USNH Yokosuka celebrates Children's Dental Health Month

By HN Nicholas Mann, USNH Yokosuka

February is fast approaching and soon adults and children alike will be throwing back the candy conversation hearts and digging into endless boxes of chocolate in celebration of Valentine's Day. While February is a month filled with sweets, it is also designated by the American Dental Association as Children's Dental Health Month (CDHM).

U.S. Naval Hospital (USNH) Yokosuka is celebrating CDHM by holding a number of dental health events geared toward children throughout February.

"We plan on spending a good deal of time outside the hospital clinic to get the word out about proper hygiene habits, good dieting and regular dental visits," said Lt. Jordan Buzzell, staff pediatric dentist at USNH.

Next month, members of the USNH Dental Clinic will take their expertise on the road to perform several dental screenings, oral hygiene instructions and dental health presentations. The pediatric dental staff will visit the main Community Development Center Feb. 4, The Sullivan's Elementary School Feb. 9 through 12, Yokosuka Middle School Feb. 18, Ikego Elementary School Feb. 23, Richard E. Byrd School in Negishi Feb. 25 and Yokosuka Co-Op Preschool Feb. 26 and 27. All children from preschool to fifth grade will be screened, as long as the parent permission slip is completed.

"We will do quick dental screenings for oral health issues that will immediately impact the child's dental health," said Buzzell.

Last year, out of the nearly 1,000 children the hospital dental staff screened, approximately 100 were found to be seriously at risk. Buzzell hopes to evaluate even more children this year.

"The focus of both CDHM and hospital events this year is on prevention and education – educating children and parents on the importance of daily oral hygiene, eating a healthy and balanced diet and understanding how dental health impacts overall health," said Buzzell. "Among the most important topics covered will be proper brushing and flossing."

Buzzell does caution that these dental screenings should not be used in place of routine dental care.

"Minor problems such as orthodontic issues, mild gum inflammation and small cavities cannot be diagnosed in such a quick exam. Comprehensive dental check-ups are still a requirement," said Buzzell.

USNH Dental Clinic personnel check a student's teeth during Children's Dental Health Month (CDHM). CDHM grew out of a one-day event in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1941. In 1949, the American Dental Association sponsored the first national observance of Children's Dental Health Day, which was expanded to a weeklong program in 1955 and to the month of February in 1981. Today it is marked in communities across the country and armed service bases abroad.

U.S. Navy file photo

For more information about Children's Dental Health Month events in Yokosuka, oral hygiene or other dental concerns, please call the USNH Dental Clinic at 243-8808 or visit the American Dental Association Web site at www.ada.org.

Navy ready for future pandemics

By U.S. Pacific Fleet Public Affairs

The Navy is prepared to deal with pandemic influenza, an epidemic of infectious flu, if an outbreak happens. That's the message by Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet (PACFLT) Adm. Robert F. Willard in his latest podcast, posted Jan. 28.

"The U.S. Pacific Fleet is part of a broader joint and combined effort to be prepared to deal with a pandemic flu outbreak," Willard said. "Our medical researchers continue to study the prevention of this and the response strategies associated with this."

"The Bureau of Medicine has been very helpful in this regard and, in the meantime, we in the Pacific Fleet will be on guard and prepared to help should a pandemic influenza ever occur," Willard said.

"Back in 1918, a worldwide [influenza] epidemic was started in an Army camp in Kansas and moved east," said Willard. "Sailors in Philadelphia and Boston died by the hundreds; millions of people died worldwide within weeks. This is not to frighten you but to illustrate how dangerous a pandemic influenza strain that we are unfamiliar with could be for the world, let alone the nation."

Of particular concern in the Pacific is the potential for an "avian flu" or bird flu pandemic.

Pacific Fleet Surgeon Capt. Charles Baxter reinforced Willard's message and said PACFLT has been developing pandemic flu plans since 2005.

"We are focused on prevention, detection and fleet response in an avian flu pandemic," Baxter said.

All human cases of bird flu transmission, to date, are traced to direct contact with an infected bird, according to Baxter. However, researchers are concerned that the virus may mutate and become able to be spread from human to human.

Baxter noted that the Navy's Bureau of Medicine and Surgery works closely with the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and the Food and Drug Administration, along with other international and national organizations and agencies, ready in case of a pandemic outbreak.

The Navy's initiatives are aligned with President Barack Obama's agenda for strengthening America's biosecurity. One of the goals in the agenda is, "Lead an international effort to diminish impact of major infectious disease epidemics" to prevent or combat 21st century threats.

How up-to-date is your list of medications?

By Landstuhl Medical Center Public Affairs

Just as you wouldn't go commissary shopping with last year's grocery list, the same principle holds true for showing up at a medical appointment with an out-of-date list of prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications and related health products such as vitamin supplements and herbal teas.

But why bother writing all of that down when it should already be on file? And besides, doesn't someone always review the meds you are taking when you show up for my medical appointment anyway?

There are many good reasons for bringing a list of all the medications, supplements, etc., you take when you visit your healthcare provider, and each one of these reasons ensures you receive the safest care possible. A few of these reasons include:

• Providing your healthcare providers the most complete and up-to-date record of what you're taking to assist them in prescribing the safest and most effective medication specifically for you.

• Preventing an adverse reaction by ensuring a new drug isn't prescribed that might interact with a medication or supplement you're taking at home, but is not listed on your medical record.

• Improving the quality and time spent talking with your doctor about your care. By providing a list of what you're actually taking, it allows your provider to quickly and accurately compare it with your previous medical history.

• Improving familiarity with your medications. Patients who keep an up-to-date list of their medications with them gain familiarity with their medications and how to take them. This knowledge is reinforced when you immediately update the list due to a change in the medications, vitamins or supplements you're currently taking.

• Saving your life. In addition to the reasons listed above, if you are ever in an emergency where your records aren't available, having a printed copy of your meds in your wallet will inform your providers about what you're taking and prevent the possibility of a severe reaction with new drugs used in your treatment.

At your next medical appointment, bring a list of all the medications and supplements you take to ensure you receive the safest care possible.

In addition, the following are a few medication safety points to keep in mind:

• Become familiar with your medications and how to take them. Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about your medications and supplements to reinforce your knowledge and to obtain answers to your questions.

• Keep your medication list updated and accurate.

• Have your list with you, especially each time you travel or go to the clinic, hospital or emergency room.

• If you are too sick to do so yourself, ask a family member or friend to show the medication list to your healthcare providers.

By participating in your healthcare, you can help prevent medication errors!

FDA issues peanut butter product recall

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has issued a recall of many consumer products containing peanut butter. The recall does not currently include major consumer brands of peanut butter commonly found on supermarket shelves. It does include many popular candies, cookies, crackers, nutrition supplements and some pet foods. Consumers should check the FDA's Web site at http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/peanutbutterrecall/index.cfm for a current list of recalled items and discard them immediately.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends postponing eating other peanut butter containing products (such as cookies, crackers, cereal, candy and ice cream) until more information becomes available about which brands may be impacted.

The CDC and FDA have been investigating a nationwide outbreak of Salmonella Typhimurium linked to peanut butter. Consumers should consult the CDC and FDA Web sites and product packaging for consumer hotline information to contact the manufacturer directly with questions or concerns regarding individual items.

Any U.S. Naval Hospital Yokosuka beneficiaries who feel they may have become ill from peanut butter are advised to consult their family care provider.