

## Health Headlines

### **Circumcision Helps Fight HIV Risk**

Public health officials are working to reduce the spread of HIV by promoting routine circumcision for all baby boys born in the US. CDC figures show that newborn circumcision rates have dropped in recent decades, from 80 percent to about 65 percent. Critics say it subjects newborn boys to medically unnecessary surgery without their consent, but circumcision can be protective against sexually transmitted diseases. Recent studies show that in African countries hit hard by AIDS, men who were circumcised reduced their infection risk by half.

[Read more about HIV and male circumcision.](#)  
*(New York Times 8.23.09)*

### **Safety May be Linked to Teen Weight**

A study of high school students in Boston shows that living in an urban neighborhood that feels unsafe may be a factor in a teen's risk for being overweight. Of the students surveyed, those that said they rarely or never felt safe in their neighborhood were about 1.2 times more likely to be overweight or at risk for becoming overweight compared with students who said they sometimes or always felt safe. Policies and programs to address gang activity and violence may help urban-living teens from becoming overweight.

[Read more about youth violence.](#)  
*(Reuters 8.24.09)*

### **Screening for Chlamydia**

Chlamydia is the most common bacterial STD in the US, with more than 2.8 million cases each year. In 2007, CDC reported 1.1 million cases of Chlamydia, of which more than half were in females aged 15-25 years. Although screening rates increased among this group from 2000-2006, there was a slight decrease in screening in 2007. Chlamydia screening and treatment of young women can preserve reproductive health by preventing potential infertility, ectopic pregnancy, and chronic pelvic pain. Increased screening by health-care providers is needed to [reduce the rates](#) of Chlamydia in the US.

[Read more about Chlamydia.](#)  
*(CDC MMWR 4.17.09)*

### **Hepatitis Outbreak**

More than two dozen cases of Hepatitis B have been linked to a doctor's office in New Jersey. Letters have been sent to several thousand more patients who are urged to get tested. Health inspectors investigating the doctor's office found it unsanitary, with blood on the floor, unsterile equipment, and open medication vials. The doctor's license has been suspended for putting patients at risk for infection caused by blood-borne viruses. Hepatitis B can lead to jaundice, scarring of the liver, liver cancer, and death.

[Read more about Hepatitis B.](#)  
*(Associated Press 9.9.09)*

**Hollywood, Health & Society** (HH&S) is a program of the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. HH&S is a free, on-demand resource for entertainment writers working on medical and health storylines. The program is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, The California Endowment, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, HRSA's Division of Transplantation, the Office of National Drug Control Policy and the National Institutes of Health.

## Funding Agency News

### **Prevention is Key to Health Care Reform**

Leaders of six of the nation's top health foundations acknowledged that prevention measures like improved access to healthy food and exercise will save both lives and money. A study by the Trust for America's Health showed that for an invested \$10 per person in prevention, \$16 billion would be saved nationwide annually within five years. The unprecedented joint call comes at a crucial time as Americans and Congress debate how to reform our national health-care system. [\(The California Endowment Press Release 8.17.09\)](#)

### **Get Schooled: You Have the Right**

Viacom's US television properties joined together on September 8 to simultaneously air [Get Schooled: You Have the Right](#), a 30-minute special that highlights the importance of education. This five-year national initiative co-developed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and Viacom features pop superstar Kelly Clarkson and NBA MVP LeBron James to show how a commitment to education and a drive to overcome obstacles can create a path to success. [\(Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Press Release 8.13.09\)](#)

### **Childhood Lead Poisoning from Car Seats**

The Maine Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program identified 55 cases of childhood lead poisoning among children under six through mandated routine screening. Six of those cases were exposed to lead dust in the family vehicles and in child safety seats, linked to household contacts who worked in high-risk lead exposure occupations. Lead dust can be transported from the workplace to home through clothing, shoes, tools, or vehicles, and is especially dangerous to children under six. Lead poisoning can damage a child's central nervous system, kidneys, and reproductive system. At high levels, lead can cause coma, convulsions, and even death. [Read more about lead poisoning in children.](#)  
*(CDC MMWR 8.21.09)*

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## Real People, Real Lives

### **Community Walking Group**

Gema Perez and Daliflor Loya met during a nutrition class in Bakersfield. They realized that physical activity was just as important to good health as eating right and started a walking group of two dozen female Spanish-speaking farm workers. Faced with a dangerous park and unsafe walking paths, they met with city officials and raised money to renovate the park. Two years later, the group grew to 60 members, and walkers have experienced substantial individual weight loss, along with reduced stress and increased self-esteem. [Read more about obesity.](#)  
*(Healthy Eating, Active Communities, Storybank)*

### **Uninsured Heart**

Eric De La Cruz was diagnosed with a weak heart in his early 20's. He needed a heart transplant, but he was a student with no health insurance. Once diagnosed, he was denied insurance because of his pre-existing medical condition. His sister tried to navigate the system, applying for disability, raising money, and using Twitter to solicit support for her brother. He finally obtained coverage, but was too sick by then for a heart transplant. He died at age 31. His sister is still crusading for the cause, saying if it hadn't been for the delays and denials in the system, her brother would still be alive today. [Read more about organ donations.](#)  
*(New York Times 8.31.09)*

### **Back-to-School Quarantines**

Sarah Spitz, a freshman at Emory University in Atlanta, feels like she's on vacation; she sleeps all day and skips out on class. Why? The Turman South dormitory has become a self-isolation facility for more than 100 students who started the school year with the serious and highly contagious [H1N1 virus](#). But others, such as Josh Katz, a sophomore, is miserable that he is behind in his school work, stuck inside the dorm instead of socializing with his friends. There are now more than 2,000 swine flu cases on college campuses, mostly in the Southeast and Northwest. As students return to school, the disease is expected to spread rapidly through crowded dorms and classrooms. Separating the sick from the healthy, and taking basic precautions will help to reduce that spread. [Learn more about pandemic influenza.](#)  
*(New York Times 9.4.09)*

