

## Health Headlines

### **Millions Misuse Asthma Inhalers**

Over 34 million people in the U.S. suffer from asthma or other chronic airway obstructive diseases. Possibly 10 million of them are using asthma inhalers incorrectly which can seriously complicate health. Some even believe they are supposed to spray their inhalers on their necks like perfume. Doctors need to better instruct their patients on how to use their inhalers. (*Chicago Tribune* 10/24/07) Learn more about [asthma](#) and [using asthma inhalers](#).

### **Hidden Brain Injuries in Kids**

Thousands of children are believed to have brain injuries though they show no symptoms. Brain injuries may occur from accidentally hitting their heads or even choking on food. Under some kind of stress, these kids may begin to show signs of the injury. Early treatment is important and kids should see a doctor if they seem dazed or have double vision after an injury. (*BBC News* 10/29/07) Read more about [child injury prevention](#) and [traumatic brain injury](#).

### **The Lure of Menthol Cigarettes**

More than half of poor, young, urban blacks smoke cigarettes. Part of the problem is "loosies," single cigarettes illegally sold to people who can't afford a whole pack - including kids. Baltimore officials are offering free nicotine patches or gum to try to help people kick the habit while new public health campaigns are underway. (*The New York Times* 10/20/07) Read more on [smoking-related diseases](#) and [quitting cigarette smoking](#).

### **Malaria Mosquitoes Alive in the U.S.**

Live malaria-infected mosquitoes are being used to develop a new vaccine against the disease. In the '70s, volunteers endured 1,000 bites from irradiated mosquitoes to test the efficacy of using whole parasites as a vaccine. Today, researchers are extracting the parasites straight from mosquitoes, using assembly lines of heavily protected workers. The weakened form of the parasite is being used in their experimental vaccine, which has received millions of dollars in funding with hopes of eventually saving countless lives, primarily in African countries. (*The New York Times* 12/11/07) Learn more about [malaria](#) and [vaccines and immunizations](#).

**Hollywood, Health & Society** (HH&S) is a project of the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. Funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and partner organizations, HH&S is a free resource for entertainment writers working on medical and health storylines.

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## News from Leading Health Agencies

### **Healthier Schools Still Not Healthy**

Many of the nation's public schools are removing junk food from campuses and cafeterias and schools are increasingly offering physical activities and prohibiting smoking on campus. But, there is still much room for improvement. Three in four high schools still sell soda, few schools offer daily physical education and many still allow smoking. Read the [press release](#) and more on [physical inactivity](#).

### **Dealing With Rampant Infections in Hospitals**

Most people have heard about the risk of contracting potentially life-threatening MRSA (methicillin-resistant staph aureus) from healthcare settings. We now know the actual numbers - in 2005, a staggering 94,000 infections were identified in the U.S., with the highest numbers among elderly and African Americans. Now these infections can be better monitored and made a higher priority for hospitals. Read the [press release](#) and learn more about [MRSA](#).

### **Cancer Disparities Still Exist**

While cancer rates are decreasing steadily in the U.S., rates are still high for Alaskan Natives and American Indians. Regional differences show higher cancer rates in the Northern Plains and Alaska compared to the Southwest. These high rates may be due to poverty, lower education and poor health-care coverage. Read the [press release](#) and more on [cancer health disparities](#).

## Real People, Real Lives

### **Artificial Heart Saves Babies' Lives**

The Berlin Heart is the first heart-assisting device that can keep sick babies and toddlers alive until they receive a heart transplant. Infant T.J. Wilson was suffering from heart failure until he was put on the Berlin heart. The device pumped blood for him until he received a heart transplant six days later. (*WTAE News* 10/3/07) Learn more about [organ donation](#) and [heart transplantation](#).

### **A Kidney for a Vacuum**

Jamie Howard was a door-to-door salesman who met Paul Sucher while trying to sell him a vacuum. Paul needed a kidney transplant, and instead of selling him a vacuum, Jamie donated a kidney to save Paul's life. The two were a perfect match, and through the generosity of a stranger, Paul was given a new life. (*Good Morning America* 10/11/07) Read more about [organ donation](#) and [kidney transplantation](#).

### **Toxic Tanning Beds**

An estimated one in three teenagers have used tanning beds at least three times in their lives. Due to high demand, tanning beds can now be found anywhere, from dry cleaners to video stores. However, Rachel Smithson, only 21 years old, can attest that even occasional use of tanning beds can cause melanoma. Now, she is trying to deter her friends from tanning because at that young age, few think they can get cancer. (*Houston Chronicle* 10/21/07) Read more on [artificial tanning booths](#) and [cancer and melanoma](#).

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