



Great Lakes VA HEALTHVIEWS

The Newsletter about Health for Veterans in VISN 12



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After-the- HOLIDAY Blues

The holidays are usually a time of celebration, joy and good cheer. They are a time for gathering with family, loved ones and friends. However, it can also be a time that you find yourself feeling sad, lonely, or even anxious.

The holiday blues can happen during any holiday or vacation time. If you feel sad, depressed, lazy, or bored during and after the winter holiday months, you may have the holiday blues.

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What Causes the Holiday Blues?

The holiday blues can be serious. According to the National Mental Health Association, holiday blues and depression can happen when you:

- ▶ Expect too much from the holidays.
- ▶ Have money troubles.
- ▶ Are not able to be with your family and friends.
- ▶ Have lost loved ones due to death or divorce.
- ▶ Are doing too much shopping, cooking, or cleaning and are stressed or tired.

What Can I Do to Beat the Holiday Blues?

While there are some things that are beyond our control, there are things we can do to keep holiday stress in check. Next year, keep your expectations for the holiday season controllable. Don't try to make it "the best ever."

- ▶ Set realistic goals and expectations. Understand the holiday season can't cure all past problems.
- ▶ Have a budget and stick to it! Don't forget to add the cost of all those special holiday foods that you plan to prepare.
- ▶ Enjoy holiday activities that are free such as driving around to look at decorations or going window-shopping without buying anything.
- ▶ Don't drink too much alcohol. Drinking will only make you tired and depressed.

- ▶ Spend time with people who support and care about you. Make new friends if you are alone during special times.
- ▶ Do not feel you have to be festive. Accept your inner experience and do not force specific feelings. If you just went through a sad time such as a death, or romantic break-up, tell people about your needs.
- ▶ Know that life brings change. The holidays don't have to be like they were in the "good old days" to enjoy them. Start some new family traditions. Celebrate the holidays in a way you have not done before.
- ▶ Find time for yourself! Don't spend all your time in activities with your family and friends. Make a list and prioritize the most important activities. Be true about what you can and cannot do. Pace yourself. Organize your time.
- ▶ Express your feelings to those around you honestly and openly. If you need to confront someone with a problem, begin your sentences with "I feel."

The holiday blues can be serious. So is Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD), a mood disorder that also usually occurs during the winter months. Don't take chances with your health. If these tips don't help your mood, contact your provider or a mental health professional.

Submitted by:
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Medical Equipment Announcement

ICD Alert

Do you have an ICD (Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator)? If so, this is important information you need to know.

In October 2007, Medtronic, Inc issued an alert for people who have an ICD. This alert is only for ICD's with a Medtronic Sprint Fidelis defibrillation lead (Models 6930, 6931, 6948, 6949).

Medtronic, Inc has found that there is a small chance of fractures in certain locations on the Sprint Fidelis lead. There is no problem with the ICD itself.

An expert panel of doctors has recommended that we do not remove the Sprint Fidelis leads, except in very rare instances. However, we are re-programming the ICD's to reduce any potential problems.

If you have this kind of lead, you should have received a notice from both Medtronic, Inc and the VA clinic that checks your ICD. If you have questions about whether you have this affected lead, talk to someone in your ICD clinic.

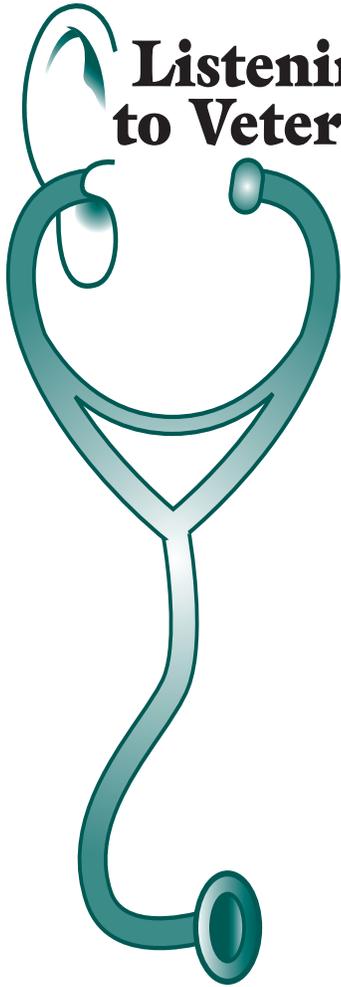
Remember...

HELP A FELLOW VET

Always **CALL** to
cancel or
reschedule



**if you can't keep
your appointment!**



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Sources:

American Diabetes Association
American Association of Diabetes
Educators

I have diabetes. Is there anything special I should do when I get sick?

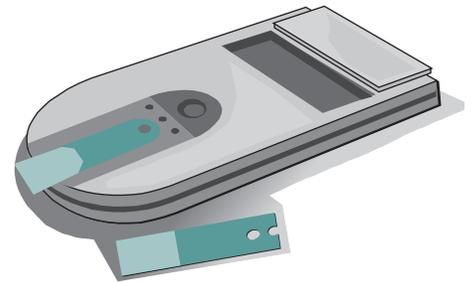
People with diabetes can get a cold, flu or minor illness just like everyone else. When you are sick, your blood glucose levels may go too high. You need to take extra care to be sure your blood glucose levels stay in your target range.

Plan Ahead

Ask for special instructions to follow when you are sick, BEFORE it happens. Your diabetes educator or healthcare provider should help you create a personal “Sick Day Plan.”

What Should I Do When I am Sick?

- Check your blood glucose at least every 2 to 4 hours and keep a record of the results.
- Check your temperature at the same time and record it too.
- If you have a fever, drink plenty of sugar-free or low-carb liquids.
- Have a friend or family check on you several times a day.
- If your family or friends notice that you are acting confused, they should call the Nurse Advice line or telephone triage line at your clinic or medical center.



Call the Nurse Triage Line or Your Healthcare Provider if You:

- Are sick for more than 1 to 2 days.
- Have a fever higher than 100.5 F or your temperature has been rising for more than 24 hours.

- Have been vomiting for more than 12 hours.
- Have been unable to eat or drink for more than 4 to 5 hours.
- Have had diarrhea for more than 6 hours.
- Have stomach pain, chest pain, or difficulty breathing.
- Feel sleepy or confused and can't think clearly.

When you call, have your records handy so you can report your blood glucose levels, medicines and temperature. If you are unable to reach the telephone triage nurses or your health care provider, go to the nearest Emergency Room. Call 911 if you are alone and aren't able to care for yourself.

What Should I Eat?

It is important to eat the same amount of carbohydrates that you usually eat.

- If you have a sore throat and it hurts to swallow, try eating soft foods.
- If you are sick to your stomach, have diarrhea or are vomiting, drink more liquids. Avoid high sugar drinks.
- Space your liquids out over the whole day. Taking a few sips every 15 minutes can help you keep the liquids down. Try taking sips during every TV commercial.

What About My Medicine?

An illness can cause your blood glucose level to go up. It is important to test your blood glucose and take your usual diabetes medicine even if you don't feel like eating.

- **Do not skip your insulin.** Call your healthcare provider and ask if you should change any of your medicines.
- Don't take over-the-counter medicines unless your healthcare provider tells you to. They may have alcohol, added sugars or other ingredients that can affect your blood glucose. They may also interact with your prescription medicine and increase your blood pressure.

What About After I Feel Better?

You still need to check your blood glucose more often than usual until you are back to your regular pattern.

You may want to keep eating soft and liquid carbohydrates until your appetite is back to normal. Start by having clear liquids. These are liquids you can see through. Ginger ale, 7-up, broth, tea, Jell-O, apple juice, and popsicles are examples of clear liquids.

Once you can keep these down, move on to full liquids. Orange juice, tomato juice, ice cream, sherbet, soup and milk are examples of full liquids. If you keep these down, you can try soft foods such as oatmeal, toast, bananas, applesauce, rice, noodles, crackers or toast.

Remember, getting a flu shot each year can help keep you from getting sick!

If you have more questions, be sure to talk to your diabetes educator, doctor, nurse or dietitian.

Care And Encouragement For A Person Who Has Lost A Limb To Amputation

There are more than 3 million amputees in the United States. There are also about 75 million amputees around the world.

- Diabetes is the number one cause of limb loss.
- Trauma is the second leading cause of limb loss.
- Cancer is the third leading cause of limb loss.

Losing a limb or amputation can be very hard on you, your family members and friends. It can affect you physically, socially, emotionally and spiritually and can lead to depression. The loss of a limb can result in less activity. This can increase the risk of other health problems due to an inactive lifestyle.

“Body image” refers to your feelings about your body and how it looks. Losing a limb can affect your body image. You may feel sad about the sudden changes in your body. You may find your self-esteem and self-worth goes downhill. Simple things like walking or getting dressed can be hard for you. You may feel you are a drain on your loved ones and friends.



There are five stages of grieving that people commonly go through after a serious loss, such as losing a limb:

- 1) Denial and isolation
- 2) Anger
- 3) Bargaining
- 4) Depression
- 5) Acceptance and hope



The amount of time it takes to go through these stages is different for each person. Many pass through each phase quickly, while others are stuck in one phase or go through some phases but not others. Stages can also occur in a different order.

Your age, the type of limb lost, and the reason for loss can affect the way you deal with the loss. For example, people who lose their limb unexpectedly, such as an accident, may be in the denial stage a long time. However, a person whose

amputation was due to a long-term disease may not be in denial very long. A person in the denial stage refuses to accept the situation. A person in denial is also less likely to seek the help they need to move towards the final stage of acceptance and hope.

How to help with the healing process:

- Remember, when you lose a limb, you lose a part of your physical self. Grieving is both normal and expected.
- It is OK to express grief over a loss.
- Talk to your local VA Medical Center about receiving proper rehabilitation care (exercise and counseling).
- Remember, acceptance and hope is a two-way street. Work with your caregiver, family and loved ones to help get you to the final stage.

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Sources:
Parkes, CM. Factors determining the persistence of phantom pain in the amputee. *J Psychosomatic Res.* 1973; 17:97-108.

FAQ's from Amputee Coalition of America website. http://www.amputee-coalition.org/nllic_faq.html
Journal Behavioral Medicine Fall 1999

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You can also subscribe to the electronic version of this newsletter by going to www.visn12.med.va.gov/subscribe.htm

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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.

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***“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.

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