The Kidney Corner:

How much potassium do you need?

By Dr. Mark Saddler
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Potassium is an electrolyte (charged chemical) which is vital for normal cellular function. By an ingenious system of molecular pumps, all cells in our body maintain a high level of potassium inside the cell while keeping the concentration low outside the cell. This potassium concentration difference between the inside and the outside of cells is important for many of their functions, including muscle contraction and normal functioning of nerve cells.

It is important that blood levels of potassium be neither too high nor too low. Low potassium levels can be caused by diarrhea, vomiting and sometimes medications including some diuretics which cause potassium loss from the urine. Lack of potassium may cause muscle cramps but there are often few or no symptoms. Critically low levels of potassium can be very dangerous due to a disruption of the heart's rhythm.

Elevated levels of potassium can also be caused by medications but most cases occur in patients with impaired kidney function. In people with healthy kidneys, a large amount of excess potassium can be excreted in the urine. Consumption of even large amounts of potassium-rich foods does not therefore usually cause high potassium levels unless kidney function is impaired. High potassium levels can cause weakness but (as with low potassium levels), it can be difficult to detect symptoms in many cases. And again, when levels get very high, the heart is at risk of going into an abnormal rhythm or stopping. In other words, the heart will only tolerate a narrow range of potassium levels to work properly. Fortunately, in healthy people, this tight range of potassium levels is usually maintained quite easily by the kidneys.

For most people with healthy kidneys, taking in adequate amounts of potassium in the diet contributes to good health. Fruits and vegetables are usually good sources of potassium and foods which are particularly high include bananas, oranges and other citrus fruits, chile, melons, potatoes and tomatoes. Many commercial "salt substitutes" also contain potassium (instead of sodium). Diets which are high in potassium are associated with a lower incidence of high blood pressure. However, in patients with advanced kidney disease potassium intake may need to be limited to avoid dangerously high levels.

Treatment of low potassium is usually simple: replacement of potassium in the diet or with potassium chloride tablets is all that is usually necessary. Bringing down high potassium levels can be more complicated. This may require avoidance of potassium in the diet, discontinuation of medicines which may be contributing to the high potassium, and sometimes use of medicines which bring potassium down including a preparation called Kayexalate which allows potassium loss from the bowel. In serious emergencies, dialysis can be used to bring down potassium levels.

Teen Dating Violence

Media release
Southern Ute Police Department Victim Services

February is National Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month. During this month, and at all times, it is important for everyone to be aware of the issue of teen dating violence. For as much as domestic violence among adults is an issue that is too often not discussed, and too often kept a secret by the victim, teen dating violence is even less discussed, and even less reported by victims.

It is important to discuss Teen Dating Violence because 1 in 4 adolescents report verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse from a dating partner each year. If this is the number of adolescents that report the abuse there are many more silent victims out there and it is important to understand that it's not just girls who are the victims of dating violence. Both males and females are victimized, no matter their race, income level or sexual preference. Teenagers who are victims of dating violence are more likely to continue to be abused in their adult relationships, and are unlikely to break the pattern of abusive relationships. Teenagers who are victims are more likely to be depressed and do poorly in school. They may engage in unhealthy behaviors, like using drugs and alcohol, and are more likely to have eating disorders. Some teens even think about or attempt suicide.

How do you know if you (or someone you know) are in a hurtful relationship? Are you going out with someone who: Is jealous towards you? Makes you afraid to disagree? Wants to get too serious too fast? Threatens to hurt you? Calls you names, insults you? Makes you tell where you are all the time? Blames you when becoming angry or losing control? Touches you without permission? Pressures you to have sex? Threatens to commit suicide if you try to break up? These are just a few of many different warning signs that someone maybe in an abusive relationship.

How do you know if you, or someone you know, are in a hurtful relationship?

What do you do if you (or someone you know) are in an abusive relationship?

Discuss your concerns. It is never too late to make your feelings clear with your partner. If expressing your concerns leads to more abuse, get HELP!

Trust Your Gut. If you have concerns about someone you're dating or want to date, trust your feelings. If the person refuses to discuss your concerns, you should not go out with them.

Believe In Yourself. It's common to question whether the abuse took place, or whether it was really "that bad". But it is important to believe your feelings.

Break the Silence. Talk with someone. Tell a parent, a relative, a friend, a trusted adult, the school nurse, a doctor, a minister, a Victim Advocate, or a school counselor.

Think of Your Safety. Abusive relationships tend to get worse, not better. Resist giving the person "one more chance." Realize that by the time you are asked for "one more chance" you have likely already given your partner numerous chances. Refuse to take phone calls and to return messages.

Regardless of the abuser's age it is against the law for anyone to: Hurt you, try to hurt you, force you to have sex, threaten you with weapons, harass you on the telephone or through the mail, stalk you or destroy things that belong to you. Always remember: Abuse is NOT love. Love is NOT abuse. Love does not hurt. The abuse is not your fault. You did not cause the abuse. You cannot stop the abuse.

If you or someone you know is or has been in an abusive relationship it is important to know that you are not alone.

Available resources

Southern Ute Police Department Victim Services
970-563-0245

Alternative to Horizons
970-247-9619

Our Sister's Keeper
970-247-7888

Sexual Assault Services Organization (SASO)
970-247-5400

National Dating Abuse Helpline
1-866-331-4474
or text "loveis" to 77054 or www.loveisrespect.org and www.myspace.com/stopteendatingvolence.com.

SUIT Environmental Programs is offering free home radon testing to Tribal Members. Please call Peter Diethrich for more information or to schedule an appointment. Priority to Elders and those with infants in their homes.

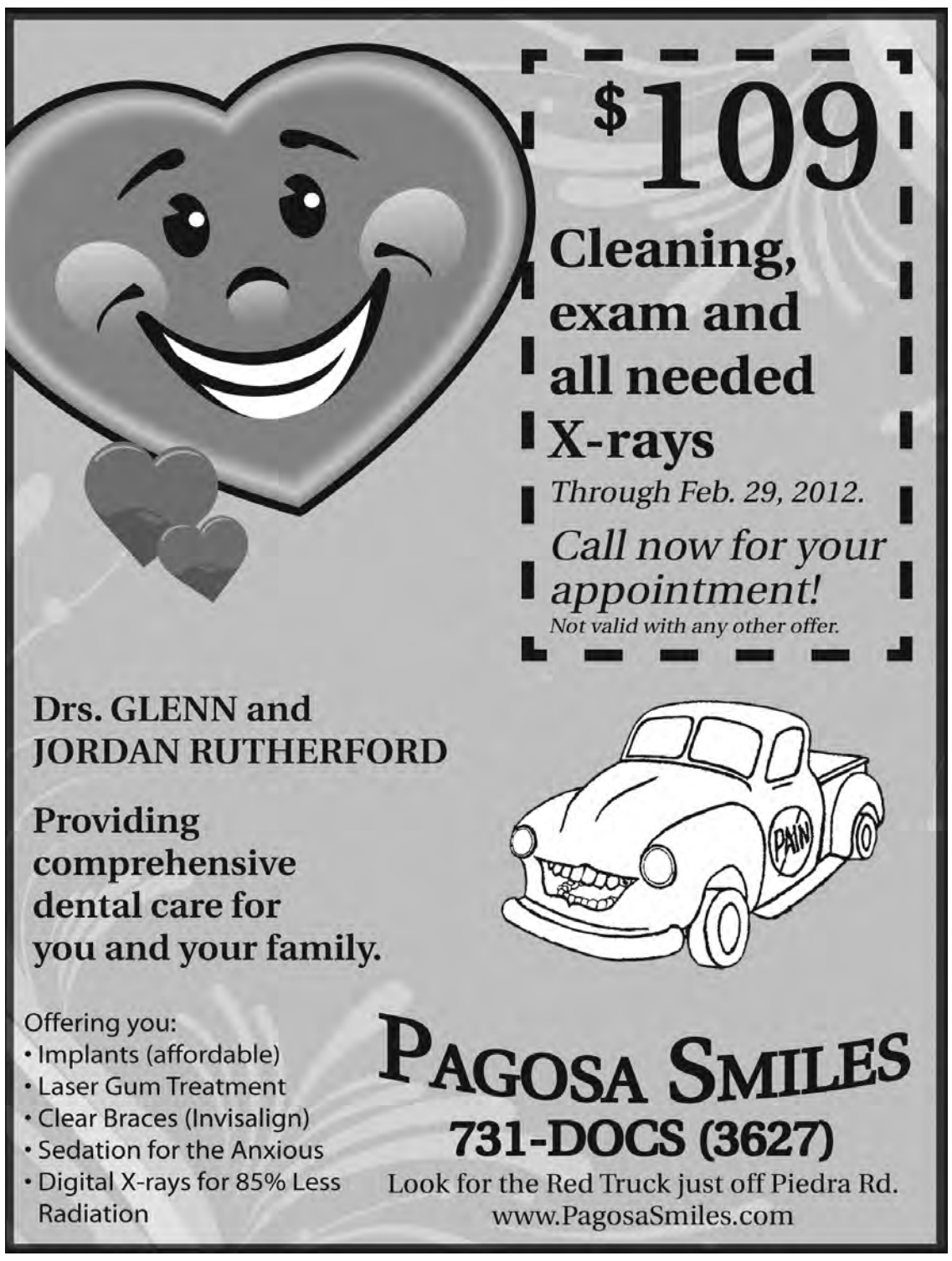
563-0135 x2238

pdieth@southern-ute.nsn.us

Mobile Blood Drives
Feb. 6 – Feb. 11

Feb. 11 – Saturday

Chocolate Oasis Celebration
Nature's Oasis/Blood Mobile
11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
300 S Camino Del Rio
Durango

Durango Office
Weekly draw hours
Mon., Tues.: 1 p.m. – 6 p.m.
Friday 8 a.m. – Noon
Wed., Thurs., Sat.: Closed

Any donor that wishes to donate at any of the Colorado area drives can call to set an appointment or get more information at 970-385-4601.
Monday through Thursday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m. and
Friday 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.