

Rapidly changing health and disease patterns and trends keep the dental profession in a state of confusion about how to keep up with the latest information. The US Department of Health and Human Services' Centers for Disease Control and Prevention strives to protect the health and safety of all people in the USA and abroad, as well as serve as a federal agency to provide sound information to health professionals and others in order to aid them in making good health decisions. This US federal agency's website is located at <http://www.cdc.gov>. This website is designed to provide health care providers and the general public with access to the latest knowledge on health and safety, data and statistics, and publications and products.

One unique factor about this website is that it can also be viewed in Spanish. The homepage of the website has several navigation bars that allow easy access to a variety of links to articles and information for both health care professionals and consumers. The homepage also carries pertinent information about the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's current campaigns and initiatives. The website also highlights up to date information about current trends, such as flu vaccine, cold weather concerns and children's health as examples. The homepage also provides information on the latest conferences and events that are of interest in prevention and disease. The top bar of the website gives the searcher links to things such as: (i) information about the CDC; (ii) the press room, where the latest disease and prevention information is released to the public; (iii) funding, where research funding can be obtained; (iv) centres, institutes and offices at the CDC; (v) an A-Z index search engine; (vi) training and employment with the CDC; and (vii) a contact link.

The side panel on the home page provides three categories of information contained in the website. They are: (i) Health and Safety Topics, (ii) Publications and Products and (iii) Data and Statistics. This side panel allows convenient access to links within the site that provide extensive information and research on the topics indicated.

The 'Health and Safety Topics' section includes areas such as birth defects, disabilities, diseases and conditions, emergency preparedness, environmental health, genetics and genomics, health promotion, injury and violence, traveller's

health, vaccinations and immunizations, and workplace safety and health. Each of these links will take you to a page with a wealth of information, statistics and research on the topic.

The section on 'Publications and Products' includes helpful topics such as the Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), Emerging Infectious Disease Journal, Preventing Chronic Disease Journal, Subscriptions, and a 'more' section that includes other publications and products that you can access. The MMWR is a compilation of weekly reports sent from to state health departments to the CDC. The Emerging Infectious Disease Journal is an online, peer-reviewed journal that tracks disease patterns and trends. Preventing Chronic Disease Journal is a publication about public health, policy and practice.

The last section is 'Data and Statistics'. This section contains items such as child growth charts, national data, individual state data, and a 'more' section that gives survey results and information as well as other health-related topics. The state data section also provides links to individual state websites containing health data for that particular state.

Overall, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website is a wealth of health information for both the health care provider and the consumer. It is very user friendly, and provides scientific, technical and practical information for all. This site is highly useful for the dental hygiene practitioner in that it can give the most up to date information that the US government has to offer in terms of diseases and prevention. This site also provides a great resource for the dental hygiene educator.

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