SUMMER 2000

Veterans' Health

The wellness magazine for VA Capitol Healthcare Network Veterans

VA Capitol Healthcare Network
VISN 5
FIVE STAR SERVICE FOR THOSE WHO SERVED

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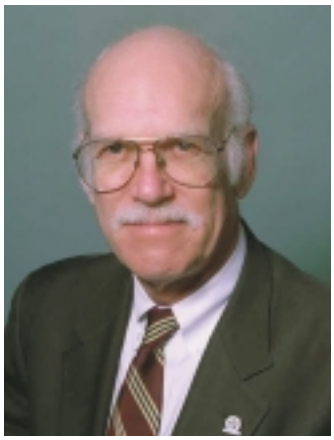
Healthcare for Every Stage of Life

VA Capitol Healthcare Network
VISN 5

The VA Capitol Healthcare Network is pleased to bring to you another edition of *Veterans' Health*. Our commitment to veterans is to promote a healthy lifestyle and to provide healthcare that is second to none.

This newsletter is part of our continuing effort to keep veterans up-to-date on healthcare issues and to highlight some of the outstanding programs and services that are available to the veterans we serve. This issue of *Veterans' Health* focuses on women's health and some of the specific services that are available for our female veterans. The VA Capitol Healthcare Network medical centers offer a wide variety of women's health services. Some of these programs include preventive healthcare services such as cancer screenings (Pap smear and mammography), well-women examinations and osteoporosis screening and treatment. Evaluation and management services encompass menstrual, breast and gynecologic disorders; menopause; and sexual abuse counseling. Supportive services focus on such areas as nutrition counseling, chronic pain management and rehabilitation. Our aim is to present diverse and innovative programs that care for, educate and support our patients during all phases of their lives. We are committed to providing accessible and comprehensive care of the highest quality to women veterans in a safe, comfortable and private setting.



James J. Nocks, M.D., M.S.H.A.

Additionally, I would like to introduce the new logo for the VA Capitol Healthcare Network. The new logo that is prominently displayed on this edition of *Veterans' Health* will be used on all future VISN 5 publications and correspondence. Our employees selected this new logo for its current design and the message it conveys. The logo embodies our basic philosophy and commitment to provide five star service to the veterans who have so admirably served this country.

I hope you find this edition of *Veterans' Health* informative and helpful. Enjoy your summer, and remember when you need quality healthcare, VA facilities provide a wide range of comprehensive services for all our veterans.

James J. Nocks, M.D., M.S.H.A.
Network Director

Could You Have a Substance Abuse Problem?

VA Capitol Healthcare Network VISN 5

Are friends and family concerned that you drink too much? Do they worry about your drug use? Do you brush them off and insist that alcohol and/or drugs are not a problem for you (even though a voice inside your head says otherwise)? Are you having difficulty handling duties at work or at home? Do you tend to pin the blame for your troubles elsewhere—on bad luck, a stubborn boss or an insensitive spouse? Anywhere but on yourself, that is?

It may be that alcohol and/or drugs are a problem for you. To help you find out, check the statements that apply to you:

❏ You can't predict whether you will use drugs or get drunk.

❏ You believe that in order to have fun you need to drink and/or use drugs.

❏ You turn to alcohol and/or drugs after a confrontation or an argument or to relieve uncomfortable feelings.

❏ You drink more or use more drugs to get the same effect that you got with smaller amounts.

❏ You drink and/or use drugs when you are by yourself.

❏ You remember how last night began but not how it ended, so you're worried you may have a problem.

❏ You have trouble at work because of your drinking or drug use.

❏ You make promises to yourself or others that you'll stop getting drunk or using drugs.

❏ You get annoyed when people criticize your drinking or drug habits.

❏ You have had a drink first thing in the morning to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover.

Checking two or more is a sign that alcohol and/or drug use may be an issue in your life. Other signs include thinking a lot about the next time you'll be able to drink or use drugs or being unable to control the amount you drink. People who abuse alcohol or drugs continue to drink even though they've gotten into trouble because of it—had car accidents, missed important deadlines or become violent, for example.

Call the VA medical center nearest you to get help for a substance abuse problem. ✪

Women Are Vet

Meeting the Growing Need for Women Veterans Care

The VA Capitol Healthcare Network has a specialized Women Veterans Healthcare Program whose objective is to provide comprehensive healthcare services to female veterans. Since the passing of the Veteran Health Care Act in 1992, Public Law 102-585, the Veterans Health Administration has placed an increasing emphasis on women's health.

The changing face of our nation's armed forces over the last decade represents an increasing number of women serving our country. The National Center for Veteran Analysis and Statistics notes a 12.3 percent increase of women veterans since 1990. Women veterans comprise 14 percent of active duty armed forces, 15 percent of the reserve forces and 20 percent of all new recruits. The VA Capitol Healthcare Network recognizes this increasing trend and has appropriately placed a high priority on women's healthcare needs.

In 1993, the role of the Women Veterans Coordinator was expanded. Women Veterans Coordinators are charged with the responsibility of utilizing the multifaceted services and programs that are available in our medical centers to meet the healthcare needs of our female veterans. Women Veterans Coordinators work with the entire staff at each medical center to coordinate the women's program and act as an advocate for all female veterans.

The Women Veterans Coordinators serve as the chair of each Women Veterans Advisory Committee and ensure that the highest quality of care is provided to our female veterans in a safe and private environment. These coordinators have been entrusted with ensuring that the focus of women's care is on health promotion, disease prevention and management, and the emotional well-being of women veterans.

The VA Capitol Healthcare Network promotes diverse and innovative programs and provides state-of-the-art care for our female veterans. Expanded programs now include counseling on prenatal care and counseling and treatment of stress disorders, including depression and sexual trauma.

Each of our medical centers offers a host of standard women's healthcare services that include breast and pelvic exams, osteoporosis screening and treatment, treatment of bladder dysfunction, hormone replacement therapy, inpatient and outpatient psychiatric care, addictions counseling and primary medical care and screening. The Baltimore VA Medical Center provides gynecology and surgery services. The Washington DC VA Medical Center also offers on-site gynecology services with surgery

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referrals to Walter Reed Army Hospital. The Martinsburg and Perry Point VA Medical Centers offer domiciliary care in addition to women's health clinics. Sexual trauma teams at each medical center offer emotional and psychiatric support, treatment and counseling for victims of sexual harassment and/or assault that may have occurred during a woman's military service.

Women Veterans Programs emphasize health screening and prevention to include:

- Pap smears beginning at age 18
- clinical breast exams yearly
- mammography every one to two years beginning at age 40
- blood pressure screening
- cholesterol measurement
- osteoporosis evaluation and treatment
- immunizations to include tetanus/diphtheria boosters, flu vaccine and pneumonia vaccine for individuals with chronic disease or over age 65

Group education sessions or individual counseling is used to promote a healthy lifestyle including how to nourish healthy eating habits, exercising properly, promoting weight control, smoking cessation, encouraging the use of sunscreen to prevent skin cancer and the premature aging effects of the sun, and promoting other safety practices such as wearing seat belts.

Recognizing that the number of women veterans continues to grow, our goal is to care for, educate and support our patients during all phases of their lives.

The VA Capitol Healthcare Network, VISN 5, includes the Washington DC VA Medical Center, the Martinsburg VA Medical Center and the VA Maryland Healthcare System. The VA Maryland Healthcare System comprises three medical centers that include Baltimore, Perry Point and Fort Howard VA Medical Centers.

These facilities work together to transform our network-wide services into an integrated healthcare delivery system that focuses on the delivery of quality care to our women veterans. The VA Capitol Healthcare Network is proud to offer a full range of women's services and programs that are accessible and second to none to all our women veterans. ✪

Contacting Your Women Veterans Coordinator

Washington DC VA Medical Center
Cynthia High, L.I.C.S.W.
(202) 745-8469

Baltimore VA Medical Center
Andrea Van Horn, CNP
(410) 605-7000, ext. 5003

Martinsburg VA Medical Center
Anne Hedges, Psy.D.
(304) 263-0811, ext. 3802/09

Fort Howard VA Medical Center
Suzanne Harris, CNP
(410) 477-1800, ext. 2259

Martinsburg VA Medical Center
Beth Frazier, PA-C
(304) 263-0811, ext. 3500

Perry Point VA Medical Center
Cheryl Lowman, Ph.D.
(410) 642-2411, ext. 5798

Why Choose the VA Healthcare System?

There are many exciting reasons to use the VA as your primary healthcare provider:

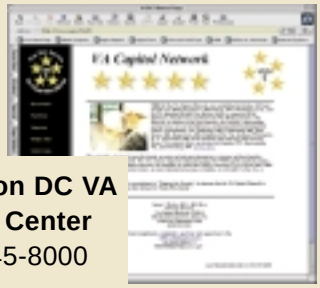
- VA is part of a large nationwide healthcare system, with a variety of services, programs and benefits.
- Veterans have access to the full range of services they need, not just those medical needs resulting from military service.
- VA healthcare benefits are available at 172 medical centers and 622 community-based outpatient clinics.
- Outpatient clinics are now located within easy access to most veterans.
- Treatment is provided in modern facilities using state-of-the-art equipment.

VA Capitol Healthcare Network Medical Centers provide the following specialty services for veterans:

- cardiac surgery
- ear, nose and throat
- eye care
- gastroenterology
- hearing and speech
- mental hygiene
- oncology
- orthopedics
- pain clinic
- psychiatric care
- rehabilitation medicine
- same-day surgery
- substance abuse
- nursing home care
- post-traumatic stress disorder
- women's health
- home-based healthcare
- domiciliary homeless program

For more information on VA healthcare services ...

... visit our WebPage at **www.va.gov/Visn5** or call one of the following medical centers:



Martinsburg VA Medical Center
(304) 263-0811

VA Maryland Healthcare System
1-800-865-2441

Washington DC VA Medical Center
(202) 745-8000

VA Volunteers—Caring Enough to Make a Difference

The Department of Veterans Affairs Voluntary Service (VAVS) program has provided more than 52 years of service to America's hospitalized veterans in VA healthcare facilities across the country.

Throughout the VA Capitol Healthcare Network, over 4,260 dedicated volunteers contribute more than 282,220 hours of service a year to support the provision of quality healthcare to our nation's veterans. These volunteers, along with numerous veteran service organizations, community groups and local businesses, contribute more than $604,380 in gifts and donations a year for the benefit of veterans.

During National Volunteer Week (April 9–15), the VA Capitol Healthcare Network recognized the selfless contributions of VAVS volunteers. "These community volunteers are a true part of the VA healthcare team, supplementing healthcare with personal services that help put the heart into VA care," said Dr. James J. Nocks, Network Director.

During National Volunteer Week, the healthcare network promoted the VAVS program and the benefits of becoming a VA volunteer. As a volunteer with the VA Capitol Healthcare Network, you can experience the gift of fellowship with others and the reward of giving of yourself. VAVS volunteer assignments include reading to or writing for patients, conducting recreational activities and escorting patients from one part of the medical center to another. For more information about becoming a VAVS volunteer or to receive a volunteer application in the mail, please contact the Office of Voluntary Service at any of the following locations:

- **Baltimore VA Medical Center**
  (410) 605-7100
- **Fort Howard VA Medical Center**
  (410) 477-7017
- **Martinsburg VA Medical Center**
  (304) 263-0811, ext. 3309
- **Perry Point VA Medical Center**
  (410) 642-1038
- **Washington DC VA Medical Center**
  (202) 745-8320

Your guide to warm-weather fun—and safety

VA Capitol Healthcare Network VISN 5

Ah—the promise of summer: sunny days and lazy evenings, barbecues and picnics, getaways and good times. To make sure those times are really good, heed these summer safety tips.

Travel smart

Before you hit the road, check this list:

- I've packed a first-aid kit that contains travel-size packages of my usual over-the-counter pain reliever, cold and stomach medicine and any other nonprescription drugs I am likely to need; adhesive bandages; antibacterial ointment; and an aloe-based lotion.
- I have packed any prescription medication I take regularly, including a few extra doses in case I am waylaid. I have also asked my doctor for a copy of my regular prescriptions.
- I have checked medication labels for warnings that might affect outdoor activities. (The sun and some medications don't mix.)
- I've packed an extra pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses as well as my lens prescription.
- I've asked my VA healthcare provider for the name of a VA provider I can visit at my vacation destination.

And while you're on the road, make sure you take a five-minute break every hour to stretch your legs and prevent highway fatigue. If you know you'll be driving through desolate territory, keep a cooler with provisions in your trunk as well as basic safety equipment, such as flares, a spare tire and a jack. Finally, make sure you and your passengers are safely buckled up!

Be sun wise

Did you know that skin cancer is directly related to sun exposure? Your best defense is to avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. If that puts a crimp in your outdoor plans, put your second best defense into action: Apply plenty of sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15; keep your head and body covered in light, loose layers; and wear a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.

If you get a sunburn anyway, apply aloe vera gel right away and take acetaminophen to ease minor discomfort. Cool showers, baths or compresses can soothe the burn and prevent it from worsening. Call your VA healthcare provider if your skin blisters or if you develop chills, fever or nausea.

Avoid lyme disease

If you're planning a hike, find out if the wooded area you'll be traveling to is Lyme disease country. Deer ticks carrying the virus hang out on plants and leaves close to the ground, so it's easy to pick one up without realizing it. To avoid doing that, wear long-sleeved shirts and tuck pants legs into knee socks. If you develop a red bull's-eye rash after an outing in a wooded area or develop flu-like symptoms, see your doctor immediately. A course of antibiotics within the first 72 hours will stop the progression of Lyme disease, but left untreated it can cause heart, joint or nervous-system problems.

Take the sting out

If you're stung by a bee, wasp or hornet, remove the stinger and venom sac by scraping it with your fingernail or a credit card. Do not squeeze and pull or you'll release more venom. Wash the site with soap and water and apply an ice pack to stop the swelling. Be alert for signs of allergic reaction, such as wheezing, labored breathing, nausea or vomiting. Go to an emergency room if any of these symptoms develop. (If you are allergic to bees, ask your VA healthcare provider about prescribing an emergency kit and keep it handy when you're outdoors.) To avoid getting stung in the first place, wear white or khaki-colored long-sleeved shirts and long pants, avoid scented products and shiny jewelry and never swat a stinging insect.

quality . compassion . service . teamwork . education . research . support . single system .

VISN 5 Important Telephone Numbers

Baltimore Medical Center
1-800-463-6295

Fort Howard Medical Center
1-800-351-8387

Perry Point Medical Center
1-800-949-1003

VAMHCS Telephone Care Line
1-800-865-2441

Automated Prescription Refill and Clinic Appointment System
1-800-463-6295, ext. 7395

Martinsburg VAMC

Medical Center
(304) 263-0811

Medical Advice Line
1-800-817-3807 or
(304) 262-4855

New Patient Evaluation
(304) 263-0811, ext. 3758

Washington DC VAMC

General Information
(202) 745-8000

Medical Line
(202) 745-8247

VETS Information
(202) 745-4046

Mobile Clinic Numbers

VA Maryland Healthcare System
1-800-351-8387, ext. 2281

Martinsburg VAMC
1-800-817-3807, ext. 3758

Washington DC VAMC
(202) 745-8247

Outpatient Clinics

Cambridge, MD
(410) 228-6243

Charlotte Hall, MD
(301) 884-7102

Cumberland, MD
(301) 724-0061

Glen Burnie, MD
(410) 590-4140

Hagerstown, MD
(301) 665-1462

Loch Raven, MD
(410) 605-7650

Pocomoke City, MD
1-800-949-1003, ext. 5016

Alexandria, VA
(703) 719-6797

Harrisburg, VA
(540) 298-4666

Stephens City, VA
(540) 869-0600

Franklin, WV
(304) 358-2355

Petersburg, WV
(304) 257-1026

Washington, DC
(202) 745-8685

Baltimore, Maryland

Fort Howard, Maryland

Martinsburg, West Virginia

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