



HEALTH INFO BY PHONE

By John Semanas
Cooperative Extension Service

A newly expanded Arizona program provides up-to-date health and safety information by telephone through nearly 400 pre-recorded tapes.

It's called Instant Health Info, a part of the UA Cooperative Extension Service.

Toll-free calls from anywhere in the state reach the switchboard at the Pima County extension office. Callers can request any of the tapes they want to hear. A list of the tape topics is free on request, too. Each tape lasts two to four minutes.

For example, a farmer in Cochise County who's concerned about how smoking affects his health might call and hear, "The truth is, unless irreversible disease has begun, stopping smoking begins to pay **immediate** health benefits . . ."

A homemaker in Coconino County, worried about weight control, could learn, "The only way to effectively lose weight is to eat less and exercise more, not through fad diets."

Sometimes the information could save a life, like the tape about first aid at an auto accident. Other messages cover such topics as protecting yourself against diseases and recognizing the early warning signs of many illnesses. These include tape number 1399, "Do I Have Appendicitis?" or number 1278, "Eye Symptoms Requiring Immediate Attention."

Instant Health Info is not meant to take the place of a visit to the family doctor or dentist, emphasizes Extension Health Specialist Bernice Epstein, the project's supervisor. However, by telling a caller about the general nature of a health condition, some of the tapes can help the caller communicate better with health-care professionals during consultation or treatment.

"People can listen to the tapes in the privacy of their homes and can request repetition as often as they'd like," says Epstein.

Though available in urban areas, the main purpose of Instant Health Info is to serve rural Arizona, where no comparable program exists. Epstein says, "The residents of rural Arizona have more health problems and fewer resources to meet their needs than do those who reside in urban areas."

A \$55,000 grant from the Phoenix-based Flinn Foundation is making

Here are some of the 400 messages offered by Instant Health Info. An (S) indicates tapes available in Spanish.

General Health

- 1138 Having Headaches?
- 1089 Diabetes? What Does It Mean? (S)
- 1141 The Common Cold (S)
- 1165 The Magic Formula for Weight Loss
- 1298 Quit Cigarettes – Live Longer! (S)
- 4000 Valley Fever
- 1140 Venereal Disease (S)
- 1205 Living with Hayfever
- 1486 Stress Management
- 1228 Who Needs Acne?
- 1052 Medicare – Questions and Answers

Emergency Care and Safety

- 1400 First Aid at an Auto Accident
- 1234 First Aid for Burns
- 6100 What to Do in a Poisoning
- 1460 For Power Tool Users

Cancer

- 1081 What Is Cancer?
- 1124 Protect Yourself Against Cancer (S)

Women

- 1120 Breast Self-Examination
- 1194 Menopause – Questions and Answers

Parents

- 1201 Preparing Your Child for Sleep
- 1191 My Child Has a Fever (S)
- 1373 Losing Your Cool with Your Child (S)

Food and Diet

- 1453 Eat Well for Less (S)
- 1152 Health Foods and Fad Diets
- 1078 The Botulism Story (S)

Drugs and Alcohol

- 1439 Spotting Problem Drinking
- 1069 Marijuana – Fables and Facts
- 1442 Drugs, Pregnancy and the Unborn (S)

Instant Health Info possible. Although the program is new to most of the state, it is actually an expanded segment of the older Instant Info phone-tape program of the Pima County Extension Service.

Several of the Instant Health Info tapes were produced in Arizona, but most come from the University of Wisconsin and have been used in other states as well. All of the tapes are reviewed every six months by health authorities and updated as needed. The program has the support of the Arizona Medical Association.

Thirty of the tapes are in Spanish.

Using the system is easy and free: Just call 1-800-525-INFO and ask for the tape you want, unless you are in Tucson. Tucson residents should still use the local Instant Info number, 628-5900. To get a complete list of the tapes, contact your own county's Cooperative Extension Service or call the above numbers. The switchboard is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., Saturday from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 5 p.m.