potency.

How hot are you?

...your body temperature, that is

When you're feeling sick, one of the first things to do is figure out whether or not you're running a fever. This information will help determine what the next step should be.

But first, what is a fever?

A fever, or elevated body temperature, is a natural way your body fights off infection. 98.6°F is widely considered to be the normal temperature, although temperature readings can vary slightly from person to person throughout the day. You have a fever if your temperature is 100° or above.

Take your temperature

The next time you're feeling ill, take your temperature (make sure you wait a few minutes after eating or drinking something hot or cold). The most

common way to take your temperature is by placing the thermometer under your tongue. If you're running a fever, give our advice nurse a call (643-7197). The nurse will help you decide whether to let the fever run its course with a self-care program of fluids, rest and over-the-counter medication such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil); or whether you need to be seen by a clinician.



We gratefully acknowledge the donation of thermometers from Kaz, Inc.



Free thermometers

Of course, in order to take your temperature, you need to own or have easy access to a digital thermometer.

We can help: Come by our Self-Care Resource Center on the second floor (next to the elevators) to learn more about your health, and get a free brand-new digital thermometer! Supply limited -- first come, first served.

New Treatment Protocol

(from page 1)

telephone treatment. "It has been very well received," he says. "Students are grateful to cut down the time and trouble it takes to get treated."

Dr. Dietrich explains that prior to establishing the protocol, inhouse studies of urinary tract infection treatment showed that the patient's description of her symptoms was the most valid aspect of the diagnosis. The UHS findings were in line with those of other campus health centers in the U.S., and this new protocol is becoming popular.

"The telephone treatment is for uncomplicated cases," explains Dr. Dietrich. Before a course of treatment can be prescribed, patients are screened for recurrent bladder infections or other symptoms that might suggest a more complicated problem, such as a kidney infection or possible STD exposure. In that case, patients are scheduled for a same-day appointment or urgent care visit for further evaluation.

Emergency Contraception

Another over-the-telephone convenience

is patient access to emergency contraception, commonly known as "EC."

EC can significantly reduce the chances of getting pregnant if taken within 72 hours after unprotected intercourse.

Now, as in the case of bladder infections, students can be screened over the phone for an EC prescription.

For more information, phone numbers, and what to do when the Tang Center is closed, see the Online Health Topics "Bladder Infection" and "Emergency Contraception" on the UHS web site.

Student Corner: Access to Health Care

(from page 1)

mental health services is a priority for the University.

Currently, all registered students can visit the Tang Center's urgent care and primary healthcare clinics at no cost. Although services such as lab, x-ray and physical therapy have fees, these costs traditionally have been moderate because they are supported, in

Berkeley students historically have had access to affordable health care AND health insurance.

part, by our registration fees. By providing registered students with these primary and urgent health services for no or moderate fees, the university maintains access to healthcare for everyone—particularly students on Financial Aid.

To cover costs outside UHS (like hospitalization after a traffic accident or health care while traveling), students are required by University policy to enroll in Berkeley's Student Health Insurance Plan (SHIP) or show proof of comparable health insurance.

Unlike many Americans, Berkeley students historically have had access to affordable healthcare AND health insurance.

However, UHS has experienced significant budget cuts over the past five years. Because of shortfalls in state revenues, the Berkeley campus has had to cut the Tang Center's share of registration fee income. At the same time, double-digit growth in health expenses nationwide (including expenses for medical equipment and health professionals) has drained UHS reserves. As a result, the Tang Center has reduced hours of operation, raised fees for some services, and reduced or eliminated some of the health programs and services that students count on. This reduction in access to on-campus student health services means that our safety net is shrinking!

To restore student access to health care—and to bring innovative, new programs and services to campus—UHS has partnered with students and student groups, like SHAC, to help restructure health care costs at Cal. We would like to do this without

referring students off-campus or adding charges to students' health insurance, since these approaches

One possible solution is a new mandatory "Health Access Fee."

drive up the costs of health care for everyone. One possible solution is a new mandatory "Health Access Fee," to be proposed to students in a special referendum later this semester. The vote is expected to take place in early March.

The Student Health Advisory Committee encourages you to be an active and informed healthcare consumer by learning more about this issue and participating in the vote.

For more information, visit <http://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~health/>