Health Headlines

 Millions Misuse Asthma Inhalers
Over 34 million people in the U.S. suffer from asthma or other chronic airway obstructive diseases. Possibly 10 million of them are using asthma inhalers incorrectly which can seriously complicate health. Some even believe they are supposed to spray their inhalers on their necks like perfume. Doctors need to better instruct their patients on how to use their inhalers. (Chicago Tribune 10/24/07) Learn more about asthma and using asthma inhalers.

 Hidden Brain Injuries in Kids
Thousands of children are believed to have brain injuries though they show no symptoms. Brain injuries may occur from accidentally hitting their heads or even choking on food. Under some kind of stress, these kids may begin to show signs of the injury. Early treatment is important and kids should see a doctor if they seem dazed or have double vision after an injury. (BBC News 10/29/07) Read more about child injury prevention and traumatic brain injury.

 The Lure of Menthol Cigarettes
More than half of poor, young, urban blacks smoke cigarettes. Part of the problem is “loosies,” single cigarettes illegally sold to people who can’t afford a whole pack - including kids. Baltimore officials are offering free nicotine patches or gum to try to help people kick the habit while new public health campaigns are underway. (The New York Times 10/20/07) Read more on smoking-related diseases and quitting cigarette smoking.

 Malaria Mosquitoes Alive in the U.S.
Live malaria-infected mosquitoes are being used to develop a new vaccine against the disease. In the ’70s, volunteers endured 1,000 bites from irradiated mosquitoes to test the efficacy of using whole parasites as a vaccine. Today, researchers are extracting the parasites straight from mosquitoes, using assembly lines of heavily protected workers. The weakened form of the parasite is being used in their experimental vaccine, which has received millions of dollars in funding with hopes of eventually saving countless lives, primarily in African countries. (The New York Times 12/11/07) Learn more about malaria and vaccines and immunizations.

 News from Leading Health Agencies

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 Real People, Real Lives

 Artificial Heart Saves Babies’ Lives
The Berlin Heart is the first heart-assisting device that can keep sick babies and toddlers alive until they receive a heart transplant. Infant T.J. Wilson was suffering from heart failure until he was put on the Berlin heart. The device pumped blood for him until he received a heart transplant six days later. (WTAE News 10/3/07) Learn more about organ donation and heart transplantation.

 A Kidney for a Vacuum
Jamie Howard was a door-to-door salesman who met Paul Sucher while trying to sell him a vacuum. Paul needed a kidney transplant, and instead of selling him a vacuum, Jamie donated a kidney to save Paul’s life. The two were a perfect match, and through the generosity of a stranger, Paul was given a new life. (Good Morning America 10/11/07) Read more about organ donation and kidney transplantation.

 Toxic Tanning Beds
An estimated one in three teenagers have used tanning beds at least three times in their lives. Due to high demand, tanning beds can now be found anywhere, from dry cleaners to video stores. However, Rachel Smithson, only 21 years old, can attest that even occasional use of tanning beds can cause melanoma. Now, she is trying to deter her friends from tanning because at that young age, few think they can get cancer. (Houston Chronicle 10/21/07) Read more on artificial tanning booths and cancer and melanoma.

 Cancer Disparities Still Exist
While cancer rates are decreasing steadily in the U.S., rates are still high for Alaskan Natives and American Indians. Regional differences show higher cancer rates in the Northern Plains and Alaska compared to the Southwest. These high rates may be due to poverty, lower education and poor health-care coverage. Read the press release and learn more about cancer health disparities.

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