



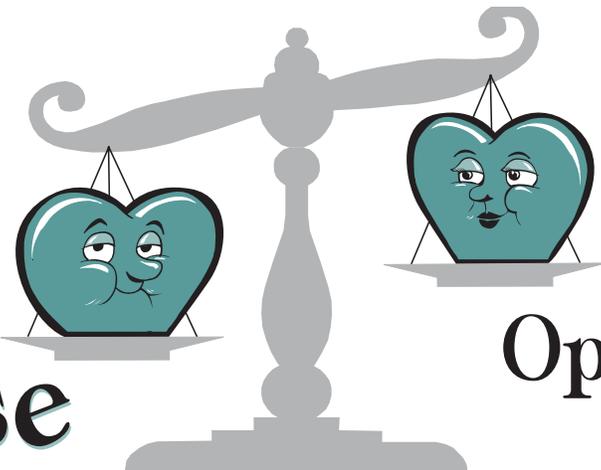
Great Lakes VA HEALTHVIEWS

The Newsletter about Health for Veterans in VISN 12



Volume 3, Issue 4

Winter 2005



Heart Disease

An Equal Opportunity Problem

Most people think of heart disease as something that affects men. It may surprise you to know it is the number one killer of American women. More women die of heart disease than from stroke, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and breast cancer combined.

Why does heart disease kill so many women? One reason may be that women do not take their warning signs or risks of heart disease seriously. Like many people, women fail to understand the risk factors that increase their chance of developing serious heart disease.

What Are the Risk Factors?

You have a greater chance of developing heart disease if you:

- ♥ Have a close family member (mother, father, brother, sister)

with a personal history or a family history of cardiovascular disease.

- ♥ Are over age 50.
- ♥ Have a body mass index (BMI) over 29.
- ♥ Have high lipid or cholesterol levels (hyperlipidemia).
- ♥ Have high blood pressure (hypertension).
- ♥ Have diabetes.
- ♥ Had a hysterectomy or are post menopausal.
- ♥ Smoke or are exposed to second-hand smoke.
- ♥ Don't exercise regularly (especially aerobic exercise).

The more of these risk factors you have, the greater your chance of having a heart attack.

(continued on page 2)

Warning Signs of Heart Attack for Women

Women may also delay getting help because they do not realize they are having a heart attack. There was a recent medical study of 515 women who had a heart attack. The study looked at the symptoms these women remembered having before the attack.

78% of the women reported having at least one of these warning signs daily or weekly for more than a month before the attack:

- ♥ Unusual fatigue (severe).
- ♥ Sleep disturbance (severe).
- ♥ Shortness of breath.
- ♥ Indigestion.
- ♥ Anxiety.
- ♥ Weakness (general and/or felt as heavy arms).
- ♥ Cold sweat.
- ♥ Dizziness.
- ♥ Back discomfort.
- ♥ Discomfort high in the chest; usually felt as a pressure, ache, or tightness.
- ♥ Discomfort in neck, throat, between shoulder blades, top of shoulder, arms, occasionally in legs.

Warning signs may also include:

- ♥ Cough.
- ♥ Heart racing.
- ♥ Loss of appetite.
- ♥ Nausea/vomiting.

- ♥ Tingling in arms/hands.
- ♥ Numbness/burning in arms/hands.
- ♥ Increased frequency or intensity of headaches.

It is important to realize that none of these women reported noticing chest pain as their first sign that something was wrong.

What Should You Do If You Think You Are Having a Heart Attack?

If you are having any of these warning signs or you think you are having a heart attack, call 911! The emergency room staff will do the tests you need to find out if you are having a heart attack. Don't drive yourself to the hospital. That can be dangerous for both you and the other people on the road.

Don't delay because you are afraid of causing a scene or finding out it was a false alarm. It is best to get to a hospital within an hour after the first heart attack symptom. The longer you wait the greater your chance of dying of a heart attack.

How to Reduce Your Chance of Having a Heart Attack

- ♥ Stop smoking.
- ♥ Exercise – at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity 5 to 7 days a week.

- ♥ Eat a heart-healthy diet.
- ♥ Aim for a healthy weight.
- ♥ Treat depression.
- ♥ Find out if you have diabetes.
- ♥ Have your blood pressure checked.
- ♥ Have your blood cholesterol checked.

to view the “Time is Life” video which is also available at your local VA hospital.

The American Heart Association (AHA) is also a great resource for information about how to prevent heart disease and lower your risk. Visit the AHA website at: www.americanheart.org.

For More Information

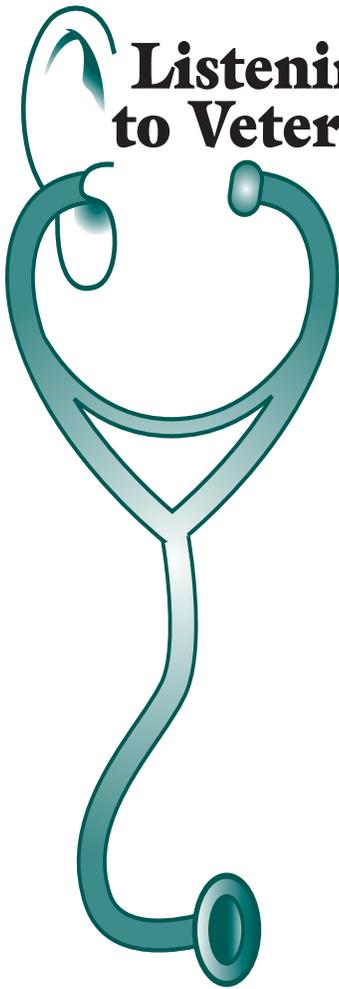
The VA has information available to help you recognize the warning signs of a heart attack. “Time is Life” education packets are available in your primary care clinic or local VA hospital library. You may also want

Beth Hammer, MSN, APRN-BC
Nurse Practitioner, Cardiology
Zablocki VA Medical Center

Heart Attack Survival Plan

Complete a small card like this and keep it handy (available from your VA provider).

<p>Heart Attack Survival Plan Information for ambulance and hospital staff: My medicines & specific instructions from my provider:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Medicines I'm allergic to: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>VA provider phone number during office hours: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Phone number after office hours: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Person to contact if I go to the hospital:</p> <p>Name: _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Home Phone: _____</p> <p>Work Phone: _____</p> <p>Cell Phone: _____</p>	 <p>MEN & WOMEN VETERANS</p> <p><i>Complete this card and keep it handy. It can help save your life or the life of someone you care about.</i></p>
	IB 10-173 P95965	



How Much Exercise Do I Really Need to Do?

Lack of exercise is a major cause of developing heart disease. Most people in the U.S. don't get the recommended amount of exercise each day. Doing as little as 30 minutes of moderate activity most days of the week is a great way to reduce your chance of heart disease.

Exercise can help protect your heart by:

- Lowering blood pressure.
- Increasing good cholesterol.
- Reducing bad cholesterol.
- Promoting weight loss.
- Improving sleep quality.
- Reducing stress.
- Increasing muscular strength and stamina.
- Improving your feeling of well-being.

Answered by:
Nancy Wilke
Occupational
Therapist
Milwaukee VAMC

Source:
AHA website at:
www.americanheart.org

Get moving!

- Check with your Primary Care Provider before starting an exercise program.
- Warm-up for 5 minutes by stretching or slow walking.
- Start with 10 minutes of moderate exercise.
- Increase your time to 30 to 40 minutes over a 2 to 3 week period.



- Exercise at an intensity that allows you to continue to carry on a conversation (“talk test”).
- Walking, biking, swimming, and dancing are good ways to exercise.
- Choose any activity you enjoy.

Add strength training

- Weight training 2 to 3 times per week will increase your strength.
- Use 1 to 3 pound hand weights.
- Start with one set of 10 to 15 repetitions and work up to 3 sets of repetitions.
- Never hold your breath while lifting weights; breathe freely.

Safety reminders

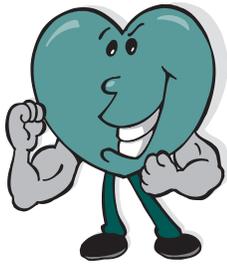
- Wait 30-60 minutes after you eat before exercising.
- Drink water before, during, and after exercise.
- Avoid exercise during extremely hot or cold weather.

- Wear comfortable shoes and clothes that breathe.
- Listen to your body; if you are dizzy, short of breath or have chest pressure, STOP.
- Tell your provider if you have any unusual symptoms when exercising.
- Cool down for 5 minutes after exercise to slow your heart rate and avoid muscle strain.

Keep moving!

- Exercise with a partner to increase enjoyment and keep you motivated.
- Do different activities to avoid boredom.
- Don't compare yourself to others; only compete with yourself.
- Reward yourself for your progress.





Heart Healthy Eating

Healthy eating habits can help you reduce three of the major risk factors for heart attack – high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, and excess body weight. They will also help reduce your risk of stroke, because heart disease and high blood pressure are major risk factors for stroke.

The American Heart Association Eating Plan for Healthy Americans recommends:

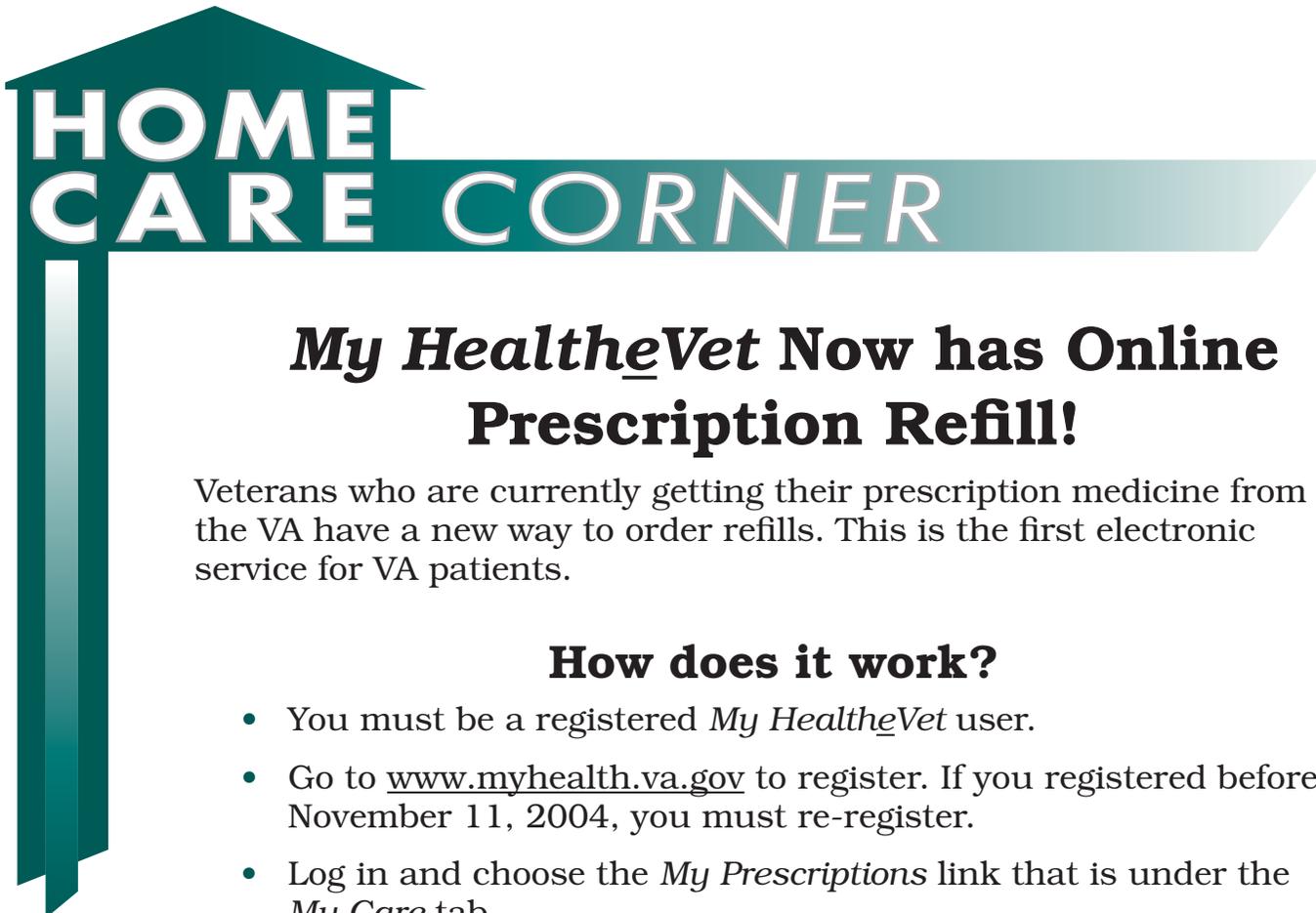
- Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables. Choose 5 or more servings per day.
- Eat a variety of grain products, including whole grains. Choose 6 or more servings per day.
- Choose fat-free or low-fat milk products.
- Eat fish, legumes (beans), skinless poultry, and lean meats.
- Choose fats and oils with 2 grams or less saturated fat per tablespoon. Use liquid and tub margarines, canola oil, and olive oil.
- Limit your intake of foods high in calories or low in nutrition. For example, limit soft drinks and candy that have a lot of sugar.
- Eat fewer foods high in saturated fat, trans fat and/or cholesterol. For example, avoid full-fat milk products, fatty

meats, tropical oils, partially hydrogenated vegetable oils, and egg yolks.

- Eat less than 6 grams of salt (sodium chloride) per day (2,400 milligrams of sodium).
- Have no more than one alcoholic drink per day if you are a woman. Men should have no more than two drinks per day. “One drink” means it has no more than 1/2 ounce of pure alcohol. Examples of one drink are 12 oz. of beer, 4 oz. of wine, 1-1/2 oz. of 80-proof spirits or 1 oz. of 100-proof spirits.
- Balance the number of calories you eat with the number you use each day to maintain your weight. If you need to lose weight, talk to your dietitian about the number of calories you should eat each day.
- Your physical activities should keep you fit and match the number of calories you eat. Walk or do other activities for at least 30 minutes on most days. To lose weight, do enough activity to use more calories than you eat every day.

Nancy Wilke
Occupational Therapist
Milwaukee VAMC

Source: AHA website at: www.americanheart.org



***My HealtheVet* Now has Online Prescription Refill!**

Veterans who are currently getting their prescription medicine from the VA have a new way to order refills. This is the first electronic service for VA patients.

How does it work?

- You must be a registered *My HealtheVet* user.
- Go to www.myhealth.va.gov to register. If you registered before November 11, 2004, you must re-register.
- Log in and choose the *My Prescriptions* link that is under the *My Care* tab.
- Choose *View Prescription History* or *Refill Prescriptions*.
- You can check the status of a refill order or see your entire prescription history online.
- Refills will be delivered in the same way as phoning in a refill request.

The screenshot shows the My HealtheVet website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for VA Facility Locator, About MHV, Contact Us, Help, FAQs, Manage My Account, and Log Out. Below this is a search bar and a "Go" button. The main navigation menu includes Home, Benefits & Services, News, Health Info, Learn About, Tools, and My Care. The user is logged in, and the "My Prescriptions" section is active, showing options for Volunteer Information, View Prescription History, and Refill Prescriptions. The "Refill Prescription Information" section displays a table of prescription refills for a user named VEHU TESTPATIENT. The table includes columns for Refill Status, Refill Submit Date, Fill Date, Prescription Number, Last Updated, Facility, and View Detail. There are four entries in the table, with the last two having checkboxes for "Active". A "Printer Friendly" link is also visible. At the bottom of the table, there are navigation options: First, Previous, View all, Next, Last, and a "Go to entries" dropdown set to "1-4" of 4. The page footer indicates it was last updated on 05/03/2005 at 1439. There are "Done" and "Submit" buttons at the very bottom.

Refill Status	Refill Submit Date	Fill Date	Prescription Number	Last Updated	Facility	View Detail
Active		05/03/2005	2663990	05/03/2005	DAYTON, OH	Q
Active		05/03/2005	2663991	05/03/2005	DAYTON, OH	Q
<input type="checkbox"/>		04/29/2005	908984	05/03/2005	ANCHORAGE, AK	Q
<input type="checkbox"/>		04/29/2005	908985	05/03/2005	ANCHORAGE, AK	Q

**Great Lakes VA
Healthviews Editorial
Committee:**

Jill Zahn
Senior Editor
Milwaukee VAMC

Deb Bates
Iron Mountain VAMC

Kathy Keckeisen
Madison VAMC

Kathleen Ford
Hines VAH

Kathy Johnson
Tomah VAMC

Alfreda Rhodes-King
North Chicago VAMC

Levi Laroco
Jesse Brown VAMC

Kim Chapman
Layout and Design
Milwaukee VAMC

Important note: We are not able to **mail** this newsletter to you. It can be found in waiting rooms of your VA Medical Center and outpatient clinics.

You can also subscribe to the electronic version of this newsletter through the VISN 12 internet site at <http://www.visn12.med.va.gov>

Click on the *Services for Veterans* button, then click on the *Veterans' Wellness* section.



Your best source for information about your health will always be your health care team. We hope this newsletter will encourage you to ask questions about your health concerns.

Phone Numbers for VISN 12 Hospitals

Hines:	708-202-8387
Iron Mountain:	906-774-3300
Madison:	608-256-1901
Milwaukee:	1-888-469-6614
North Chicago:	1-800-393-0865
Tomah:	1-800-872-8662
Jesse Brown:	312-569-8387

**“Ask An Expert” Question
or Idea for Future Articles**

Do you have an “Ask An Expert” question or an idea for a future article? Your ideas can be e-mailed or mailed to the Senior Editor.

E-mail address:

SrEditorGreatLakesVAHealthviews@med.va.gov

Mailing address:

Jill Zahn
Milwaukee VA Medical Center Library
5000 W. National Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53295

VISN 12 VA Healthcare facilities are accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO). JCAHO evaluates healthcare facilities on quality, safety of patient care and safety of the environment

If you have any concerns about patient care or safety in your facility, first contact the person in charge. If your concern cannot be resolved, the VA encourages you to contact JCAHO. You may request a “public information interview.” Requests should be made in writing to:

Division of Accreditation Operations
Office of Quality Monitoring
Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations
One Renaissance Boulevard
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181