



The Kidney Corner:

Exploring edema

By Dr. Mark Saddler
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Edema is the term used to describe swelling of the body due to accumulation of fluid.

When it is severe, this swelling is usually very obvious, showing up as swollen ankles and legs and occasionally a puffy face. Extra fluid accumulating in a patient's body usually is seen in the ankles, since gravity tends to make it flow downward.

So we usually test for edema by gently squeezing a patient's lower shin with a thumb or finger; if this pressure leaves an indentation, it is a sign that edema is present.

Symptoms of edema include a feeling of fullness of the ankles or legs, inability to put on shoes because they are too tight, and puffiness of the face.

A serious form of edema occurs when the fluid accumulates in the lungs. This "pulmonary edema" causes shortness of breath and tends to be worse when a patient lies flat in bed. Standing up sometimes relieves it.

The shortness of breath caused by this fluid in the lungs can be very distressing, and patients might say it feels as if they are drowning — which indeed they



through loss of protein in the urine or through chronic kidney disease.

In addition, localized disease processes can cause edema. A clot in a leg vein is a good example. Edema of one leg is a common symptom of a leg vein clot. Varicose veins can sometimes cause similar swelling.

Obstruction to lymphatics can also cause edema. This is a common problem after removal of lymph nodes for breast cancer. Other occasional causes include some medications and allergic reactions.

Edema is usually best treated by addressing the cause of the problem (treating the heart disease or kidney disease). The mainstay of treatment of edema, however, is with diuretic medications. Examples are furosemide (Lasix) and hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ).

These drugs increase the body's excretion of sodium and water from the kidneys. They generally work well, but it's important to remember that they don't work as well in the presence of a high sodium intake. Even though you may not add salt yourself to your food, it may already be high in salt if someone else has prepared it. Most fast foods are very high in salt.

are! It usually needs to be treated in a hospital or emergency room by intravenous medicines that help to remove the extra fluid.

What can cause this extra fluid accumulation? Usually, fluid in the blood vessels is maintained by a complex series of processes that limit the amount of fluid leaking out into the surrounding tissues.

This finely tuned system can be unbalanced by a number of systemic illnesses. Heart disease is one cause, and edema is a hallmark of congestive heart failure. Liver disease, particularly cirrhosis, can also result in severe edema and in this case is often associated with accumulation of fluid in the abdomen, called ascites. Kidney disease is a third cause, either

Sutton bids farewell



photo Ace Stryker/SU DRUM

Grounds Maintenance Division Head Don Sutton (right) said his goodbyes on Friday, Jan. 6 after 15 years of employment with the Southern Ute Indian Tribe. Staff members from all areas of the tribal organization, including Executive Officer Steve R. Herrera Sr. (left) and Personnel Director Brian Sheffield (center), stopped by the Grounds Maintenance office to wish Sutton well in retirement.

Thanking foster families



Foster care coordinator Tara Reeves of the Southern Ute Indian Tribe's Division of Social Services organized a foster parent appreciation party to show the division's gratitude to its foster families, guardians, kinship providers and department staff. The Sunday, Jan. 8 party in the Rolling Thunder Bowling Lanes at the Sky Ute Casino Resort hosted foster families and providers for an afternoon of bowling and pizza. The Thompson and Herrera families (top) enjoy several varieties of pizza; Brianna Goodtracks-Alires (bottom) helps Dominique Howe choose a ball before bowling. The division is currently planning two more events for foster children: a sweat in March and a Bear Dance workshop in May. Anyone interested in volunteering their time or knowledge is asked to call Tara Reeves at 970-563-0100 ext. 2337.

photos Robert Ortiz/SU DRUM

United Blood Services, blood drives

Wednesday, Jan. 18
• BP, Bloodmobile
8 a.m. – 11:30 a.m., 380 Airport Rd., Durango, CO
• Fort Lewis College, Vallecito Room
10 a.m. – 1:45 p.m., 1000 Rim Dr., Durango, CO
Thursday, Jan. 19
• CDOT, Bloodmobile
9 a.m. – 11:45 a.m., 3803 N. Main Ave., Durango, CO

Florida Mesa Elementary, Bloodmobile
2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m., 216 Hwy 172, Durango, CO
Friday, Jan. 20
• Ute Mountain Casino Hotel, Bingo Hall
11 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., 3 Weeminuche Dr., Towaoc, CO
• Pleasant View Fire Dept., Bloodmobile
2:30 p.m. – 6 p.m., 15529 CR CC, Pleasant View, CO

Community Meeting



Organize AND Strategize COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS

Wednesday, January 18th 5:30 p.m.
Southern Ute Higher Education Building

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Health Services, 970-563-0154
Shining Mountain Diabetes Program, 970-563-4741

Winter Whitening!



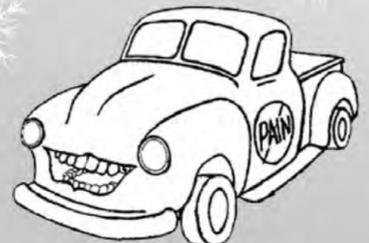
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