



# Health Services News

## Flu shots now available: Your best bet for avoiding influenza

Getting a flu shot often protects you from coming down with the flu. While the flu shot doesn't always provide total protection, it's still worth getting because it reduces the symptoms of the flu.

The flu shot is now available at the Cayman Islands Hospital, District Health Centres, Faith Hospital and Little Cayman clinic.

- The flu shot is now available at the General Practice Clinic at the Cayman Islands Hospital, Faith Hospital in Cayman Brac and all District Health Centres, from 2:00 p.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

- Residents of Little Cayman should contact the clinic to make arrangements.

Director of Primary Health Care Services, Dr. Kiran Kumar recommends getting vaccinated in November ahead of the peak of the flu season which ranges between December and January but can last as late as May.

Dr. Kumar advises that since the vaccine is effective for only one season, persons at high risk for getting the flu virus or of having related complications should be vaccinated early each year.



### Why do I need to get vaccinated every year?

You need annual flu protection because the influenza virus changes from year to year. The flu vaccine you got last year wasn't designed to fight the virus strains in circulation this flu season.

Influenza viruses mutate so quickly that they can render one season's vaccine ineffective by the next season.

### Who should get the flu vaccine?

Most people who want to reduce the risk of getting influenza can get a flu shot. The CDC recommends the flu vaccine each year if you:

- Are age 6 months up to 19 years
- Are pregnant
- Are 50 years old or older
- Have a chronic medical condition such as asthma, diabetes, or heart, kidney or lung disease

- Have a weakened immune system such as from medications or HIV infection
- Are a resident of a nursing home or other long term care facility
- Are a child care worker or health care worker or live with or care for someone at high risk of complications from the flu

### Who shouldn't get the flu shot?

You are advised not get a flu shot if you:

- Have had an allergic reaction to the vaccine in the past.
- Are allergic to chicken eggs.
- Developed Guillain-Barre syndrome, a serious autoimmune disease affecting the nerves outside the brain and spinal cord, within six weeks of receiving the vaccine in the past. People who have experienced Guillain-Barre after the flu vaccine are at higher risk than are others of developing it again.
- Additionally if you have a fever, wait until your symptoms subside before getting vaccinated.

### What kind of protection does the flu vaccine offer?

- According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), when the match between flu vaccine and circulating strains of flu virus is close, a flu shot is between 70 and 90 percent effective in warding off illness in healthy people under age 65. For older adults who don't live in nursing homes and for people with chronic medical conditions, the flu vaccine is 30 to 70 percent effective in preventing hospitalization for flu or pneumonia. Among nursing home residents, a flu shot is 50 to 60 percent effective in preventing hospitalization and pneumonia, and 80 percent effective in preventing death from influenza.
- In some cases, people who get a flu shot can still get the flu, but they may get a much less severe form of the illness and, most important, they'll have a decreased risk of flu-related complications — especially pneumonia, heart attack, stroke and death — to which older adults are especially vulnerable.

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## New Pharmacy opening schedule

New opening hours have been introduced at the Pharmacy which will allow patients to pick up and drop off medication and prescription refills between the hours of 8:00 and 9:30 p.m.

### Opening Hours:

Monday – Friday 8:00am – 9:30pm to the public	Saturday & Sunday 8:00am – 7:30pm to the public	Public Holidays 8:00am – 6:00pm to the public
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Chief Pharmacist Colin Medford notes that the new opening schedule is convenient for patients as the hours allow many persons to get their medication before the start of the busy work day or after work.

The Pharmacy is also encouraging all patients to telephone their refill requests directly to the Pharmacy by dialing 244-2715 or 244-2716. Providing your request is called in well in advance (preferably the day before) there should be a minimal wait at the Pharmacy.

When phoning to request your refills, please have all the following required information:

- Patient's Name
- Patient's date of birth
- Prescription number(s), the eleven digit number(s) located at the lower right corner of the prescription label
- Contact telephone number(s)

Phone-in refill requests should be made from 8.30am to 4:30pm, Monday to Friday. All pick-ups should preferably be done between 8.00am and 8.30pm, Monday to Friday.

## Flu shots now available Continued from page one

### Can I lower my risk of the flu without getting a flu shot?

With or without a flu shot, you can take steps to help protect yourself from the flu and other viruses.

#### Practice good hygiene

Good hygiene remains your primary defense against contagious illnesses.

- Wash your hands thoroughly and often with soap and water or an alcohol-based sanitizer containing at least 60 percent alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth whenever possible.
- Avoid crowds when the flu is most prevalent in your area.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

### If I've already had the flu, can I get it again?

Once you've had the flu, you develop antibodies to the viral strain that caused it, but those antibodies won't protect you from new or mutated strains of influenza or other viruses.

### Is there any medicine to treat the flu?

Antivirals help to prevent the flu or reduce the severity and duration of the illness by a day or two. Antiviral medications are best taken within 48 hours of the onset of your symptoms and are available only by prescription.

Your best bet for treating flu symptoms remains the tried and true measures:

- Rest.
- Get plenty of fluids.
- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol, others) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, others) for aches and pains.

It's also important to eat healthy and get some daily activity to help keep your immune system in top condition.

# *From the Acting CEO*



Lizzette Yearwood  
Acting CEO

Exciting developments continue to happen at our hospital, and in this month's newsletter we want to share a few of these with you.

Our services have expanded to include a new pain management clinic, speech therapy services, DNA services and a procedure to better treat eye diseases. I encourage you to take the time to read about these new services which we have been added to our growing range of specialist services offered to the public.

These follow closely on the installation of a new 16-slice CT scanner as well as C-ARM and Patient Archiving Computer System (PACS) in our Radiology Department. This new technology will improve the services that we provide to our patients.

Technology is rapidly advancing and we must keep pace in order to be able to provide our patients with the latest diagnostic capabilities, reduce waiting times and reduce the need to travel off-island for care.

We are ushering in a new era of healthcare - pushing the standard of care higher and keeping the focus where it belongs - on the patients.

As exciting as these developments have been, what has inspired me the most recently is the overwhelming response and support by many of you who have rallied to the aid of our colleagues and friends in Cayman Brac and Little Cayman who experienced significant damage from Hurricane Paloma. It makes me proud to be part of a team with such a caring and dedicated group of employees.

This has been a challenging time for our colleagues and our patients in the sister islands, which will require considerable adjustments. I encourage everyone to continue to support the initiatives announced by the Staff Welfare Association to provide various forms of assistance.

Speaking of challenges, many of you would have seen recent press reports regarding new measures introduced by Cabinet to reduce expenditure and freeze employment, except for critical positions, due to the global financial crisis. This H.S.A. is not exempt as the policy also applies to all statutory authorities.

Over the past two years we have been taking steps to reduce our expenditure and improve our financial position. Every possible avenue of cost-reduction and/or revenue enhancement has been extensively explored and aggressive actions have been undertaken to make the most of every opportunity. Nonetheless, Cabinet's new directive mandates that efforts continue to reduce our costs.

It is clear that we must continue to be a more efficient, cost-effective, and patient focused institution. I will keep you informed about the plans ahead and how we are preparing for these challenging times. Stay informed, stay energized, and remain involved.

God bless.

Lizzette Yearwood  
Acting Chief Executive Officer

## H.S.A reintroduces speech therapy clinics

The Health Services Authority is expanding its range of speciality medical services to the people of the Cayman Islands with the introduction of a speech therapy clinic and has announced the appointment of Caymanian, Faith Gealey, a certified speech language pathologist, as clinical specialist for this area.

Services provided by the Speech-Language Pathologist include identification, evaluation and treatment of a wide range of communication (including speech, language, and voice), swallowing and cognition (including memory and problem solving) disorders.

Medical diagnoses treated include, but are not limited to:

- Stroke
- Brain injury
- Parkinson disease
- Cancer

Ms. Gealey notes that therapy is patient centered and therefore the treatment plan varies to meet the patient's particular needs depending upon severity and age of individual.

No referrals are required for this service but patients should pre-book appointments by calling the Physiotherapy Department at 244-2730.

Services are available for both children and adults.

Supervisor of Physiotherapy Services, Zillah Isaacs says the addition of speech therapy services reflects the commitment of the H.S.A to continually reviewing its services based on patient feedback and demand for such services in the Cayman Islands.

"We now are able to provide more services to the people of the community right here in the Cayman Islands, reducing the need for overseas referrals and the emotional trauma which many patients experience as a result of separation from family members during their care overseas" says Ms. Isaacs.

"I am also pleased to have someone of the professional caliber of Ms. Gealey joining our team. With her broad expertise and training I have no doubt that our services will continue to expand."



Ms. Gealey was a recipient of a Cayman Islands Government scholarship and attended Florida State University where she earned a Bachelor's Degree in Communication Sciences and Disorders and several distinctive university and national awards.

In 2005, she returned to her alma mater to complete a Master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology. She now holds her Certificate of Clinical Competence which was awarded to her through the American Speech-Language Hearing Association.

Her clinical experiences include internships with Tallahassee Memorial Hospital in Tallahassee, Florida and All Children's Hospital in Tampa, Florida. Faith was most recently employed by EBS Healthcare Inc. where she provided services in Polk County, Florida.

Ms. Gealey is extremely excited about this opportunity to provide speech-language services at HSA and, like all other HSA employees, intends to provide the highest level of care to all of her patients. If anyone from the community has any questions regarding speech-language services, please contact Faith Gealey at 244-2730.

# New Pain Management Clinic helping patients with chronic pain

Pain has become one of the most frequent causes of visits to the doctor by many persons who suffer physically and emotionally from chronic pain. As a result, the Cayman Islands Hospital has introduced a new pain management clinic operated by Dr. Delroy Jefferson who recently completed doctoral studies in anaesthesiology and intensive care medicine with a concentration in the management of acute and chronic pain.

Medical Director Dr. Greg Hoeksema says the introduction of the pain management clinic is another of the many positive initiatives being undertaken by the H.S.A to increase the range of specialist medical services to the community. "This is an exciting time for the Specialist Clinic as we expand our services to better serve our community".

Our pain management service draws on many disciplines to study the prevention, evaluation, diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of painful disorders with a multidisciplinary resource team of professionals including:

- Anaesthetists
- Radiologist
- Pharmacist
- Clinical Psychologist
- Surgical and Medical Specialists
- Psychiatrist
- Nurses
- Physiotherapist

Patients referred to the Pain Management Clinic, can be booked by contacting the Specialist Clinic. The Pain Management Clinic offers a wide range of services for patients with acute, chronic and cancer pain problems.

"Our goal is to alleviate or ease the pain that patients experience and to teach them how to manage it so they can return to a normal, productive life as soon and as much as possible." says Dr. Jefferson.

The Pain Management Clinic currently provides diagnostic and therapeutic modalities, including:

- X-ray, computed tomography scanning
- Physical therapy

- Massage therapy
- Psychotherapy (Behavioral modification)
- Cutaneous stimulation
- Electrotherapy
- Minimally invasive therapies such as lumbar epidural steroid injections, selective nerve root injections, facet injections, therapeutic trigger point injections, peripheral nerve blocks
- Pharmacotherapy (use of medications) and management of narcotic medication

It is our intention to widen the range of services offered in the pain clinic to include structured patient education programmes as well as the non-invasive and invasive pain management modalities.

Chronic pain can produce feelings of anger, sadness, hopelessness and despair. It disrupts sleep, alters one's personality and interferes with work and relationships. It can even have a profound effect on other family members. Treating, controlling and managing chronic pain is one of the main concerns of modern medicine, so we have made it our priority at the Cayman Islands Hospital.

The majority of patients currently seen in the clinic present with severe back pain, failed back surgery, challenging chronic pain or fibromyalgia.

Dr. Jefferson says "the causes of low back pain can include muscle and ligament strain, pinched nerves, degenerating spinal discs, and herniated or "slipped" discs. Arthritis, bone infections or cancer may lead to pain. Even stress and bad posture can play a significant part in chronic low back pain."

Chronic pain is often defined as pain lasting longer than three months or continuing long after the original injury occurs, despite the normal healing process.

Few cases of back pain require surgery or even a lengthy course of treatment. The pain often goes away on its own after a brief period of eased activity. About 90 percent of people with low back pain recover fully within three months.

However, in some cases, low back pain recurs, returning with increasing frequency and with greater pain intensity over time.

Most treatments are directed at pain relief for only the current episode. Any episodic relief can cause the patient to depend on that therapy and subsequently the patient may be tempted to seek a quick answer for what is essentially a life-long problem. So, in addition to whatever treatment is necessary for the present episode of pain, the patient should be taught strategies and techniques to help him or her become self-reliant in managing bouts of pain.

"Since recurrences of back pain are very common, our patients are taught specific [preventive] techniques designed to minimize recurrences and allow them to quickly manage any acute episodes of pain themselves," says Dr. Jefferson. "We empower our patients when we give them the knowledge to essentially treat their own lower back pain."

Complete bed rest is rarely recommended for back pain. Most people can find relief by taking over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medications and doing gentle, therapeutic exercises such as stretching and walking.

To prevent flare-ups, talk with your health care professional about exercises that can strengthen your back and postures that can minimize back strain.

Appointments for our Pain Management Clinic can be made by calling 244-2530 or 244-2531.

# New High Tech Equipment acquired for the Eye Clinic

As part of our commitment to remain on the cutting-edge of ophthalmic innovation and technology, the Health Services has invested in the purchase of a new phaco-emulsifier machine for cataract surgery, called the Alcon Infiniti.

The machine is used to break up and remove cataracts from within the eyeball and gives the eye surgeon much greater control, with increased stability, and therefore will reduce the number of severe operative complications such as a “dropped nucleus”. Dr. Pandit said the total amount of energy needed to break up a cataractous lens inside the eyeball is also reduced, which leads to a faster recovery time from the operation for most patients.

Medical Director, Dr. Greg Hoeksema says the addition of the new technology is part of the H.S.A's continual investment in state-of-the-art diagnostic and surgical equipment. “Eye care and vision correction have come a long way since the days when an individual's only option was a new pair of glasses.

Doctors are now using breakthrough treatments that have improved vision for millions of patients of all ages and from all walks of life. We're doing everything we can to improve our patients outcomes and quality of life. We know our focus on technology is worth the investment and our patients tell us they can truly see the difference.”

Consultant Ophthalmologist, Dr. Jyotin Pandit says the addition of this new equipment at the Eye Clinic will allow for even more advanced procedures offered at the Lions Eye Clinic.

“Ophthalmic surgery is now a precise, sophisticated science, where surgeons rely on advanced technology to diagnose and treat problems such as glaucoma, corneal disease, and cataracts. Many procedures that used to require a hospital stay and lengthy recovery are now performed on an outpatient basis with most patients returning to their normal activities

the next day” he said.

Last year the Lions Eye Clinic also benefited greatly from the replacement of the operating microscope used for eye surgery. “We now have a top-of-the-range Leica binocular stereo microscope whose optics and resolving ability allows us to see things inside the eye during surgery in unparalleled detail. This piece of equipment, on its own, greatly enhanced patient safety during surgery and alleviated a lot of the anxiety that we surgeons feel when operating on precious eyes” said Dr. Pandit.

“We have introduced a higher standard for visual outcomes for ourselves. It is no longer acceptable to us for patients to have good distance vision with glasses after cataract surgery. Now we aim that patients have good vision without glasses after surgery, as long as no other diseases are present. Therefore we now perform immersion biometry for all our cataract patients, which is the “gold standard” in measuring the eyeball. These measurements are needed in order to calculate the correct power for the replacement lens that has to be inserted into the eyeball after cataract surgery” said Dr Pandit.

For carefully selected patients we offer the “Restor” multifocal lens implant, which can be used to view objects at distance and near without glasses. We started inserting those lenses in October last year and have had excellent results so far.

Next year we plan to appoint a second ophthalmologist to the eye clinic, so that patients do not have wait so long to be seen and to have their surgery. Another piece of equipment that we are aiming to have available soon include an OCT (optical coherence tomography) machine. This is a scanning laser ophthalmoscope that displays images of the optic nerve and retina that can help in detecting the earliest signs of disease such as glaucoma and macular degeneration.

All these changes means that our patients can look forward to cataract surgery and other treatments and assessments that are on par with best practise in the USA and UK - safer, faster and better than before.



# Congratulations you're having a baby!

## What you need to know

Having a baby is one of the most exciting events in your life. Becoming a parent is an utterly incomparable experience.

Are you ready? You'll never be 100% prepared for all of what's coming, but with the right information in hand; the incredible process of becoming a parent is more than a little bit easier. You can then increase your preparedness and capture real peace of mind as you embark on this spectacular journey.

Unfortunately, many new parents don't prepare themselves. Common situations that don't need to be mysterious or frightening become a cause for concern. Too much time is spent worrying and not enough time is spent enjoying this wonderful time.

Once you have considered a doctor and hospital, it is advisable that you contact your health insurance provider and discuss the details of your health insurance coverage.

The best time to find out about your health insurance coverage

for pregnancy and birth of your baby is before you get pregnant. However, if you missed that opportunity, do check into coverage as early in your pregnancy as possible.

The only thing worse than having no health insurance is having a limited understanding about your health insurance benefits. Here are some of the things you'll want to ask about your plan:

- Does it cover prenatal care? What prenatal tests are covered?
- What delivery options are covered?
- Does it cover nursery costs for the baby?
- Is there a co-payment? If so, how much is it?
- Is there a deductible? If so, how much is it?
- Are anaesthesia and emergency c-sections covered?
- Are sick and well-baby visits covered?
- What can I expect my total out-of-pocket

expenses to be?

- Does policy exclude preexisting conditions?

It's a good idea to check on all this in case your current plan doesn't meet your needs.

The level of benefits provided under your health insurance policy will depend on your insurance plan; it may be anything from 100% to none at all. Some insurance companies require a 10-month waiting period before they will cover your pregnancy, and some have a limit on prenatal care. It would also be advisable to find out how you go about adding your new baby to your insurance policy from the moment of their birth.

# Having a Baby?



It is important to read your health insurance policy carefully, especially the section that deals with “exclusions, limitations and restrictions,” so that you will know in advance what the insurance company will pay for and what it will not pay for.

The cost of delivery can be very expensive, particularly if there are complications. If you do not have health insurance or if the benefits provided under your coverage would be inadequate to cover the projected medical expenses, it is advisable that you consider your options very early in your pregnancy and discuss with your physician all alternatives including the possibility of giving birth in your native country where various programs may be available to assist in covering the expenses associated with your delivery.

Before embarking on any travel overseas, discuss the trip with your midwife or doctor to ensure that everything is progressing normally and you are fit to travel.

Always carry your medical notes with you when you travel. Keep in mind that most airlines will not allow a pregnant woman to travel after 32 weeks gestation, so plan your trip to be back in plenty of time. It should also be kept in mind that most problems in pregnancy occur within the first 12-15 weeks, when miscarriage can occur. Complications such as high blood pressure, also known as pre-eclampsia, are very common after 30 weeks. So if there is a “good” time to travel it is usually during the middle 3 months.

## Speak to your Physician

Regular communication with your physician is the key to safe delivery of your baby. If you have not done so prior to your pregnancy, it is important that you speak with your physician as soon as possible regarding your pregnancy, delivery options and your health insurance plan to make sure you are appropriately prepared.

## Pre-registering for your delivery

After verifying your health insurance benefits, it is important that you pre-register for your delivery. Through advance registration, all of the required information about you is gathered and placed in our files pending your visit. Our Patient Financial Services Representative will discuss financial requirements with you at that time.

Benefits will vary depending upon the type of insurance policy you carry. Your co-payment, deductible and co-insurance are due at the time we are pre-registering you. Payment may be made by cash, check, or credit card.

Remember: Your insurance coverage is a contract between you and your insurance company.

To ensure that your registration is complete and accurate, please have the following items ready when you arrive at the Hospital, this will ensure that the registration process will flow smoothly and efficiently:

- All current health insurance information - (insurance cards). As a reminder: It is important that you contact your insurance company to obtain pre-certification and benefits information. If you do not have insurance coverage, we will require a deposit towards your care. The amount of that deposit will be directly proportional to the level of service you are scheduled to receive. You will also be required to meet with a Patient Financial Service Representative to discuss and agree on a payment plan prior to your delivery date.
- Picture ID
- Provide a current mailing address. This will facilitate timely and efficient correspondence.
- Provide contact telephone number(s). This is our only means of immediate contact to verify appointments and notify you of any changes

## Paying for Hospital Services

The cost of your maternity care will vary depending on the nature of delivery. For available rates please contact 244-2597.

Following your visit or hospitalization you will receive a bill which will show what has been billed to insurance and any balance that may be owed. If your insurance

# Having a Baby?



covers all cost for service you will not have a patient balance indicated on your bill. During the process of filing your claim, you will receive a variety of letters to keep you informed of the status of your account.

Please be advised that you may obtain informational statements until your bill is settled. After receiving the insurance payment, you will receive an Explanation of Benefits (E.O.B.) from your insurance company telling you how the claim was processed and informing you of your financial responsibility (co-pays, deductibles, and/or co-insurance).

If you are insured your bill will be sent to your health insurance provider. You will an itemized statement which will reflects your hospital care, and all the supplies and services ordered by your physician. If you need an insurance billing form for billing other health insurance providers, we can provide you with a copy if you contact our Patient Financial Services Department.

Our 'people friendly' financial counsellors are available each week day from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. each week day to discuss payment arrangements with you and answer your general questions.

Please call 244-2571, 244-2596; 244-2516; 244-2597; 244-2547; 244-2572, or 244-2511 to discuss financial arrangements.

It is very important that you check with your health insurance company before admission on your eligibility. Some insurance companies limit the number of days and the amount of reimbursement for your maternity stay.

Please be prepared to pay any co-payments required by your insurance policy before you have your baby. Payment arrangements can be discussed with our Patient Financial Service Representatives.

## Overseas Medical Care

Unfortunately, events occur that we can't foresee. If there is an emergency that

requires overseas transfer your evacuation can be significantly delayed if you do not have sufficient health insurance coverage and do not have the financial means to pay.

Most overseas healthcare institutions require the payment of deposits ranging up to US\$500,000 before accepting patient transfers. Without health insurance or the ability to pay this could put your health or that of your child at risk. We therefore encourage all patients to take into consideration all aspects of their delivery and make contingency financial arrangements for any unforeseen circumstances.

It is also important to note that in cases of overseas referrals, proper documentation is needed for the immigration authorities. Valuable time can be saved if your travel documents are in order, and this can be critical in saving precious lives.

- ensure that you have a valid passport and visa
- contact the passport office to have these validated if necessary
- ensure that your health insurance premiums are paid and current

For holders of passports from countries which are part of the USA Visa Waiver Programme such as Canada and the UK, remember that this program applies only if you arrive on a commercial airline. For arrival on an ambulance, you will need a visa. Also note that the Cayman Islands Passport Office cannot issue waivers for UK passport holders.

## Our LOGO



How many times have you asked: what does the Health Services logo represent?; what is the significance of the three "squiggles" in our logo? and what is the importance of the logo anyway?

The caduceus symbol: two serpents criss-crossed around a staff topped by a round knob and flanked by wings has been the traditional symbol/logo used globally by many hospitals and healthcare facilities. While the symbol is highly recognised and identifiable with healthcare it offers no distinctiveness to the particular facility.

One of the distinguishing features of the HSA logo is its uniqueness. When people see our logo, we want them to immediately associate it with the Health Services Authority and no one else.

The symbols of the HSA's logo represent many things. They show, of course, three figures, coming together. These are symbolic of the three islands – Grand Cayman, Little Cayman and Cayman Brac and the collaborative approach to providing healthcare to all the people of the Cayman Islands.

The logo also reflects the cooperative approach to the delivery of care through involvement of the family. The three figures in this sense represent patient, family and healthcare jointly involved in the healthcare process and what is now becoming the popular approach to health care. Family-centred care promotes the involvement, health and well-being of individuals and families which leads to better health outcomes.

The three figures in our logo can also be translated differently by individuals -- e.g. the two larger figures as two parents, while the smaller figure is usually seen as a child, reinforcing our focus on family centered care.

While our logo to many persons may seem just as another symbol, more important is what that symbol represents. It symbolises our commitment to patients, staff and the community working together to ensure the optimum health for all.

## Managing Cough and Cold in Children

by *Linden Swan, Paediatrician*

We are well into the cold season and there is a lot of sneezing and sniffles all around. A cold is an infection of the nose and throat caused by a virus. A cold is also called a viral upper respiratory tract infection. The common cold is a self limited viral illness that can be caused by more than 200 different viruses.

Most healthy children can get as much as 6-10 colds per year from different viruses. Most colds last about 1 week, but some can last longer. The cough can sometimes last for 2 to 3 weeks.

Colds are spread by contact with other persons who have the cold. It is very easily transmitted. Handwashing is the most important way to reduce the spread of colds.

### No cure yet

Studies have shown that many people attend to hospitals in the belief that there is a "cure" for the common cold or in the mistaken belief that antibiotics can help. Needless to say that this myth is sometimes perpetuated by Doctors and other health personnel. One study showed that as much as 40% of children were given antibiotics when it was not necessary. Often they are treating the impatient parents and loading the innocent child with another unnecessary drug.

On the brighter side however, other studies have demonstrated that most patients and their parents are more interested in education than in medication. We are very pleased when people can accept a diagnosis and information rather than a prescription.

### Medicines and the common cold

More people will be attending to medical facilities or pharmacies for cough and cold medicines than any other time of the year.

Medications for the common cold, although contributing significantly to health care costs, have not been shown to be effective and have demonstrated little or no benefit in children. Most recent recommendation is for no cold medicines to be given to children under 4 years. Over the counter and prescription cold medicines are not usually helpful for children and some may cause unwanted side effects such as drowsiness, dizziness, difficulty falling asleep, or rapid heart rate. Rarely the side effects can be serious and life threatening.

### Cold treatment in various cultures

As we survey the literature we notice that different ethnic cultures have had a variety of home remedies for the common cold, and some of these have been used for generations.

It is unlikely that the Chinese are all wrong with their ginger tea-hot water with ginger and sugar. They have used this for generations with good effect. Meanwhile in Hawaii, the home of Sarah Palin, they encourage you to swim in the ocean to promote nasal drainage, and when you get home you use some Saimin (noodle soup). Just across in the mainland USA, Barack Obama's grandmother would have given him some honey and lemon tea along with some chicken soup. In the Philippines where one name for the common cold is Sipon in the Tagalog dialect, it is fought with warm water with kalamansi (small lemon or lime). Inhaled Vics steam treatment is also part of the traditional armory.

# Eye-Opening Truths About Caffeine

At work and play, is caffeine your constant companion? Or do you purposely avoid the stimulant for health reasons? You'll find people on both extremes of the caffeine issue—and many others who are uncertain whether caffeine is helpful or harmful. What is the truth about caffeine?

Some medical experts say caffeine can be both friend and foe, depending on your medical history and how much caffeine you consume.

It's a stimulant that speeds up your nervous system, and some people are naturally more sensitive to its effects. On the positive side, caffeine is known to improve mood, mental sharpness and reaction time—and help with pain relief. On the flip side, it can cause stomach upset, heartburn, nervous jitters and trouble sleeping.

When deciding whether to use or avoid caffeine, it pays to know the facts and details behind the recent headlines. Here is the whole story on recent reports you may have heard.

## ***Caffeine consumption is linked to miscarriage.***

The whole story: A study concluded that the risk for miscarriage doubles for expectant moms who consume more than 200 milligrams (mg) of caffeine every day—about two regular cups of coffee. But some doctors are skeptical of the caffeine/miscarriage link. Until these results are confirmed, mothers-to-be are urged to keep their daily caffeine consumption less than 200 mg.

## ***Caffeine does not help you lose weight.***

The whole story: Caffeine is a stimulant and an appetite suppressant, which is why many nonprescription "weight-loss" pills include it. Caffeine also increases urination and can have a laxative effect, which means the scale may show a temporary weight loss. Still, there is no reliable data proving that caffeine use leads to significant long-term weight loss.

## ***Caffeine is addictive.***

The whole story: Many studies suggest that caffeine causes physical dependence. Regular caffeine users who skip a "dose" may suffer withdrawal symptoms, such as headache, anxiety, fatigue, depression and muscle pain. These symptoms typically disappear within 48 hours of quitting caffeine.

## ***Caffeine increases blood pressure.***

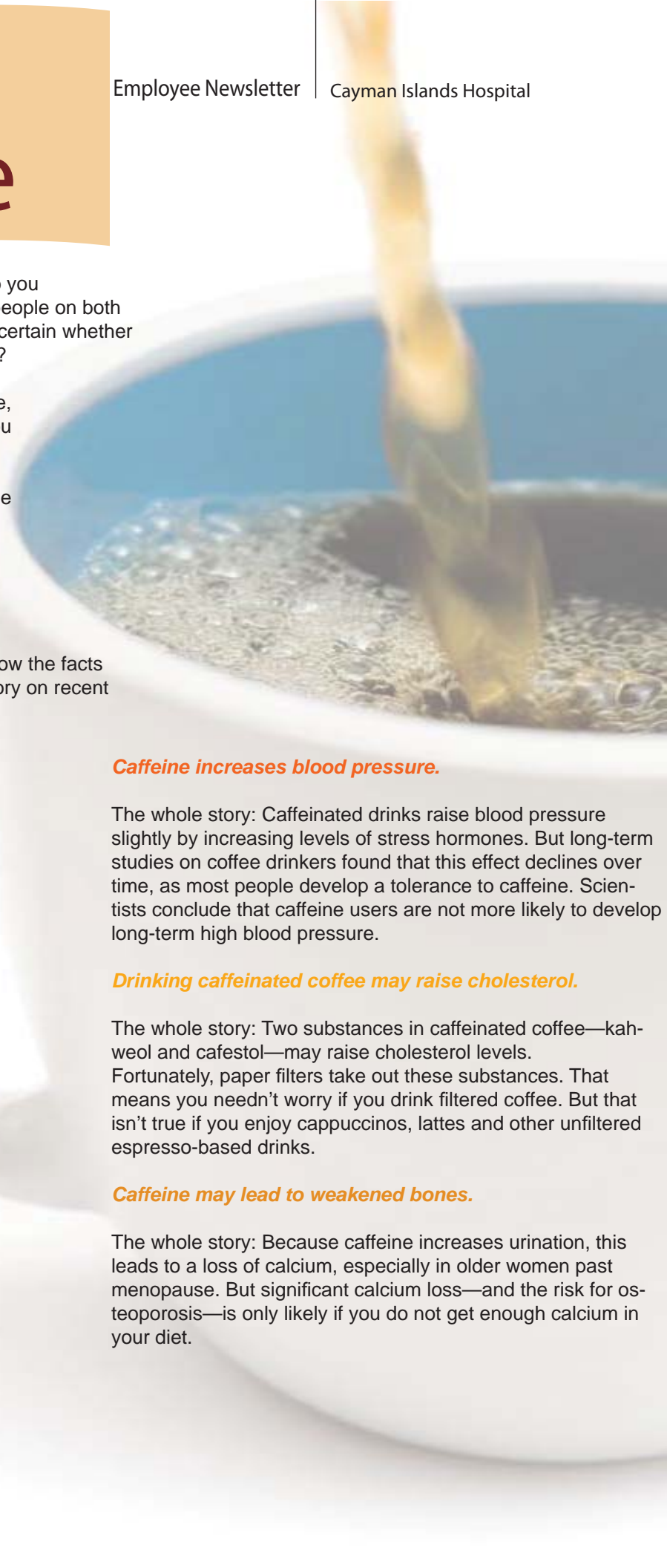
The whole story: Caffeinated drinks raise blood pressure slightly by increasing levels of stress hormones. But long-term studies on coffee drinkers found that this effect declines over time, as most people develop a tolerance to caffeine. Scientists conclude that caffeine users are not more likely to develop long-term high blood pressure.

## ***Drinking caffeinated coffee may raise cholesterol.***

The whole story: Two substances in caffeinated coffee—kahweol and cafestol—may raise cholesterol levels. Fortunately, paper filters take out these substances. That means you needn't worry if you drink filtered coffee. But that isn't true if you enjoy cappuccinos, lattes and other unfiltered espresso-based drinks.

## ***Caffeine may lead to weakened bones.***

The whole story: Because caffeine increases urination, this leads to a loss of calcium, especially in older women past menopause. But significant calcium loss—and the risk for osteoporosis—is only likely if you do not get enough calcium in your diet.



## Managing Cough and Cold in Children (cont'd)

A wide array of remedies are used but some of these are common and keep recurring across different cultures, these include Ginger tea, Inhaled Vicks, Tea with honey and lemon, mint tea, and various soups from chicken to barley. There is also the adventurous to the religious when it comes to treating the common cold; from a mixture of Vodka and water in a 4: 1 ratio, in Russia to reading a passage from the Koran or other holy book in Afghanistan. Any alcohol concoction would certainly be for adults only.

All of this shows us that management of the common cold in these instances is intended to provide temporary relief of symptoms until the cold runs its course.

You cannot make a cold go away faster, neither can your doctor. Plenty of patience is needed as you try to make your child as comfortable as possible. Offer lots of fluids to drink, since the appetite for solid foods is often decreased.

Treatment for runny nose or congestion is with normal saline (salt water). You can loosen the mucus by placing 2 to 3 drops in each nostril several times daily, especially before feeding and at bedtime. Use 1 drop at a time and do 1 nostril at a time.

A soft rubber bulb suction can help remove mucus from the nostril of infants after you loosen it with saline.

A cool mist vaporizer or humidifier in the bedroom can also help with mucus control and keeps the nostrils open.

Most parents ask, "Doc., what are you giving for the cough?" In most cases the cough is just a symptom of the cold, and there is little one can do to make it go away any faster. The cough goes away as the cold virus runs its course. Cough is often worse at night also presumably because children are lying flat. An extra pillow to raise the head of older children can be useful. Sometimes a cough can be a sign of a chest infection or Asthma. The doctor can tell.

Acetaminophen (Panadol), or Ibuprofen is good for the fever. Doses according to weight is usually used in children and this is often on the container.

Can a cold cause complications?

Colds are not usually serious, but a small percentage, about 5 % of children with a cold can go on to develop a bacterial infection as well. These include ear, throat, sinus, and chest infections. For your doctor may recommend antibiotics. It is to be noted however that antibiotics have no effect on cold viruses. Using antibiotics when they are not needed makes it harder to treat bacterial infections with antibiotics if needed in the future. Antibiotics can also cause side effects such as upset stomach, vomiting, diarrhoea, and skin rashes.

Finally, let's remember colds are caused by a virus which is easily spread from person to person. The symptoms of the common cold include runny nose, coughing, sneezing, and mild fever. The ammunition to battle the mighty cold includes good hydration, fever control, adequate humidity, patience, and time.

## From the Pipeline

Congratulations to Valerie Parris of the Medical Records Department who has been promoted to the post of Records Officer.

Valerie will be now be part of the Freedom of Information Unit which will oversee the H.S.A's implementation of the FOI Legislation.

Congratulations Valerie on your promotion.

Please give her your usual support and cooperation as we continue the exercise of getting ready for FOI.

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Welcome aboard Salome Trinidad, better known as Razel, who has joined our team as Financial Controller.

Salome comes to the H.S.A from the Auditor General's Department with an impressive background in financial management.

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Congratulations to Pamela Givens Harper who was recently appointed as Nurse Manager for Faith Hospital and the Little Cayman Clinic. Pamela was raised in California and moved to Cayman Brac in 1997 with her husband. She has been a Registered Nurse since 1984. In 1990 she received her Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing and Management along with a Public Health Nurse certificate.

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It's the ultimate dream of any physiotherapist who treats athletes and their sports related injuries to participate in the Games of the Olympics. For Pier Ann Patterson-Brown physiotherapist at Faith Hospital on Cayman Brac this dream materialized last summer when she travelled to Beijing, China with the Cayman Islands Olympic delegation.

It was an honor to have been selected as part of the contingency. I had no problem bonding with our 4 Olympians and other members of the delegation. We all had high hopes for each athlete and were committed in our efforts to help them succeed. Our assigned attaché and 4 Chinese volunteers were fabulous. They did everything to make us comfortable and happy and became like family by the end of the Games." remarked Mrs. Brown.

Apart from witnessing the spectacular performances of the athletes of the XXIX Olympiad, Mrs. Brown took advantage of the professional development opportunities at the Games. She attended the International Olympics Medical Commission's Sport Medical Conference where topics such as: Health Care in China, Nutrition in Athletes, Injury Prevention and Doping Control Procedures were discussed. She also participated in continuing education seminars on: Jumper's Knee and Shockwave Therapy. The sessions proved to be very informative, refreshing and revitalizing. To some extent she says she experienced a comparative awe of witnessing Olympic records being broken from being in the counsel of renowned therapists, doctors, rehabilitation specialists and researchers from all over the world. Some of whom were authors of renowned sports medicine textbooks and scientists associated with research papers she had read.

"The 2008 Beijing Olympics was an awesome experience – it has already been tagged as the best ever!" With this infusion and rekindling of her love for sports medicine, Mrs. Brown says she's now considering pursuing a Masters in Sports Medicine in the near future.