

“Getting and Staying Healthy for the New Year And the Rest of Your Life”

Notes from Dr. David Prelutsky’s presentation
January 12, 2008 - 21 O’Fallon

Introduction: David Prelutsky established South Hampton Medical Care in 1986 and is a member of the Washington University faculty. He is a member of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association and serves a large number of LGBT patients in his practice. He has the largest number of HIV patients in the city.

The following are notes taken during the presentation made by David Prelutsky in his address to the members of Prime Timer’s at their monthly meeting.

1. **Choose your doctor wisely.**
 - **Be OUT to your doctor.**
 - Your doctor must know your job, hobbies, travel and sexual relations.
 - If you are not OUT to your doctor, he will not have all the information necessary to make an accurate diagnosis of your medical problems.
 - **Know your doctor.**
 - Is he a family practitioner or an internist?
 - Is he board certified in the areas in which you have medical problems?
 - Does he have hospital access? (Some doctors do not make rounds in hospitals anymore. It is possible that you could be seen by a totally new doctor when you are in the hospital if your doctor does not have access to the hospital in which you are treated.)
 - **Expect your doctor to take a complete medical history.**
 - This is your “story” that helps explain to your doctor why you are coming to him.
 - It will help explain your symptoms and provide the background information necessary to make an accurate diagnosis.
 - **Expect your doctor to give you a complete physical exam on a regular basis.**
 - This should include an annual digital rectal exam and periodic measurement of PSA, cholesterol, blood sugar, kidney function and liver function.
2. **Get the following vaccinations.**
 - ***Influenza*** - every year in the fall (especially if you are over 65)
 - ***Pneumococcal*** - once at 50
 - ***Diphtheria and tetanus*** - every 10 years
 - ***Hepatitis A and B*** - Get the blood test first, you may have already had the infection and do not need the vaccination.

- **Shingles** - especially if you are over 60 and have had chicken pox as a child.
- **Human papillomavirus** - This prevents cervical cancer in women. Not often recommend for men. It is the virus behind venereal warts and squamous cell carcinoma.

3. Guard against the following infectious diseases.

- **HIV – AIDS**
 - **To prevent exposure to HIV: PRACTICE SAFE SEX.**
 - § **Safe sex – no sex**
 - § **Relatively safe – masturbation by yourself or mutual masturbation with another person**
 - § **Some risk – oral sex with a condom**
 - § **More risk – oral sex without a condom**
 - **This exposes you to not only HIV but also gonorrhea, Chlamydia, herpes, venereal warts, syphilis and intestinal parasites.**
 - § **High risk – anal sex with a condom**
 - § **Extremely high risk – anal sex without a condom**
 - **If you engage in risky sexual behavior, get tested for HIV on a regular basis.**
 - § **After exposure to HIV, it takes 4 to 12 weeks (sometimes even 6 months) for the AIDS antibody to be produced.**
- **Hepatitis A**
 - **Transmitted through microscopic fecal material picked up on food or during oral sex.**
 - **To avoid hepatitis A: get vaccinated against it (Before getting vaccinated, you should have a blood test to make sure that you don't already have developed antibodies to the disease.)**
 - **All food handlers are required to have this vaccination.**
- **Hepatitis B**
 - **Transmitted through blood. This is a more potent virus than hepatitis A. It is easily transmitted through needle sticks or oral sex. Even though your symptoms may go away, it is possible to be a "chronic carrier."**
 - **To avoid hepatitis B: get vaccinated against it. (Before getting vaccinated, you should have a blood test to make sure that you don't already have developed antibodies to the disease.)**
 - **This vaccination wanes after 5 to 10 years. Your doctor needs to check antibody levels.**
 - **Gay men, health workers and travelers to countries where the blood isn't safe should get this vaccination**
- **Hepatitis C**

- o **Less is known about this virus. It appears to be associated with rough vigorous sex among gay men, with sharing coke straws (cocaine disrupts the lining of the nose), with hemophiliacs who receive contaminated blood.**
- o **It is possible to be a “chronic carrier” of this virus, similar to hepatitis B.**
- o **Unfortunately, there is not yet a vaccine against this virus. It can be treated through oral medications and injections.**
- **Syphilis**
 - o **First stage of the disease: there is a quarter inch by quarter inch chancre on the penis.**
 - § **Syphilis can enter the mouth or anus and not show any chancre sores.**
 - § **If sexually active, it is wise to be tested for syphilis so that the disease is diagnosed early and a shot of penicillin can be administered.**
 - o **Second stage of the disease: If untreated, syphilis produces a rash.**
 - § **Now the disease is much more dangerous since the rash goes away but remains dormant until it attacks the brain.**
 - § **An individual is highly contagious during this stage.**
 - o **Final stage of the disease: If the brain is attacked, mental illness, heart problems and death may follow.**
- **Gonorrhea**
 - o **Infects the penis, throat or rectum.**
 - o **If in the penis, there will be a painful discharge.**
 - o **If in the throat or rectum, there may be an undetectable discharge of mucous.**
 - o **Treatment is an antibiotic but in the gay community gonorrhea is increasingly resistant to these antibiotics.**
- **Chlamydia**
 - o **Similar to gonorrhea in infection sites, symptoms and treatment.**
- **Herpes**
 - o **Produces blisters around mouth, anus, nipples or penis.**
 - o **These blisters tend to be reoccurring.**
 - o **It can be transmitted by actions as innocent as kissing.**
 - o **There is no cure but there is a medication that prevents the reoccurring break-outs of blisters.**

4. Watch for the following metabolic diseases.

- **Declining levels of testosterone**
 - **Symptoms include decreased sexual interest, fatigue, cloudy thinking. This is very common and similar to menopause in women. It might be called “manopause.”**
 - **Treatment may include injections, patches or a gel to the skin every day.**
- **Endocrine disorders**
 - **Low or overactive thyroid**
 - **Symptoms are similar to declining levels of testosterone plus weight gain.**
 - **Diagnosed through a blood test.**
 - **Treatment is a pill to restore appropriate thyroid levels.**
 - **Diabetes**
 - **Type I is most common. Associated with diet. Treated orally.**
 - **Type II is more serious. Need insulin shots.**

5. Monitor heart related diseases.

- **High cholesterol - blocked arteries especially to the heart or brain.**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Leaky heart valve**
 - Recommendations:**
 - **Measure cholesterol – total, HDL and LDL and their ratio.**
 - **Measure blood pressure**
 - **If warranted, doctor will order echo cardiogram or stress test and prescribe appropriate medications.**
 - **For men over 50, a small aspirin (81mg) per day is a good preventive measure.**
 - **For men with high blood pressure, be careful with Viagra or similar drugs because they dilate the arteries which may quickly elevate your heart rate.**
 - **Men have had heart attacks after taking Viagra.**
 - **If over 40 and you have a problem with erectile dysfunction, have your doctor give you a stress test before taking Viagra or similar drug.**

6. Stay vigilant with respect to cancer

- **Skin cancer is the most common. (Watch for patchy areas of skin.)**
 - **Melanoma cancer is the most dangerous skin cancer because it can spread to the lymph nodes. Its primary symptom is a rapidly growing dark mole that changes colors and whose borders become fuzzy.**
 - **Squamous cell is less dangerous because it is in the basal cell layer of skin but should be closely monitored.**
- **Prostate cancer is also very common.**
 - **It is preventable and treatable if diagnosed early.**
 - **Critical tests: changes in PSA over time, annual rectal exams.**

- **Colon cancer is also common but easily cured if diagnosed early.**
 - o **Critical test: colonoscopy.**
 - o **It is recommended for anyone over 50 or earlier if it has infected other members of your family.**
 - **If the test reveals no polyps, you don't need another test for ten years.**
 - **If the test reveals polyps, they are removed and there should be another test in three years.**
 - **If polyps go undetected for 5 to 10 years, they will become cancerous.**

7. Ward off depression

- **As we age, we can get isolated and depressed which is further aggravated by addictions.**
- **Don't let yourself become socially isolated. Organizations like Prime timer's St. Louis are good antidotes to depression.**

8. End of life issues

- **Make sure that you have the prepared the following documents:**
 - o **Power of Attorney for Health Care**
 - o **Power of Attorney for Property**
 - o **Declaration of Grounds for Refusing Medical Treatment**
 - o **Will and/or Living Trust**
- o **Without these legal documents, you will lose control over critical decisions with respect to your medical treatment and the distribution of your property and they will automatically fall to your nearest relative**

Notes prepared by Dennis Hostetler, Secretary of Prime Timers St. Louis