

## Featured Health Alert

### *Pica*



#### What is Pica?

Pica is the compulsive eating of material that may or may not be foodstuff. The material is often consumed in large quantities without regard for nutritional consequences; these include but are not limited to hair, dirt, chippings from drywall or paint, or anything an individual can pick up.

In the developmentally disabled community, there are changes in the incidence of pica with age, IQ, medication, and manifestations of behavior and appetite. An increased incidence of pica has been found to occur in patients with central nervous system type disorders, congenital anomalies which are present at birth, and associated medical problems, such as diabetes, deafness, and seizures. Pica also often occurs with other mental health disorders that are associated with impaired functioning such as Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Schizophrenia.

#### Diagnosis

The diagnosis for Pica is made from a clinical history of the individual; there is no blood test or laboratory test for Pica. Additionally, a medical doctor may order tests for anemia, mineral deficiencies, potential intestinal blockages, and toxic side effects of ingested substances.

#### Signs and Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of Pica include persistent eating of substances that are not food and do not provide nutritional value, over a period of at least one month. Additionally, for the diagnoses of Pica, the ingested substances are not a part of culturally supported or socially normative practice (e.g., some cultures promote eating clay as part of a medicinal practice).

#### Treatment

If pica is suspected in an individual, seek guidance from medical professionals such as the Primary Care Practitioner, Gastrointestinal Specialist, Psychiatrist, or Psychologist.

After Medical Evaluation consider consultation from other professional specialists such as a Behavioral Specialists, a Dietician, or an Occupational Therapist.

If the behaviors aren't caused by malnutrition or don't stop after nutritional treatment, a variety of behavioral interventions are available. For example, redirecting the person's attention away from the desired object or rewarding the individual for discarding or setting down the non-food item. Careful attention to eating habits and close supervision of individuals known to put things in their mouths may help reduce the risk before complications can occur. A behavioral support plan, developed for the individual can be a helpful tool for staff. A plan should include collecting data on the incidences and frequency of pica occurrences.

#### Health Consequences

- Eating some substances can lead to poisoning
- Eating non-food objects can interfere with eating healthy food, which can lead to nutritional deficiencies.
- Eating objects that cannot be digested, such as stones, can cause constipation or blockages in the digestive tract.
- Eating hard or sharp objects (such as paperclips) can cause tears in the lining of the esophagus or intestines.
- Bacteria or parasites from dirt or other objects can cause serious infections.

Blinder BJ. (2008) An update on pica: Prevalence, contributing causes, and treatment. *Psychiatric Times*, 25(6). Retrieved from <http://www.psychiatrictimes.com/eating-disorders/update-pica-prevalence-contributing-causes-and-treatment>.

Johnson, B.E. (1990). Pica. In: Walker, H.K., Hall, W.D., Hurst, J.W., editors. *Clinical Methods: The History, Physical, and Laboratory Examinations*, 3rd ed., chap. 148. Boston: Butterworths. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK255/>

National Eating Disorders. (2018). Pica. Retrieved from <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/learn/by-eating-disorder/other/pica>



### Durable Medical Equipment, Prosthetics, Orthotics, and Supplies for Medicare/Medicaid Beneficiaries Impacted by an Emergency or Disaster

When a natural disaster strikes, it can be devastating to individuals, families, and communities. For individuals with disabilities though, natural disasters can be even more detrimental. Many individuals with disabilities rely on durable medical equipment including home oxygen equipment, continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) devices, hospital beds, diabetes testing supplies, wheelchairs, canes, walkers, artificial limbs, braces, and enteral nutrients and other supplies to maintain their quality of life. If durable medical equipment is damaged during a declared emergency as the result of a natural disaster, Medicare/Medicaid will pay for a replacement. For guidance and more information please visit the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services website or click the link below.

Natural Disasters, like hurricanes, can produce distressing effects such as flooding, loss of electricity, or power surges due to damaging winds and lightening. Hurricane season in Virginia occurs from June 1<sup>st</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup>. Providers can prepare for emergencies through careful planning and preparation. Need ideas to best prepare? Visit [www.vaemergency.gov](http://www.vaemergency.gov) or the Virginia Department of Health for emergency planning resources.

U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (n.d.). Durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics, and supplies for Medicare beneficiaries impacted by an emergency or disaster. Retrieved from: <https://www.cms.gov/About-CMS/Agency-Information/Emergency/Downloads/Emergency-DME-Beneficiaries-Hurricanes.pdf>

Virginia Department of Emergency Management, Commonwealth of Virginia Government (2017, Aug. 1). VDEM and DMAS collaborate to update DME policies. Retrieved from: <http://www.vaemergency.gov/vdem-dmas-collaborate-update-dme-policies/>

Virginia Department of Health. (2018). Hurricane season Retrieved from <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/emergency-preparedness/emergency-preparedness/hurricane-season/>



### 2018 Remote Area Medical Clinic Schedule

“The Mission of RAM is to prevent pain and alleviate suffering by providing free quality healthcare to those in need”

RAM clinics offer basic services such as general medical appointments, dental cleanings, fillings, and extractions. Additionally, vision exams including dilated eye exams, testing for glaucoma and diabetic retinopathy (damage to the eyes due to diabetes), and glasses made on site. Preventative services are also offered including breast exams, diabetes screenings, physicals, and women’s health exams. Finally, educational resources and information are provided throughout service areas. For more information on RAM clinics, including eligibility and Frequently Asked Questions, please visit <https://www.ramusa.org>.

#### LEE COUNTY, VA

September 22, 6:00 a.m. – TBD

September 23, 6:00 a.m. – TBD

*Lee High School, 200 Generals Lane  
Jonesville, VA 24263*

#### GRUNDY, VA

October 6, 6:00 a.m. – TBD

October 7, 6:00 a.m. – TBD

*Riverview School, 27382 Riverside  
Drive  
Grundy, VA 24614*

#### GLOUCESTER, VA

November 3, 6:00 a.m. – TBD

November 4, 6:00 a.m. – TBD

*Ware Academy, 7936 John  
Clayton Memorial Hwy  
Gloucester, VA 23061*