From the CDC

All bicyclists should wear helmets

Making the wearing of helmets mandatory for all bicyclists is the best way to reduce bicycle-related injuries and deaths, say agency officials.

Currently, only Georgia and New Jersey have statewide laws requiring children to wear bicycle helmets. Fewer than 10% of all bicyclists in the United States wear a helmet. Children fare even worse: fewer than 2% of all children bicyclists don a helmet.

No link: HIV and CFS

Researchers found no link between the class of retroviruses that causes the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) and chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS). Investigators tested 68 CFS patients for retroviruses and compared the results with test results of 68 healthy persons.

False-positive results may have led scientists to prematurely link HIV and CFS in earlier studies, now say officials.

From the NIH

Vaccines tested in HIV-infected children

For the first time, the efficacy of three experimental vaccines is being tested in children infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

The 90 children participating in the trial range in age from 1 month to 12 years. All of the children are asymptomatic. Once the safety of the vaccines has been determined, future trials will examine whether the vaccines prevent, or at least delay, the progression of the HIV infection to the onset of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome.

From the FDA

Approvals for MS, AD drugs pending

A medical advisory board has recommended that the genetically engineered drug Betaseron (interferon-beta) be approved for the treatment of multiple sclerosis (MS). In clinical trials, the genetically engineered drug reduced nerve damage and severe attacks associated with MS by 50%.

In a separate review process, an advisory panel unanimously recommended that the drug tacrine be approved for use in treating Alzheimer's disease. This recommendation was made despite less than optimal benefits.

"There is a beneficial effect, but it is not a drug for everyone," says Paul Leber, director of the drug division that supervised the testing of tacrine. About 12% of patients with Alzheimer's disease are expected to benefit from this drug. Side effects associated with tacrine therapy include liver disease.

At presstime, no approval dates for either drug had been set.

Revised CVS sampling guidelines

New guidelines for chorionic villus sampling (CVS) have been established. Physicians are now advised to perform CVS on women no earlier than the 10th week of pregnancy. Previously, physicians were performing this test as early as the eighth week of gestation.

The timetable was revised in response to at least two studies published last year that associated birth defects with this sampling procedure.

"The FDA has to take a conservative approach; we'd be remiss if we didn't," says spokesperson Marcia Meyer.

The agency is also advising that women seek physicians who are experienced in performing CVS, as the risk of miscarriage is greater each time a placental tissue sample must be drawn.

Labeling on contraceptives strengthened

Over-the-counter and prescription contraceptives are required to carry more precise wording. The labeling change is part of an overall effort to educate the public concerning high-risk sexual behavior, particularly among adolescents and young adults.

Oral and injectable contracep-

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tives, birth control implants, intrauterine devices, and condoms are included in this labeling change. Specifically, the new regulations require the packaging to state that the particular product is intended to prevent pregnancy and *not* sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

"There is a great deal of confusion out there," says Ruth Merkatz, special assistant for women's health at the agency.

Latex condoms are the only contraceptives that can claim efficacy in preventing the transmission of STDs.