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U.S. EMBASSY, MANILA

Inauguration Celebrates Continuity of American Democracy

When Barack Obama takes the oath of office on January 20, 2009, it will mark the 56th time that a U.S. president has been sworn in for a four-year term since 1789, when George Washington first took the same oath.

During that period, eight presidents died in office and one resigned; each time, the vice president took the same oath, and completed the four-year term.

Many inaugural events have been added during the past 220 years, but the steps that the president-elect follows to take the constitutionally mandated oath of office, the central event of the inauguration, are essentially unchanged.

The oath will be administered at the U.S. Capitol, in a ceremony on the west front of the building, overlooking the National Mall, as it has been since 1801 when Thomas Jefferson was sworn in there. The Supreme Court chief justice first administered the oath in 1797 to John Adams.

The swearing-in ceremony — televised since 1949 — will be attended by Obama's family, past and future Cabinet members, members of the Senate and House of Representatives, Supreme Court justices and many invited guests.

Obama will stand before a judge — in this case Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts — and swear the 35-word oath prescribed in Article II, Section 1, of the Constitution:

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

When taking the oath, Obama will place his hand on the same Bible President Lincoln used at his first inauguration in 1861. The Bible is currently part of a collection at the Library of Congress. Although a Bible is traditionally used at the swearing in, it is not a constitutional requirement.

As in previous inaugural ceremonies, going back to that of George Washington, after taking the oath President Obama will give an inaugural address that outlines the themes for his four years in office.

Famous Inaugural Addresses

Starting with George Washington at the first inauguration in 1789, the inaugural address has been an important American tradition. Most presidents use the inaugural address to present their visions for the United States and to set forth their goals to the American people.

Inaugural addresses have varied in length, from George Washington's 135 words on March 4, 1793, to William Harrison's 8,445 words on March 4, 1841. The speeches set the tone for the upcoming presidency, and a select few are among the most enduring, and most frequently quoted, presidential speeches:

"With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

— **Abraham Lincoln**, 1865, in the final days of the U.S. Civil War

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"Let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself." — **Franklin D. Roosevelt**, 1933, in the midst of the economic Great Depression

"And so my fellow Americans: Ask not what your country can do for you — ask what you can do for your country." — **John F. Kennedy**, 1961

"To a few of us here today, this is a solemn and most momentous occasion; and yet, in the history of our nation, it is a commonplace occurrence. The orderly transfer of authority as called for in the Constitution routinely takes place as it has for almost two centuries and few of us stop to think how unique we really are. In the eyes of many in the world, this every-four-year ceremony we accept as normal is nothing less than a miracle." — **Ronald Reagan**, 1981

"I see history as a book with many pages, and each day we fill a page with acts of hopefulness and meaning. The new breeze blows, a page turns, the story unfolds. And so today a chapter begins, a small and stately story of unity, diversity, and generosity — shared, and written, together." — **George H.W. Bush**, 1989

"The greatest progress we have made, and the greatest progress we have yet to make, is in the human heart. In the end, all the world's wealth and a thousand armies are no match for the strength and decency of the human spirit." — **William Jefferson Clinton**, 1997

"Through much of the last century, America's faith in freedom and democracy was a rock in a raging sea. Now it is a seed upon the wind, taking root in many nations. Our democratic faith is more than the creed of our country, it is the inborn hope of our humanity, an ideal we carry but do not own, a trust we bear and pass along." — **George W. Bush**, 2001

Is your New Year's resolution to eat healthier? If so, here are some better health tips provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

A balanced eating plan and regular physical activity are the building blocks of good health. Poor eating habits and physical inactivity may lead to becoming overweight and related health problems. By eating right and being active, you may reach or maintain a healthy weight. You may also improve your physical health, mental well-being, and set an example for others. Do it for yourself and your family!

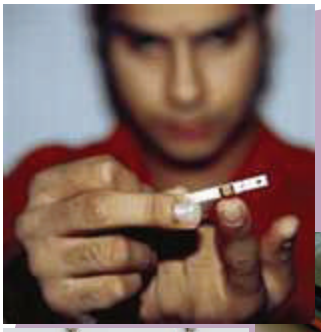
A healthy eating plan emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk products. It includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts. It is low in saturated fats, trans-fats, cholesterol, salt, and added sugars.

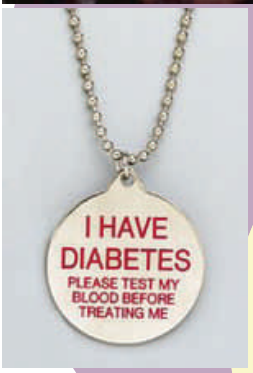
You should eat breakfast every day. People who eat breakfast are less likely to overeat later in the day. Breakfast also gives you energy and helps you get your day off to a healthy start. Choose whole grains more often. Try whole-wheat breads and pastas, oatmeal, brown rice, or bulgur. Select a mix of colorful vegetables each day. Vegetables of different colors provide different nutrients. Eat dark leafy greens such as spinach, kale, collard, and mustard greens and red and oranges such as carrots, sweet potatoes, red peppers, and tomatoes. Choose fresh, canned, or frozen fruit more often than fruit juice. Fruit juice has little or no fiber, and the calories may be high. Use fats and oils sparingly. Olive, canola, and peanut oils, avocados, nuts and nut butters, olives, and fish provide heart healthy-fat as well as vitamins and minerals. Eat sweets sparingly – limit foods and beverages that are in high in added sugars. Eat three meals every day. If you skip meals or replace a meal with a snack, you might overeat later on. Have low-fat, low-sugar snacks on hand. Whether you are at home, at work, or on the go, healthy snacks may help to combat hunger and prevent overeating.

Some quick breakfast ideas are low-fat yogurt sprinkled with low-fat granola; oatmeal with low-fat or fat-free milk, or soy-based beverage; a slice of whole-wheat toast with a thin spread of peanut butter; a fruit smoothie made with frozen fruit, low-fat yogurt, and juice; or high-fiber, low-sugar cereal with soy-based beverage or low-fat milk.

Easy snack ideas are low-fat or fat-free yogurt, rice cakes, fresh or canned fruits, sliced vegetables or baby carrots, dried fruit and nut mix (but no more than a handful), air popped popcorn sprinkled with garlic powder or other spices, or high-fiber / low-sugar cereal.

For dinner consider high protein options. Lean beef (beef is 27% leaner today than 20 years ago), eggs, and pork (has 31% less fat than before) are packed with homocysteine-lowering B vitamins. The lowest fat beef cuts are top/eye rounds marked "extra lean" and boneless shoulder pot roast. For pork, look at pork tenderloin and boneless pork sirloin chops. Beans--legumes such as chickpeas, black beans, and kidney beans--are not only rich in high-quality proteins but are also one of nature's richest sources of soluble fiber, which whisks cholesterol out of your body and helps hold blood sugar levels stable. Also consider eating more fish. Fish delivers omega-3 fatty acids that keep heart rhythm steady and discourage blood clotting. The healthiest seafood for your heart is cold-water ocean fish because it's so rich in omega-3s. The most popular kinds are salmon and tuna; other choices include mackerel, herring, and anchovies. Your goal is to get three or four servings of these fish a week. Skinless chicken and turkey are low in artery-clogging saturated fat, and their protein keeps food cravings (and the risk of overeating) at bay.





What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is a disease in which blood glucose levels are above normal. Most of the food we eat is turned into glucose, or sugar, for our bodies to use for energy. The pancreas, an organ that lies near the stomach, makes a hormone called insulin to help glucose get into the cells of our bodies. When you have diabetes, your body either doesn't make enough insulin or can't use its own insulin as well as it should. This causes sugar to build up in your blood.

Diabetes is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States. Nearly 24,000,000 Americans have diabetes, but nearly 5.7 million don't know they have the disease. It is a major cause of heart disease and stroke, new blindness in adults, and the leading cause of leg and foot amputations unrelated to injury, and kidney failure. Every 24 hours more than 4000 adults are diagnosed with diabetes, 200 people die from diabetes, 200 diabetic related amputations take place, 130 diabetic related kidney failures take place, and 50 adults go blind because of diabetic conditions. It is estimated that 1/3 of people born in the year 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime.

"Diabetes is a major cause of heart disease and stroke, and the leading cause of leg and foot amputations unrelated to injury, kidney failure, and new blindness in adults."

What are the symptoms of diabetes?

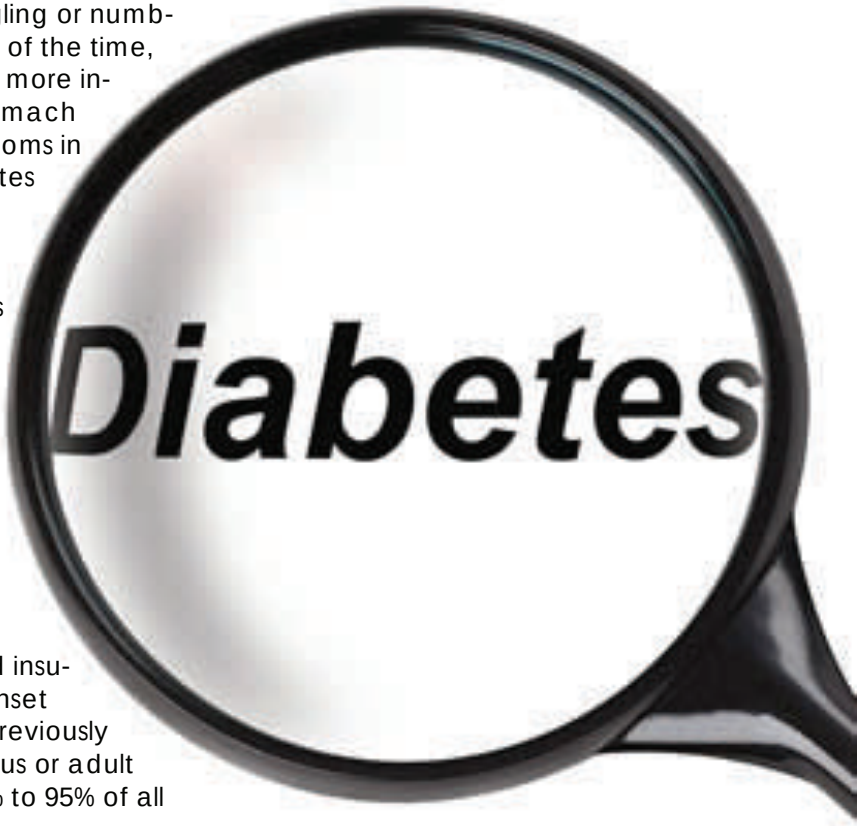
The following are some of the symptoms of diabetes: Frequent urination, excessive thirst, unexplained weight loss, extreme hunger, sudden vision changes, tingling or numbness in hands or feet, feeling very tired much of the time, very dry skin, sores that are slow to heal, and more infections than usual. Nausea, vomiting, or stomach pains may accompany some of these symptoms in the abrupt onset of insulin-dependent diabetes (type 1 diabetes).

What is pre-diabetes?

It is estimated that 57 million American adults have pre-diabetic conditions. People with pre-diabetes have impaired fasting glucose, impaired glucose tolerance, or both; where blood glucose levels are higher than normal, but not high enough to be classified as diabetes. People with pre-diabetes are 5-15 times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than people with normal glucose levels.

What are the types of diabetes?

Type 1 diabetes (which was previously called insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus or juvenile onset diabetes) and Type 2 diabetes (which was previously called non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus or adult onset diabetes), may account for about 90% to 95% of all diagnoses cases of diabetes.



What are the risk factors for diabetes?

Risk factors for type 2 diabetes include older age, obesity, family history of diabetes, prior history of gestational diabetes (pregnant women), impaired glucose tolerance, physical inactivity, and race/ethnicity. African Americans, Hispanic/Latino Americans, American Indians, and some Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are at particularly high risk for type 2 diabetes.

Risk factors are less well defined for type 1 diabetes than for type 2 diabetes, but autoimmune, genetic, and environmental factors are involved in developing this type of diabetes.

What is the treatment for diabetes?

Healthy eating, physical activity, and insulin injections are the basic therapies for type 1 diabetes. The amount of insulin taken must be balanced with food intake and daily activities. Blood glucose levels must be closely monitored through frequent blood glucose testing.

People with diabetes must take responsibility for their day to day care, and keep blood glucose levels from going too low or too high. People with diabetes should see a health care provider who will monitor their diabetes control and help them learn to manage their diabetes. In addition, people with diabetes may see an endocrinologist, who may specialize in diabetes care; ophthalmologists for eye examinations, podiatrists for routine foot care, and dieticians and diabetes educators who teach the skills needed for daily diabetes.

What causes diabetes?

The causes of type 1 diabetes appear to be much different from those for type 2 diabetes, though the exact mechanisms for developing both diseases are unknown. The appearance of type 1 diabetes is suspected to follow exposure to an "environmental trigger", such as an unidentified virus, stimulating an immune attack against the beta cells of the pancreas in some genetically predisposed people.

Can diabetes be prevented?

A number of studies have shown that regular physical activity can significantly reduce the risk of developing type 2 diabetes. Type 2 diabetes also appears to be associated with obesity. Researchers are making progress in identifying the exact genetics and "triggers" that predispose some individuals to develop type 1 diabetes, but prevention remains elusive.

Is there a cure for diabetes?

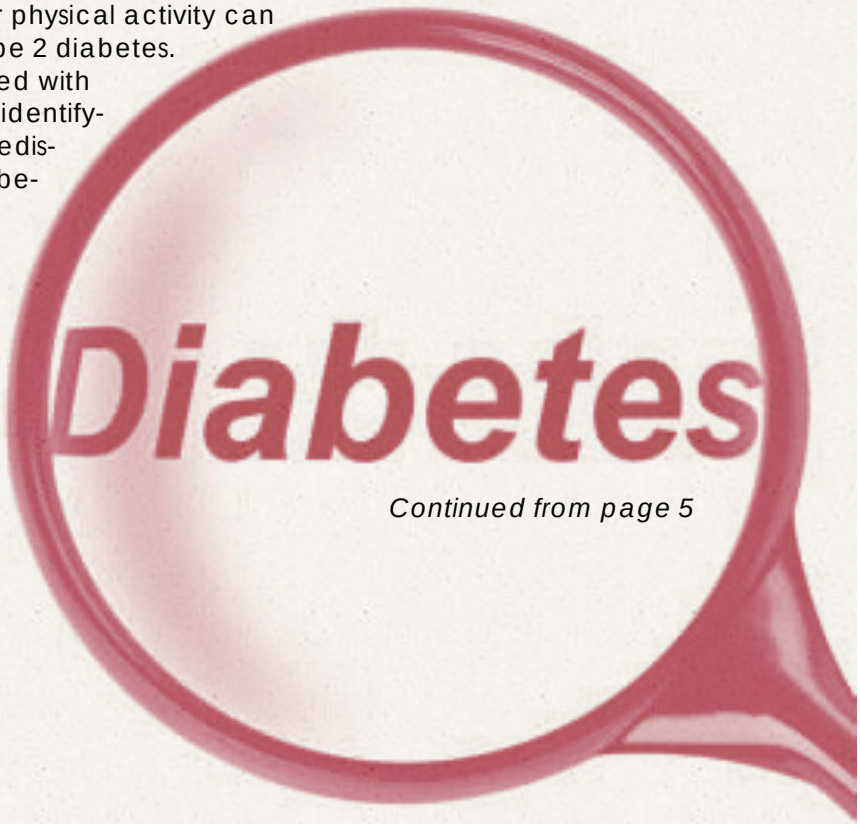
Not at the present time.

What are other sources of information on diabetes?

The Department of Veterans Affairs - www.va.gov/diabetes

The Indian Health Service - www.ihs.gov/medical/programs/diabetes/index.asp

The National Diabetes Education Program - www.cdc.gov/diabetes/ndep/index.htm



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ALCOHOLISM

What is Alcohol?

Ethyl alcohol, or ethanol, is an intoxicating ingredient found in beer, wine, and liquor. Alcohol is produced by the fermentation of yeast, sugars, and starches.

How does alcohol affect a person?

Alcohol affects every organ in the body. It is a central nervous system depressant that is rapidly absorbed from the stomach and small intestine into the bloodstream. Alcohol is metabolized in the liver by enzymes; however, the liver can only metabolize a small amount of alcohol at a time, leaving the excess alcohol to circulate throughout the body. The intensity of the effect of alcohol on the body is directly related to the amount consumed.

Why do some people react differently to alcohol than others?

Individual reactions to alcohol vary, and are influenced by many factors, including but not limited to: age, gender, race or ethnicity, physical condition, amount of food consumed before drinking, how quickly the alcohol was consumed, use of drugs or prescription medicines, and family history of alcohol problems.

What is Alcoholism?

Alcoholism, also known as alcohol dependence, is a disease that includes the following four symptoms: Craving (a strong need, or urge, to drink); Loss of Control (not being able to stop drinking once drinking has begun); Physical Dependence (withdrawal symptoms, such as nausea, sweating, shakiness, and anxiety after stopping drinking); Tolerance (the need to drink greater amounts of alcohol to get "high".

Is alcoholism a disease?

Yes, alcoholism is a disease. The craving that an alcoholic feels for alcohol can be as strong as the need for food or water. An alcoholic will continue to drink despite serous family, health, or legal problems. Like many other diseases, alcoholism is chronic, meaning that it lasts a person's lifetime; it usually follows a predictable course; and it has symptoms. The risk for developing alcoholism is influenced both by a person's genes and by his or her lifestyle.

Is alcoholism inherited?

Research shows that the risk for developing alcoholism does indeed run in families. The genes a person inherits partially explain this pattern, but lifestyle is also a factor. Currently, researchers are working to discover the actual genes that put people at risk for alcoholism. Your friends, the amount of stress in your life, and how readily available alcohol is, are also factors that may increase your risk for alcoholism.

But remember: Risk is not destiny. Just because alcoholism tends to run in families doesn't mean that a child of an alcoholic parent will automatically become an alcoholic too. Some people develop alcoholism even though no one in their family has a drinking problem. By the same token, not all children of alcoholic families get into trouble with alcohol. Knowing you are at risk is important, though, because then you can take steps to protect yourself from developing problems with alcohol.

Can alcoholism be cured?

No, alcoholism cannot be cured at this time. Even if an alcoholic hasn't been drinking for a long time, he or she can still suffer a relapse. Not drinking is the safest course for most people with alcoholism.

Can alcoholism be treated?

Yes, alcoholism can be treated. Alcoholism treatment programs use both counseling and medications to help a person stop drinking. Treatment has helped many people stop drinking and rebuild their lives.

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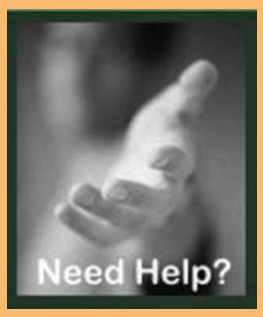
What medications treat alcoholism?



Three oral medications – disulfiram, naltrexone, and acamprosate – are currently approved to treat alcohol dependence. In addition, an injectable, long acting from of naltrexone is available. These medications have been shown to help people with dependence reduce their drinking, avoid relapse to heavy drinking, and achieve and maintain abstinence.

Nalrexone acts in the brain to reduce craving for alcohol after someone has stopped drinking. Acamprosate is thought to work by reducing symptoms that follow lengthy abstinence, such as anxiety and insomnia. Disulfiram discourages drinking by making the person taking it feel sick after drinking alcohol. Other types of drugs are available to help manage symptoms of withdrawal (such as shakiness, nausea, and sweating) if they occur after someone with alcohol dependence stops drinking.

Although medications are available to help treat alcoholism, there is no "magic bullet". In other words, no single medication is available that works in every case and /or in every person.

Does alcoholism treatment work?

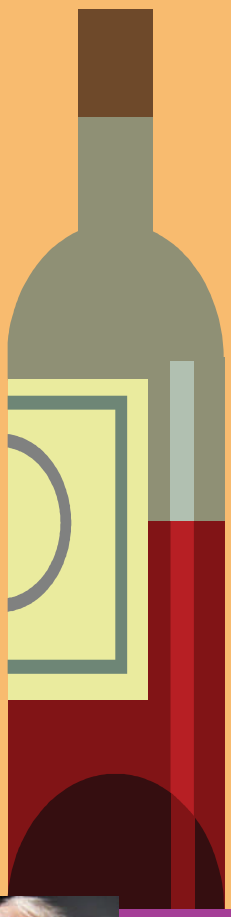
Alcoholism treatment works for many people. But like other chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and asthma, there are varying levels of success when it comes to treatment. Some people stop drinking and remain sober. Others have long periods of sobriety with bouts of relapse. And still others cannot stop drinking for any length of time. With treatment, one thing is clear, however; the longer a person abstains from alcohol, the more likely he or she will be able to stay sober.

Do you have to be an alcoholic to experience problems?

No. alcoholism is only one type of an alcohol problem. Alcohol abuse can be just as harmful. A person can abuse alcohol without actually being an alcoholic – that is, he or she may drink too much and too often but still not be dependent on alcohol. Some the problems linked to alcohol abuse include not being able to meet work, school, or family responsibilities; drunk driving arrests and car crashes; and drinking related medical conditions. Under some circumstances, even social or moderate drinking is dangerous – for example, when driving, during pregnancy, or when taking certain medications.

Are specific groups of people more likely to have a problem?

Alcohol abuse and alcoholism cut across gender, race, and nationality. In the United States, 17.6 million people – about 1 in every 12 adults – abuse alcohol or are alcohol dependent. In general, more men than women are alcohol dependent or have alcohol problems. And alcohol problems are highest among young adults ages 18-29 and lower among adults ages 65 and older. We also know that people who start drinking at an early age – for example, at age 14 or younger – are at a higher risk of developing alcohol problems at some point in their lives compared to someone who starts drinking at age 21 or after.



How can you tell if someone has a problem?

Answering the following four questions can help you find out if you or a loved one has a drinking problem – Have you ever felt you should cut down on your drinking? Have people annoyed you by criticizing your drinking? Have you ever felt bad or guilty about your drinking, or have you ever had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover?

One "yes" answer suggests a possible alcohol problem. More than one 'yes" answer means it is highly likely that a problem exists. If you think that you or someone you know might have an alcohol problem, it is important to see a doctor or other health care provider right away. They can help you determine if a drinking problem exists and plan the best course of action.

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Can a problem drinker simply cut down?

It depends. If that person has been diagnosed as an alcoholic, the answer is "no". Alcoholics who try to cut down on drinking rarely succeed. Cutting out alcohol – that is, abstaining, is usually the best course for recovery. People who are not alcohol dependent but who have experienced alcohol related problems may be able to limit the amount they drink. If they can't stay within those limits, they need to stop drinking altogether.

What can you do if an alcoholic is unwilling to get help?

This can be a challenge. An alcoholic can't be forced to get help except under certain circumstances, such as a traffic violation or arrest that results in court ordered treatment. But you don't have to wait for someone to "hit rock bottom" to act. Many alcoholism treatment specialists suggest the following steps to help an alcoholic get treatment.

Stop all "cover ups" – Family members often make excuses to others or try to protect the alcoholic from the results of his or her drinking. It is important to stop covering for the alcoholic so that he or she experiences the full consequences of drinking.

Time Your Intervention – The best time to talk to the drinker is shortly after an alcohol related problem has occurred – like a serious family argument or an accident. Choose a time when he or she is sober, both of you are fairly calm, and you have a chance to talk in private.

Be Specific – Tell the family member that you are worried about his or her drinking. Use examples of the ways in which the drinking has caused problems, including the most recent incident.

State the Results – Explain to the drinker what you will do if he or she doesn't go for help – not to punish the drinker, but to protect yourself from his or her problems. What you say may range from refusing to go with the person to any social activity where alcohol will be served, to moving out of the house. Do not make any threats you are not prepared to carry out.

Get Help – Gather information in advance about treatment options in your community.. IF the person is willing to get help, call immediately for an appointment with a treatment counselor. Offer to go with the family member for the first visit to a treatment program and/or an alcoholics anonymous meeting.

Call on a Friend – If the family member still refuses to get help, ask a friend to talk with him or her using the steps just described. A friend who is a recovering alcoholic may be particularly persuasive, but any person who is caring and nonjudgmental may help. The intervention of more than one person, more than one time, is often necessary to coax an alcoholic to seek help.

Find Strength in Numbers – With the help of a health care professional, some families join with other relatives and friends to confront an alcoholic as a group. This approach should only be tried under the guidance of a health care professional who is experienced in group intervention.

Get Support – It is important to remember that you are not alone. Support groups offered in most communities include Al-anon, which holds regular meetings for spouses and other significant adults in an alcoholic' life, and Alateen, which is geared to children of alcoholics. These groups help family members understand that they are not responsible for an alcoholic's drinking, and that they need to take steps to take care of themselves, regardless of whether the alcoholic family member chooses to get help.

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What is a safe level of drinking?

For most adults, moderate alcohol use – up to two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women and older children, cause few if any problems. (one drink equals one 12 ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5 ounces glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80 proof distilled spirits).

Certain people should not drink at all, however. These include women who are pregnant or trying to get pregnant, people who plan to drive or engage in other activities that require alertness and skill, people taking certain over–the-counter or prescription medications, people with medical conditions that can be made worse by drinking, recovering alcoholics, and people younger than 21.

Is it safe to drink during pregnancy?

No, alcohol can harm the baby of a mother who drinks during pregnancy. Although the highest risk is for babies whose mothers drink heavily it is not clear yet whether there is any completely safe level of alcohol during pregnancy. The damage caused by prenatal alcohol includes a range of physical, behavioral, and learning problem in babies. Babies most severely affected have what is called a Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS). These babies may have abnormal facial features and severe learning disabilities. Babies can also be born with mild disabilities without the facial changes typical of FAS.

Does alcohol affect older people differently?

Alcohol's effects do vary with age. Slower reaction times, problems with hearing and seeing, and a lower tolerance to alcohol's effects put older people at higher risk for falls, car crashes, and other types of injuries that may result from drinking. Older people also tend to take more medicines than younger people. Mixing alcohol with over the counter or prescription medications can be very dangerous, even fatal. In addition, alcohol can make many of the medical conditions common in older people, including high blood pressure and ulcers more serious. Physical changes associated with aging can make older people feel "high" even after drinking only small amounts of alcohol. So even if there is no medical reason to avoid alcohol, older men and women should limit themselves to one drink per day.

Does alcohol affect women differently?

Yes, alcohol affects women differently than men. Women become more impaired than men do after drinking the same amount of alcohol, even when differences in body weight are taken into account. This is because women's bodies have less water than men's bodies. Because alcohol mixes with body water, a given amount of alcohol becomes more highly concentrated in a woman's body than in a man's. That is why the recommended drinking limit for women is lower than for men.

Is alcohol good for your heart?

Studies have shown that moderate drinkers are less likely to die from one form of heart disease than are people who do not drink any alcohol or who drink more. If you are a nondrinker, however, you should not start drinking solely to benefit your heart. You can guard against heart disease by exercising and eating foods that are low in fat. If you can safely drink alcohol and you choose to drink, do so in moderation. Heavy drinking can actually increase the risk of heart failure, stroke, and high blood pressure, as well as cause many other medical problems, such as liver cirrhosis.

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When taking medications, must you stop drinking?

Possibly. More than 150 medications interact harmfully with alcohol. These interactions may result in increased risk of illness, injury, and even death. Alcohol's effects are heightened by medicines that depress the central nervous system, such as sleeping pills, antihistamines, antidepressants, anti-anxiety drugs, and some pain killers. In addition, medicines for certain disorders, including diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease, can have harmful interactions with alcohol. If you are taking any over the counter or prescription medications, ask your doctor or pharmacist if you can safely drink alcohol.

What is alcohol withdrawal?

Alcohol withdrawal refers to symptoms that may occur when a person who has been drinking too much alcohol every day suddenly stops drinking. This usually occurs within 5 – 10 hours after the last drink, but it may occur up to 7-10 days later. Excessive alcohol use is generally considered the equivalent of 2 – 6 pints of beer or 4 oz of "hard" liquor per day for a week, or habitual use of alcohol that disrupts a person's life and routines. The mild symptoms of alcohol withdrawal include jumpiness or nervousness, shakiness, anxiety, irritability, excitability, rapid emotional changes, depression, fatigue, bad dreams. Moderate symptoms can include headache, sweating, nausea, vomiting, pallor, rapid heart rate, clammy skin, tremors, loss of appetite, and involuntary abnormal movements of the eyelids. Severe symptoms include delirium tremens (a state of confusion and visual hallucinations), agitation, fever, convulsions, and black outs. If this is occurring a person should contact their personal physician or go to a hospital immediately as treatment must be given.

How does alcohol affect people with diabetes?

Alcohol can affect people with diabetes in a number of ways, including: a rise in the blood sugar levels after a moderate amount of alcohol, a dangerous drop in the blood sugar level if excess alcohol is consumed, can stimulate the appetite leading to overeating, can interact negatively with oral diabetic medicines or insulin, can increase triglyceride levels, may increase blood pressure, and can cause nausea and increased heart beats.

IDENTITY THEFT

and YOUR TAX RECORD

1. How can someone steal your identity? Identity theft occurs when someone uses your personal information such as your name, social security number, or other identifying information, without your permission, to commit fraud or other crimes.

- Identity theft is a serious crime. People whose identities have been stolen can spend months or years - and their hard-earned money - cleaning up the mess thieves have made of their good name and credit record. In the meantime, victims may lose job opportunities, have loans refused, or even get arrested for crimes they didn't commit.
- Generally, identity thieves use someone's personal data to steal his or her financial accounts and run up charges on the victim's existing credit cards, but the IRS has identified other potential areas where this type of fraud may occur as they relate directly to your tax records.
- Undocumented workers or other individuals may use your social security number to get a job. That person's employer would report W-2 wages earned using your information to the IRS so it might appear that you did not report all of your income on your return.
- An identity thief may file a tax return using your social security number to receive a refund or stimulus payment.
- If the thief already filed a return using your social security number, the IRS will believe that you already filed and received your refund, and the return you just submitted is a second copy or duplicate.
- If you do receive a notice from the IRS that leads you to believe someone may have used your social security number fraudulently, please notify the IRS immediately by responding to the name and number printed on the notice or letter.

2. Be alert to possible identity theft if the notice or letter states that:

- more than one tax return for you was filed, or – IRS records indicate you received wages from an employer unknown to you.
- If you receive a notice, contact the IRS either by phone or in writing as directed in that notice. IRS tax examiners will work with you and other agencies, such as the Social Security Administration, to help resolve the problem.

3. The IRS does not initiate taxpayer communications through e-mail.

- The IRS does not request detailed personal information through e-mail.
- The IRS does not send e-mails requesting your PIN numbers, passwords or similar access information for credit cards, banks or other financial accounts.

4. If you receive an e-mail from someone claiming to be the IRS or directing you to an IRS site,

- Do not reply.
- Do not open any attachments. Attachments may contain malicious code that will infect your computer.
- Do not click on any links.

IDENTITY THEFT

and

YOUR TAX RECORD

5. Phishing is the act of sending an e-mail to a user falsely claiming to be an established, legitimate enterprise in an attempt to scam the user into surrendering private information that will be used for identity theft.

6. If you receive an e-mail or find a website you think is pretending to be the IRS:

- Forward the e-mail or website URL to the IRS at phishing@irs.gov.
- You can forward the message as received or provide the internet header in the e-mail. The internet header has additional information to help the IRS locate the sender.
- After you forward the e-mail or header information to the IRS, delete the message.

7. Minimizing Identity Theft: Though you can't prevent identity theft entirely, you can minimize your risk. Protect your social security number.

- Don't carry your social security number (SSN); leave it in a secure place.
- Only give your SSN when absolutely necessary.
- Your employer and financial institution may need your SSN for wage and tax reporting purposes. Don't give a business your SSN just because they ask for it. Find out why before giving it out.
- Ask why your SSN is needed and if other types of identifiers can be used.

8. If you receive a notice or letter in the mail from the IRS that leads you to believe someone may have used your Social Security number fraudulently, please respond immediately to the name, address, and/or number printed on the IRS notice.

Be alert to possible identity theft if the IRS issued notice or letter:

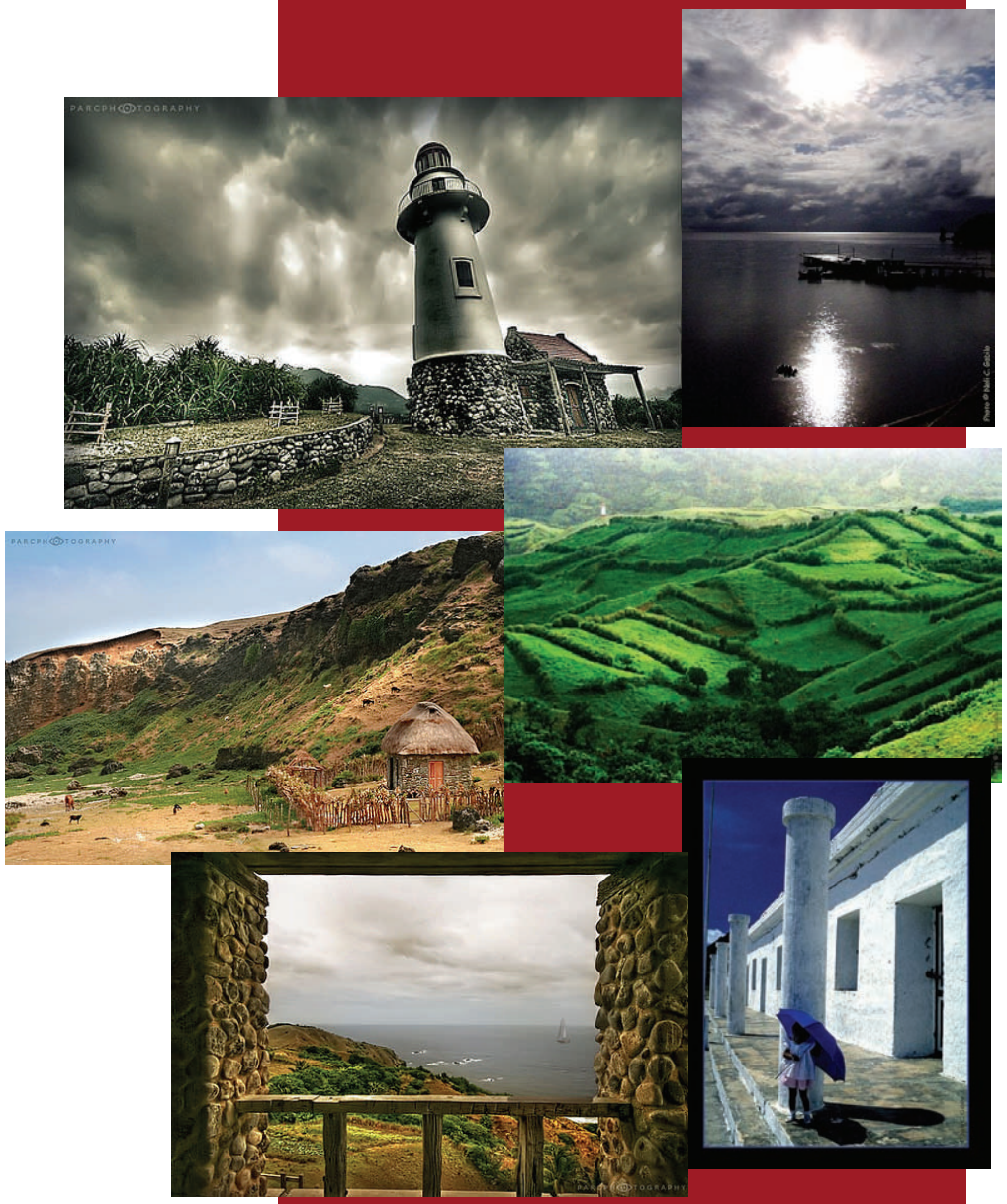
- states more than one tax return was filed for you, or
- indicates you received wages from an employer unknown to you.

9. For more information on identity theft and your tax records, please visit www.irs.gov and use the words "Identity Theft" in the search block.

9. For more information on reporting phishing, e-mail scams and bogus IRS Web sites, click on the following link: http://www.irs.gov/privacy/article/0,,id=179820,00.html

An identity thief might also use your Social Security number to file a tax return in order to receive a refund. If the thief files the tax return before you do, the IRS will believe you already filed and received your refund if eligible.

B a t a n e s



a treasure in the North...

At the northernmost part of the Philippines is the serene and unspoiled province of Batanes, the “Home of the Winds”. With a land area of about 230 square kilometers and a population of a little over 16,000, Batanes is considered the smallest province of the Philippines. It is composed of ten islands, three of which, namely Batan, Sabtang, and Itbayat are inhabited. Basco is the capital municipality of Batanes.

Continued on Page 14...

Batanes

The province of Batanes is marvelously distinct from any other province in the Philippines. Its terrain is hilly and mountainous with steep cliffs, deep canyons and boulder-lined shores. It is rich with marine resources, including the rarest sea corals in the world. Unlike the rest of the country, Batanes is not tropical. Since it is constantly swept by wind and rain, the weather is cool almost all year round. The best time to visit Batanes is in April or May when the weather is warm and sunny.

Clockwise from left: Cavanaran Beach; A typical Ivatan house; An Ivatan woman wearing a Vakul

The native people of Batanes are called Ivatans (from "Ivat" meaning "washed ashore"). The Ivatans can be found greeting visitors, giving root crops to tourists and simply going out of their way to please Batanes' guests. Warmth and friendliness are not the only esteemed traits of the Ivatans, but honesty is deeply valued. Houses remain unlocked and personal belongings could be left lying around and not get lost. A very interesting tourist spot is a coffee shop which operates on an honesty policy. It is owned by a 73-year old retired Ivatan teacher who does not tend to the shop. Customers are trusted to pay for their purchase by leaving money in a box and getting just the exact change.

Ivatan houses are made of meter-thick limestone walls, heavy wooden doors and cogon grass rooftops. They are built to withstand the strongest storms and the heaviest winds. Located in the town of Ivana is the oldest stone house in Batanes. It was built in 1887 and is popularly knows as the "House of Dakay". Its walls were constructed with layers of corals and stones.

The Ivatans uniqueness is typified by their headgear called *Vakul*. It is made from dried *vuyavuy* fiber and is used to protect them from rain or heat of the sun.

Life in Batanes is slow, peaceful and relaxing. The Ivatans live without television, movie-houses, shopping malls or restaurants. Bicycles and scooters dominate the cement paved streets of Batanes. But despite the laidback ambience, modern conveniences such as mobile phones, electricity and cable television are available.

Farming, fishing and raising livestock are the Ivatan's primary sources of living. Batanes delicacies include their famous yellow rice, *dibang* (flying fish), *tatus* (coconut crab), *payi* (spiny lobster), *unot* (helmet urchins), and uved (strips of banana heart mixed with ground meat). The local brew is called *palek*, fermented juice extracted from sugar cane.

The province of Batanes is the best place for nature lovers, adventure seekers, and people who love tranquility and serenity while discovering a unique local culture…

Batanes is truly a treasure in the North…

For further information on places of interest, accommodations and transportation, visit: www.tourism.gov.ph

References: www.wikipedia.comwww.batanesonline.com; www.flickr.com/photos/parc/sets; www.philstar.com; www.rumsua.org; www.philsite.net/batanes; www.geocities.com/kitnaldo/

Philippines
Country Specific Information

The Department of State provides information to assist travelers in better understanding foreign countries they may visit and the known risks that they should consider. Travelers are encouraged to inform themselves about their country of destination prior to commencement of travel. It is the traveler's responsibility to obtain a U.S. passport from the Department of State and appropriate visas from the embassy or consulate of the country of destination. Canceling a scheduled trip abroad may cost money. When making reservations, travelers should discuss cancellation policies with their travel agent, travel insurer or airline. The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation; Medicare does not cover medical expenses abroad.

Americans planning travel to *Philippines* should read Intercountry Adoption Philippines, International Parental Child Abduction Philippines, Travel Warning for Philippines , Avian Flu Fact Sheet and Worldwide Caution Public Announcement available on the Department of State web site at http://travel.state.gov

June 17, 2008

COUNTRY DESCRIPTION: The Philippines is an emerging economy with a democratic system of government, located in Southeast Asia. The archipelago consists of more than 7,000 islands, of which over 800 are inhabited. The major island groupings are Luzon in the north, the Visayas in the center and Mindanao in the south. Tourist facilities are available within population centers and the main tourist areas. English is widely spoken in the Philippines, and most signs are in English. Read the Department of State Background Notes on the Philippines for additional information.

ENTRY/EXIT REQUIREMENTS: U.S. citizens may enter the Philippines without a visa upon presentation of their U.S. passport, valid for at least six months after the date of entry into the Philippines, and a return ticket to the United States or an onward ticket to another country. Upon arrival immigration authorities will annotate your passport with an entry visa valid for 21 days. If you plan to stay longer than 21 days you must apply for an extension at the Philippine Bureau of Immigration and Deportation's main office at Magallanes Drive; Intramuros, Manila, Philippines or at any of its provincial offices at http://www.immigration.gov.ph.

Persons who overstay their visas are subject to fines and detention by Philippine immigration authorities. American citizens are urged to remain aware of their visa status while in the Philippines and to strictly follow immigration laws and regulations. Travelers departing the country from international airports must pay a Passenger Service Charge in Philippine Pesos. Visit the Embassy of the Philippines web site at http://www.philippineembassy-usa.org for the most current visa information.

Special requirements exist for the entry of unaccompanied minors. In an effort to prevent international child abduction, the Philippine government requires that a waiver of exclusion be obtained from a Philippine Embassy or Consulate or from the Bureau of Immigration and Detention in Manila for a child under 15 years of age who plans to enter the Philippines unaccompanied by either a parent or legal guardian prior to the child's entry into the Philippines.

Information about dual nationality or the prevention of international child abduction can be found on our web site. For further information about customs regulations, please read our Customs Information sheet.

SAFETY AND SECURITY: U.S. citizens contemplating travel to the Philippines should carefully consider the risks to their safety and security while there, including those due to terrorism. While travelers may encounter such threats anywhere in the Philippines, the southern island of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago are of particular concern. Travelers should exercise extreme caution in both central and western Mindanao as well as in the Sulu Archipelago.

Kidnap for ransom gangs operate in the Philippines. In October 2007, one such gang abducted a visiting U.S. citizen whose whereabouts are unknown at this time. Several other foreigners were also kidnapped for ransom in 2007. The New People's Army (NPA), a terrorist organization, operates in many rural areas of the Philippines, including in the northern island of Luzon. While it has not targeted foreigners in several years, the NPA could threaten U.S. citizens engaged in business or property management activities, and it often demands "revolutionary taxes."

Philippines
Country Specific Information (continued)

Terrorist groups, such as the Abu Sayyaf Group, the Jema'ah Islamiyah and groups that have broken away from the more mainstream Moro Islamic Liberation Front or Moro National Liberation Front, have carried out bombings resulting in deaths, injuries and property damage. In November 2007, a bombing outside the House of Representatives in Metro Manila resulted in a number of deaths and injuries to bystanders. On January 3, 2008, a bomb exploded at a Cotabato City disco pub, killing one and injuring eight. The central and western areas of Mindanao have also experienced bombings targeting bus terminals and public buildings. While those responsible do not appear to have targeted foreigners, travelers should remain vigilant and avoid congregating in public areas; U.S. Government employees must seek special permission for travel to Mindanao or the Sulu Archipelago. When traveling in Mindanao, U.S. official travelers attempt to lower their profile, limit their length of stay and exercise extreme caution. Some foreigners who reside in or visit western and central Mindanao hire their own private security personnel.

For the latest security information, Americans traveling abroad should regularly monitor the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs web site at http://travel.state.gov where the current Travel Warnings and Travel Alerts, including the Worldwide Caution, can be found.

Up-to-date information on safety and security can also be obtained by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll free in the United States and Canada, or for callers outside the United States and Canada, a regular toll-line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday (except U.S. federal holidays).

The Department of State urges American citizens to take responsibility for their own personal security while traveling overseas. For general information about appropriate measures travelers can take to protect themselves in an overseas environment, see the Department of State's pamphlet A Safe Trip Abroad.

CRIME: As in many of the major metropolitan areas in the United States, crime is a significant concern in Metro Manila. As a rule of thumb, Americans should exercise good judgment and remain aware of their surroundings. Reports of confidence games, pick pocketing, internet scams and credit card fraud are common. Be wary of unknown individuals who attempt to befriend you, especially just after you arrive in country. A number of robberies and assaults involving the "date rape drug" (known locally as Ativan) have occurred; the drug is generally administered to unwitting male or female victims via food or drink. It is best not to accept food, drink, or rides in private vehicles from strangers, even if they appear legitimate. While Americans are not typically targeted for kidnapping, kidnappings and violent assaults do occur in the Metro Manila area.

Taxis are the recommended form of public transportation. However, the following safeguards are important: do not enter a taxi if it has already accepted another passenger; and request that the meter be used. If the driver is unwilling to comply with your requests, it is best to wait for another cab. It is also a good idea to make a mental note of the license plate number should there be a problem. When driving in the city, make certain that the doors are locked and the windows rolled up. All other forms of public transportation, such as the light rail system, buses and "jeepneys" should be avoided for both safety and security reasons.

Visitors should also be vigilant when using credit cards. One common form of credit card fraud involves the illicit use of an electronic device to retrieve and record information, including the PIN, from the card's magnetic strip. The information is then used to make unauthorized purchases. To limit your vulnerability to this scam, never let your card out of your sight.

A continuing problem is the commercial scam or sting that attempts to sell or to seek negotiation of fraudulent U.S. securities. Visitors and residents should be wary when presented with supposed Federal Reserve Notes or U.S. securities for sale or negotiation. For further information, consult the Federal Reserve System's web site at http://www.federalreserve.gov/.

In many countries around the world, counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available. Transactions involving such products may be illegal under local law. In addition, bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines. More information on this serious problem is available at http://www.cybercrime.gov/18usc2320.htm.

INFORMATION FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME: The loss or theft abroad of a U.S. passport should be reported immediately to the local police and the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. If you are the victim of a crime while overseas, in addition to reporting to local police, please contact the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate for assistance. The Embassy/Consulate staff can, for example, assist you to find appropriate medical care, contact family members or friends and explain how funds could be transferred. Although the investigation and prosecution of the crime is solely the responsibility of local authorities, consular officers can help you to understand the local criminal justice process and to find an attorney if needed. The Philippines has a victim compensation program to provide financial compensation to victims of violent or personal crime and of unjust imprisonment. Information may be obtained from the Philippine Department of Justice at 011-632-536-0447 or via the Internet at http://www.doj.gov.ph/.

Philippines
Country Specific Information (continued)

The local equivalent to the "911" emergency line in the Philippines is: 117.

See our information on Victims of Crime.

MEDICAL FACILITIES AND HEALTH INFORMATION: Adequate medical care is available in major cities in the Philippines, but even the best hospitals may not meet the standards of medical care, sanitation, and facilities provided by hospitals and doctors in the United States. Medical care is limited in rural and more remote areas.

Serious medical problems requiring hospitalization and/or medical evacuation to the United States can cost several or even tens of thousands of dollars. Most hospitals will require a down payment of estimated fees in cash at the time of admission. In some cases, public and private hospitals have withheld lifesaving medicines and treatments for non-payment of bills. Hospitals also frequently refuse to discharge patients or release important medical documents until the bill has been paid in full. A list of doctors and medical facilities in the Philippines is available on the web page of the U.S. Embassy in Manila at http://manila.usembassy.gov/.

Information on vaccinations and other health precautions, such as safe food and water precautions and insect bite protection, may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747) or via the CDC's web site at http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/default.aspx. Tuberculosis is an increasingly serious health concern in the Philippines. For further information, please consult the CDC's Travel Notice on TB, http://wwwn.cdc.gov/travel/yellowBookCh4-TB.aspx.

For information about outbreaks of infectious diseases abroad consult the World Health Organization's (WHO) web site at http://www.who.int/en. Further health information for travelers is available at http://www.who.int/ith/en.

MEDICAL INSURANCE: The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and whether it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. Please see our information on medical insurance overseas.

TRAFFIC SAFETY AND ROAD CONDITIONS: While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning the Philippines is provided for general reference only, and may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Travel within the Philippine archipelago is possible by boat, plane, bus or car. Few tourists rent cars to drive, as the road system is crowded and drivers are undisciplined. Driving off the national highways and paved roads is particularly dangerous, especially at night, and should be avoided. To avoid overcrowded or unsafe transport, exercise caution in planning travel by older, inter-island ferryboats, or other public conveyances.

For specific information concerning Philippine driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Philippine Embassy in Washington, D.C. at tel. (202) 467-9300 or one of the Philippine consulates in the United State (Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco) or via the Internet at http://www.philippineembassy-usa.org/home.htm. Please see also related information from the Philippine Department of Tourism at http://www.tourism.gov.ph and http://www.dotpcvc.gov.ph.

Please refer to our Road Safety page for more information. Visit the web site of the country's national tourist office and national authority responsible for road safety at http://www.lto.gov.ph/.

AVIATION SAFETY OVERSIGHT: The U.S. Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has assessed the Government of the Philippines' Civil Aviation Authority as not being in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) aviation safety standards for the oversight of the Philippines' air carrier operations. For more information, travelers may visit the FAA's web site at http://www.faa.gov/safety/programs_initiatives/oversight/iasa.

SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES: Marriage in the Philippines: The Philippine Government requires foreigners who wish to marry in the Philippines to obtain from the U.S. Embassy a "Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage" before filing an application for a marriage license. Because there is no national register of marriages in the United States, the U.S. Embassy cannot provide such a certification. As a result, the Philippine Government will accept an "Affidavit in Lieu of a Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage" in its place. Americans may execute this affidavit at the U.S. Embassy in Manila Monday-Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m., except for Philippine or American holidays. The American must present his/her U.S. passport. There is a fee of $30.00 or its peso equivalent for the affidavit. Philippine authorities will not accept any substitute document issued in the United States. Before traveling to the Philippines to be married, U.S. military personnel should contact their personnel office regarding Department of Defense joint service regulations.

Philippines
Country Specific Information (continued)

Execution of the affidavit by a U.S. consular officer is a notarial act, and the consular officer is authorized by U.S. law to refuse to perform the service if the document will be used for a purpose patently unlawful, improper, or inimical to the best interests of the United States (see 22 C.F.R. section 92.9b). Entering into a marriage contract for the principal purpose of facilitating immigration to the United States for an alien is an unlawful act, and the U.S. Code provides penalties for individuals who commit perjury in an affidavit taken by a consular officer. Relationship fraud is a persistent problem in the Philippines, and it is not uncommon for Filipinos to enter into marriages with Americans solely for immigration purposes. Relationships developed via correspondence, particularly those begun on the Internet, are particularly susceptible to manipulation.

The Marriage Application Process: Once an American citizen has obtained from the U.S. Embassy an "Affidavit in Lieu of a Certificate of Legal Capacity to Contract Marriage," he/she may file an application for a marriage license at the office of the Philippine Civil Registrar in the town or city where one of the parties is a resident. The U.S. citizen applicant must present: (a) the affidavit; (b) divorce decree(s) or death certificate(s), if applicable (required to verify civil status and legal capacity to contract marriage); (c) his/her U.S. passport; and (d) documentation regarding parental consent or advice, if applicable. (Persons aged 18 to 21 must have written parental consent to marry in the Philippines; those aged 22 to 24 must have received parental advice. Philippine law prohibits marriage for persons under the age of 18.) A judge, a minister, or other person authorized by the Philippine Government can perform the marriage.

Marriage to a U.S. citizen confers neither citizenship nor an automatic eligibility for entry to the United States. A foreign spouse requires an immigrant visa to live in the United States. Questions about filing a petition to bring a foreign spouse to the United States may be directed to the nearest U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service office, to the U.S. Department of State's Visa Office (telephone: (202) 663-1225) or, while in the Philippines, to the U.S. Embassy's Immigrant Visa Unit at http://manila.usembassy.gov/.

Disaster Preparedness: The Philippines is a volcano-, typhoon- and earthquake-prone country. From May to December, typhoons and flash floods often occur. Flooding can cause road delays and cut off bridges. Typhoons in the vicinity of the Philippines can interrupt air and sea links within the country. Updated information on typhoons is available at http://www.pagasa.dost.gov.ph. Volcanic activity is frequent, and periodically the Philippine Government announces alerts for specific volcanoes. Updated information on volcanoes in the Philippines is available at http://volcanoes.usgs.gov. Earthquakes can also occur throughout the country. General information about natural disaster preparedness is available via the Internet from the Philippines National Disaster Coordinating Council (NDCC) at http://ndcc.gov.ph/home/ and from the U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) at http://www.fema.gov.

Customs: Philippine customs authorities enforce strict regulations concerning temporary importation into or export from the Philippines of items such as firearms and currency. It is advisable to contact the Embassy of the Philippines in Washington, DC or one of the Philippine consulates in the United States (Chicago, Honolulu, Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco) for specific information regarding customs requirements. Counterfeit and pirated goods are widely available in the Philippines; transactions involving such products are illegal and bringing them back to the United States may result in forfeitures and/or fines.

Please see our Customs Information.

CRIMINAL PENALTIES: While in a foreign country, a U.S. citizen is subject to that country's laws and regulations, which sometimes differ significantly from those in the United States and may not afford the protections available to the individual under U.S. law. Penalties for breaking the law can be more severe than in the United States for similar offenses. Persons violating the Philippines' laws, even unknowingly, may be expelled, arrested or imprisoned. Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in the Philippines are severe, and convicted offenders can expect long jail sentences and heavy fines. Engaging in sexual conduct with children or using or disseminating child pornography in a foreign country is a crime, prosecutable in the United States. Please see our information on Criminal Penalties.

CHILDREN'S ISSUES: For information see our Office of Children's Issues web pages on intercountry adoption and international parental child abduction.

REGISTRATION / EMBASSY LOCATION: Americans living or traveling in the Philippines are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security within the Philippines. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. The U.S. Embassy is located at: 1201 Roxas Boulevard, Manila, Philippines, tel. (63) (2) 301-2000. The American Citizen Services (ACS) section's fax number is (63) (2) 301-2017 and the ACS web page is at http://manila.usembassy.gov/.

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This replaces the Country Specific Information for the Philippines dated January 17, 2008 to update sections on "Country Description," "Safety and Security," "Crime" and "Medical Facilities and Health Information."

Travel Warning

United States Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs

PHILIPPINES

February 13, 2008

This Travel Warning updates information on the security situation and reminds Americans of the risks of travel in the Philippines . This Travel Warning supersedes the Travel Warning for the Philippines issued April 27, 2007.

U.S. citizens contemplating travel to the Philippines should carefully consider the risks to their safety and security while there, including those due to terrorism. While travelers may encounter such threats anywhere in the Philippines , the southern island of Mindanao and the Sulu Archipelago are of particular concern. Travelers should exercise extreme caution in both central and western Mindanao as well as in the Sulu Archipelago.

Kidnap for ransom gangs operate in the Philippines . In October 2007, one such gang abducted a visiting U.S. citizen whose whereabouts are unknown at this time. Several other foreigners were also kidnapped for ransom in 2007. The New People's Army (NPA), a terrorist organization, operates in many rural areas of the Philippines , including in the northern island of Luzon . While it has not targeted foreigners in several years, the NPA could threaten U.S. citizens engaged in business or property management activities, and it often demands "revolutionary taxes."

Terrorist groups, such as the Abu Sayyaf Group and the Jema'ah Islamiyah, and groups that have broken away from the more mainstream Moro Islamic Liberation Front or Moro National Liberation Front, have carried out bombings resulting in deaths, injuries and property damage. On January 3, 2008, a bomb exploded at a Cotabato City disco pub, killing one and injuring eight. The central and western areas of Mindanao have also experienced bombings targeting bus terminals and public buildings. While those responsible do not appear to have targeted foreigners, travelers should remain vigilant and avoid congregating in public areas; a recent bombing outside the House of Representatives in Metro Manila resulted in a number of deaths and injuries to bystanders.

U.S. Government employees must seek special permission for travel to Mindanao or the Sulu Archipelago. When traveling in Mindanao , U.S. official travelers attempt to lower their profile, limit their length of stay, and exercise extreme caution. Some foreigners who reside in or visit western and central Mindanao hire their own security.

The Department strongly encourages Americans in the Philippines to register with the Consular Section of the U.S. Embassy in Manila through the State Department's travel registration website, https://travelregistration.state.gov. The U.S. Embassy is located at: 1201 Roxas Boulevard , Manila , Philippines , tel. 63-2-301-2000. The American Citizen Services (ACS) section's fax number is 63-2-301-2017 and the ACS web page is at http://manila.usembassy.gov/wwwh3004.html.

For information on general crime and security issues, U.S. citizens should also consult the Department of State's Country Specific Information for the Philippines and the Worldwide Caution, located at http://travel.state.gov/. American citizens may also obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 from the United States and Canada , or 202-501-4444 from overseas.

Worldwide Caution

United States Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs

July 16, 2008

This Worldwide Caution updates information on the continuing threat of terrorist actions and violence against Americans and interests throughout the world. In some countries, the rise in oil and food prices has caused political and economic instability and social unrest. American citizens are reminded to maintain a high level of vigilance and to take appropriate steps to increase their security awareness. This supersedes the Worldwide Caution dated January 17, 2008.

The Department of State remains concerned about the continued threat of terrorist attacks, demonstrations and other violent actions against U.S. citizens and interests overseas. Current information suggests that al-Qaida and affiliated organizations continue to plan terrorist attacks against U.S. interests in multiple regions, including Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East. These attacks may employ a wide variety of tactics including suicide operations, assassinations, kidnappings, hijackings and bombings.

Extremists may elect to use conventional or non-conventional weapons, and target both official and private interests. Examples of such targets include high-profile sporting events, residential areas, business offices, hotels, clubs, restaurants, places of worship, schools, public areas and locales where Americans gather in large numbers, including during holidays. A July 9, 2008 terrorist attack on Turkish police guarding the U.S. Consulate General in Istanbul killed three police officers and wounded other police personnel. On March 15, a bomb was detonated at an Italian restaurant in Islamabad, killing two and injuring twelve, including five Americans. Also on March 15, two bombs exploded at the CS Pattani Hotel in southern Thailand killing two and injuring thirteen. In January, a bomb in a disco pub in the Philippines killed one and injured eight.

Americans are reminded of the potential for terrorists to attack public transportation systems. Recent examples include multiple anti-personnel mine detonations on passenger buses in June 2008 in Sri Lanka, multiple terrorist attacks on trains in India in 2006, the July 2005 London Underground bombings, and the March 2004 train attacks in Madrid. Extremists may also select aviation and maritime services as possible targets, such as the August 2006 plot against aircraft in London, or the December 2006 bomb at Madrid's Barajas International Airport. In June 2007, a vehicle was driven into the main terminal at Glasgow International Airport and burst into flames, but the bomb failed to detonate.

The Middle East and North Africa

Credible information indicates terrorist groups seek to continue attacks against U.S. interests in the Middle East and North Africa. Terrorist actions may include bombings, hijackings, hostage taking, kidnappings, and assassinations. While conventional weapons such as explosive devices are a more immediate threat in many areas, use of non-conventional weapons, including chemical or biological agents, must be considered a possible threat. Terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Increased security at official U.S. facilities has led terrorists and their sympathizers to seek softer targets such as public transportation, residential areas, and public areas where people congregate, including restaurants, hotels, clubs, and shopping areas.

On March 18, 2008, a mortar attack on the U.S. Embassy in Yemen injured several Yemeni citizens in the vicinity. On January 15, a roadside explosion in Beirut, Lebanon damaged a U.S. Embassy vehicle, killing three Lebanese and injuring an American citizen. On December 11, 2007, two vehicle-borne explosive devices were detonated at the UN headquarters in Algiers and the Algerian Constitutional Council. Three suicide bomb attacks in July and September of 2007 in Algeria killed more than 80 people. In July 2007, suspected al-Qaida operatives carried out a vehicle-borne explosive device attack on tourists at the Bilquis Temple in Yemen, killing eight Spanish tourists and their two Yemeni drivers. There was a series of bombings in Morocco in March and April 2007, two of which occurred simultaneously outside the U.S. Consulate General and the private American Language Center in Casablanca. Additionally, an attack took place on the American International School in Gaza in April 2007. These events underscore the intent of terrorist entities to target facilities perceived to cater to Westerners. The September 2006 attack on the U.S. Embassy in Syria and the March 2006 bombing near the U.S. Consulate in Karachi, Pakistan illustrate the continuing desire of extremists to strike American targets.

Worldwide Caution

United States Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs

Potential targets are not limited to those companies or establishments with overt U.S. ties. For instance, terrorists may target movie theaters, liquor stores, bars, casinos, or any similar type of establishment, regardless of whether they are owned and operated by host country nationals. Due to varying degrees of security at all such locations, Americans should be particularly vigilant when visiting these establishments.

The violence in Iraq, clashes between Palestinians and Israelis, and clashes between terrorist extremists and the Lebanese Armed Forces have the potential to produce demonstrations and unrest throughout the region. Americans are reminded that demonstrations and rioting can occur with little or no warning. In addition, the Department of State continues to warn of the possibility for violent actions against U.S. citizens and interests in the region. Anti-American violence could include possible terrorist actions against aviation, ground transportation, and maritime interests, specifically in the Middle East, including the Red Sea, Persian Gulf, the Arabian Peninsula, and North Africa.

The Department is concerned that extremists may be planning to carry out attacks against Westerners and oil workers on the Arabian Peninsula. Armed attacks targeting foreign nationals in Saudi Arabia that resulted in many deaths and injuries, including U.S. citizens, appear to have been preceded by extensive surveillance. Tourist destinations in Egypt that are frequented by Westerners were attacked in April 2006 resulting in many deaths and injuries, including Americans. Extremists may be surveilling Westerners, particularly at hotels, housing areas, and rental car facilities. Potential targets may include U.S. contractors, particularly those related to military interests. Financial or economic venues of value also could be considered as possible targets; the failed attack on the Abqaiq oil processing facility in Saudi Arabia in late February 2006 and the September 2006 attack on oil facilities in Yemen are examples.

East Africa

A number of al-Qaida operatives and other extremists are believed to be operating in and around East Africa.

As a result of the conflict in Somalia, some of these individuals may seek to relocate elsewhere in the region. Americans considering travel to the region and those already there should review their plans carefully, remain vigilant with regard to their personal security, and exercise caution. Terrorist actions may include suicide operations, bombings, kidnappings or targeting maritime vessels. Terrorists do not distinguish between official and civilian targets. Increased security at official U.S. facilities has led terrorists to seek softer targets such as hotels, beach resorts, prominent public places, and landmarks. In particular, terrorists and likeminded extremists may target international aid workers, civil aviation and seaports in various locations throughout East Africa, including Somalia. Americans in remote areas or border regions where military or police authority is limited or non-existent could also become targets.

Americans considering travel by sea near the Horn of Africa or in the southern Red Sea should exercise extreme caution, as there have been several incidents of armed attacks, robberies, and kidnappings for ransom at sea by pirates during the past several years. Merchant vessels continue to be hijacked in Somali territorial waters, while others have been hijacked as far as 300 nautical miles off the coast of Somalia in international waters.

The U.S. Government maritime authorities advise mariners to avoid the port of Mogadishu, and to remain at least 200 nautical miles off the coast of Somalia. In addition, when transiting around the Horn of Africa or in the Red Sea, it is strongly recommended that vessels travel in convoys, and maintain good communications contact at all times.

Worldwide Caution

United States Department of State
Bureau of Consular Affairs

South and Central Asia

The U.S. Government continues to receive information that terrorist groups in South and Central Asia may be planning attacks in the region, possibly against U.S. Government facilities, American citizens, or American interests. The presence of al-Qaida, Taliban elements, indigenous sectarian groups, and other terror organizations, many of which are on the U.S. Government's list of foreign terror organizations, poses a potential danger to American citizens in the region. Continuing tensions in the Middle East may also increase the threat of anti-Western or anti-American violence in the region.

Terrorists and their sympathizers have demonstrated their willingness and capability to attack targets where Americans or Westerners are known to congregate or visit. Their actions may include, but are not limited to, vehicle-born explosives, improvised explosive devices, assassinations, carjackings, rocket attacks, assaults or kidnappings. On June 2, 2008, a large bomb exploded in front of the Danish Embassy in Islamabad, Pakistan killing at least six people and wounding nearly 20. In May 2008, a series of coordinated bombings occurred in market and temple areas of the tourist city of Jaipur in Rajasthan, India. In Afghanistan, kidnappings and terrorist attacks on international organizations, international aid workers, and foreign interests continue. In Sri Lanka, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and other groups have conducted suicide bombings at political rallies, government buildings, and major economic targets, and in recent months have increasingly targeted public transportation. Although there is no indication that American citizens were targeted in these attacks, and none were injured, there is a heightened risk of American citizens being victims of violence by being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Previous terrorist attacks conducted in Central Asia have involved improvised explosive devices and suicide bombers and have targeted public areas, such as markets, local government facilities, and, in 2004, the U.S. and Israeli Embassies in Uzbekistan. In addition, hostage-takings and skirmishes have occurred near the Uzbek-Tajik-Kyrgyz border areas.

Before You Go

U.S. citizens living or traveling abroad are encouraged to register with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate through the State Department's travel registration web site at https://travelregistration.state.gov/ibrs/ui/ so that they can obtain updated information on travel and security. Americans without Internet access may register directly with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate. By registering, American citizens make it easier for the Embassy or Consulate to contact them in case of emergency. U.S. citizens are strongly encouraged to maintain a high level of vigilance, be aware of local events, and take the appropriate steps to bolster their personal security. For additional information, please refer to "A Safe Trip Abroad" found at http://travel.state.gov.

U.S. Government facilities worldwide remain at a heightened state of alert. These facilities may temporarily close or periodically suspend public services to assess their security posture. In those instances, U.S. embassies and consulates will make every effort to provide emergency services to U.S. citizens. Americans abroad are urged to monitor the local news and maintain contact with the nearest U.S. Embassy or Consulate.

As the Department continues to develop information on any potential security threats to U.S. citizens overseas, it shares credible threat information through its Consular Information Program documents, available on the Internet at http://travel.state.gov. In addition to information on the Internet, travelers may obtain up-to-date information on security conditions by calling 1-888-407-4747 toll-free in the U.S. and Canada or, outside the U.S. and Canada on a regular toll line at 1-202-501-4444. These numbers are available from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm Monday through Friday, Eastern Time (except U.S. federal holidays.)

AMERICAN CITIZEN SERVICES

Consul General: Richard D Haynes

ACS Chief: **Linda E. Daetwyler**

Office: **(63) (2) 301-2246 or 2567**

Fax: **(63) (2) 301-2017**

Email: **ACSInfoManila@state.gov**

Passports

Mon through Fri 7:30am - 11:00am

By phone: M-F, 2-4pm x2555

For applications: FedEx - 02-879- 4747 or

Citizenship and Birth Registration

By phone: M-F, 2-4pm x2532

By appointment only for forms/applications:

FedEx - 02-879-4747

Notary Services

Mon through Fri 7:30am - 10:00am

Legal Capacity to Marry

Mon through Fri 7:30am - 10:00am

Emergencies

For emergencies after office hours please call (63) (2) 301-2000 and ask for the Duty Officer.

For further information, visit:
http://manila.usembassy.gov

Email: acsinfomanila@state.gov

Virtual Consulate Davao:

http://www.usvirtualconsulatedavao.org.ph

Online Registration:

https://travelregistration.state.gov

Cebu Consular Agency

Waterfront Hotel, Lahug, Cebu City

Mon through Fri, 9:00am - 11:00am

Tel: (63) (32) 231-1261

Fax: (63) (32) 231-0174

ANNOUNCEMENT

Department of Veterans Affairs
Regional Office
1131 Roxas Blvd
Manila, Philippines

On January 2, 2009 the Department of Veterans Affairs Manila Regional Office (VA) implemented an appointment system for all visitors to their public contact section. VA will no longer entertain walk-in visitors; all visitors will be required to have an appointment before they are admitted to the Embassy.

For an appointment, call VA at 258-2500 or if calling from outside Metro Manila call VA toll-free at 1-800-1888-5252 using a PLDT line.

2009 HOLIDAY CALENDAR

HOLIDAY	LEGAL DATE	CLOSING DATE
Martin Luther King Jr Day (U.S.)	Monday, January 19	Monday, January 19
President's Day (U.S.)	Monday, February 16	Monday, February 16
Bataan & Corregidor/Heroism Day (PHIL)	Monday, April 6	Monday, April 6
Maundy Thursday (PHIL)	Thursday, April 9	Thursday, April 9
Good Friday (PHIL)	Friday, April 10	Friday, April 10
Labor Day (PHIL)	Friday, May 1	Friday, May 1
Memorial Day (U.S.)	Monday, May 25	Monday, May 25
Independence Day (PHIL)	Friday, June 12	Friday, June 12
Independence Day (U.S.)	Friday, July 4	Friday, July 4
Ninoy Aquino Day (PHIL)	Friday, August 21	Friday, August 21
National Heroes Day (PHIL)	Monday, August 31	Monday, August 31
Labor Day (U.S.)	Monday, September 7	Monday, September 7
Eid-ul-Fitr (subject to proclamation-PHIL)	TBD	TBD
Columbus Day (U.S.)	Monday, October 12	Monday, October 12
Veterans Day (U.S.)	Wednesday, November 11	Wednesday, November 11
Thanksgiving Day (U.S.)	Thursday, November 26	Thursday, November 26
Bonifacio Day (PHIL)	Monday, November 30	Monday, November 30
Christmas Day (U.S./PHIL)	Friday, December 25	Friday, December 25
Rizal Day (PHIL)	Wednesday, December 30	Wednesday, December 30
Last Day of the Year (PHIL)	Thursday, December 31	Thursday, December 31