



Great Lakes VA HEALTHVIEWS

The Newsletter about Health for Veterans in VISN 12



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Parenting Tips... for returning veterans with physical or emotional injuries

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Being a parent is a tough job. Most parents have feelings of fear and doubt about their parenting skills. If you are a returning veteran with a physical or emotional injury, you may find it is a challenge to rejoin and reconnect with your family. If you now have a disability, you may have even more fear and doubt because you feel you have changed. New obstacles and special needs can make you feel scared, angry or overwhelmed. Your life as a parent will be different than it was before your injury.

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Can I still be a good parent?

Of course! You are not alone! There are nearly 9 million parents with disabilities in the U.S. You can learn to adapt to your child's needs and your child can learn to adapt to yours. The most important things a parent can do for their children are still possible, even with a disability.

- Listen to you child.
- Love your child.
- Keep your child safe.
- Set consistent schedules and rules.
- Spend time with your child.

Your child will grow up healthy and strong!

How do I explain my injury to my child?

Your child may react to your disability in many ways. Very young children will probably accept your disability. A young teen may feel ashamed, angry or guilty. It is important to keep the lines of communication open with your child. Talk openly about their feelings and your feelings. Explain things at a level your child can understand.

Tips for different age children:

Preschool children

- Name and describe the injury in a way they can understand.
- Use simple drawings, dolls or stuffed animals to explain the injury.

- Answer questions with short explanations.

School age children

- Name and describe the injury in a way they can understand.
- Assure them their needs will be met.
- Enjoy helping you around the house with small jobs. Be careful not to give them too much to do. Remember, they still need to be the child not the parent.

Teenagers

- Give more detailed information.
- May need someone outside the home they can talk to.
- Realize they need to begin separating from parents and spend more time with friends.
- May resent the attention you are getting. Try to give them extra attention and praise.

Talking with your child about the differences in people is important. All people do not look or act the same. Discussing these differences with your child has a positive side. Your child will develop important qualities such as compassion and having an open mind.



The VA has programs for both men and women to help you be a successful parent. The VA staff is specially trained to assist veterans with injuries such as amputations, blindness, spinal cord injuries, traumatic brain injuries and posttraumatic stress disorder. Each VA also has a Women Veterans Program Manager to help returning women understand and use VA benefits and health care programs.

Here are some of the services we offer:

Mental Health Services

Emotional support is very important. Peer support, support groups and counseling are available. You may need help in rebuilding your confidence. Help is also available for issues such as anxiety, depression, anger and substance abuse. You can get the support you need so you can care for your child.

Occupational Therapy

Occupational therapy helps you develop the skills you need to live

your daily life and care for your child. An occupational therapist may show you a different way to lift or carry your child, comb hair, bathe, feed or dress your child.

Physical Therapy

Parenting can be hard physical work. Physical therapy will help improve your strength.

Assistive devices

The VA can help you get and learn how to use many devices to help you adapt to your changing needs. Some examples are specialized wheelchairs, computer screens and prosthetics.

References:

North Carolina Office on Disability and Health, Parenting with a Disability, retrieved 10/15/07 from <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncodh/orchid/pages/parenting.cfm>

Villanova University School of Nursing, Parenting with a Disability, Retrieved 10/15/07 from <http://nurseweb.villanova.edu/womenwithdisabilities//Parenting/coverpage.html>

Through the Looking Glass, Parents with Disabilities, retrieved 10/15/07 from <http://lookingglass.org/index.php>

American Academy of Family Physicians, Parenting Tips. Retrieved 9/20/07 from <http://familydoctor.org/online/famdocen/home/children/parents/behavior/368.html>

Image from <http://www.womenshealth.gov/wwd/parents.cfm?style=module>

RESOURCES for you

National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov?ncmain/index.jsp>
Phone: 802-296-6300

Parenting with a Disability

<http://nurseweb.villanova.edu/womenwithdisabilities//Parenting/coverpage.html>

Parents with Disabilities Online

<http://www.disabledparents.net/adaptive.html>

Through the Looking Glass

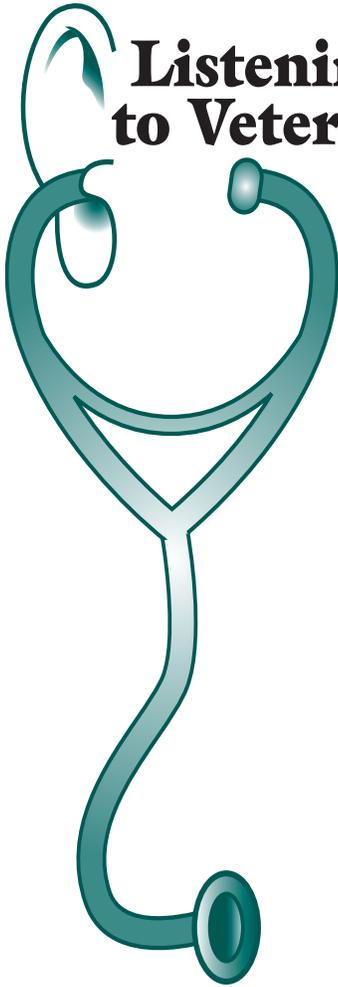
<http://lookingglass.org/index.php>
Phone: 1-800-644-2666 (voice)

United States Department of Veterans Affairs, Seamless Transition Home

<http://www.seamlesstransition.va.gov/>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Women's Health

<http://www.womenshealth.gov/wwd/parents.cfm?style=module>
Phone: 1-800-994-9662



Why is Vitamin D Important?

Vitamin D has been getting its chance in the sun lately. Many studies have come out in the past few years that prove its helpful effects. Vitamin D is not only key for keeping our bones strong, but it may also help prevent some types of cancer, such as breast, prostate, and colon. Research also shows that vitamin D may help prevent autoimmune diseases, such as multiple sclerosis and type 1 diabetes. Despite all of this good news about vitamin D, most people are still not getting enough.



Answered by:

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Sources:

Hendley J. Shining Light on
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2007. p. 46-51.

<http://dietary-supplements.info.nih.gov/factsheets/vitamind.asp>

How can I get more vitamin D?

We get vitamin D from two main sources: the sun and the food we eat. When the sun hits our skin, it can make all the vitamin D our body needs! Experts advise 5 to 15 minutes of sun without sunscreen, a few days out of the week. This is not very long and should not raise skin cancer risk.

Unfortunately, many of us live in places where the sun is not strong enough during the winter for our skin to make enough vitamin D. Also, as we age, our skin does not make vitamin D as well as it did when we were young, so eating foods with vitamin D is vital.

What foods have vitamin D?

Liver, egg yolks and fatty fish, such as salmon, tuna, and sardines, all have vitamin D. Many foods now have vitamin D added to them, including milk, some orange juices and cereals. You can find this out by reading the label.

How much vitamin D do I need?

Adults under age 50 should get 200 international units (IU) of vitamin D each day. Adults who are 50 to 70 years old should get 400 IU of vitamin D per day. Adults over age 70 should get 600 IU daily.



How can I get enough vitamin D in my diet?

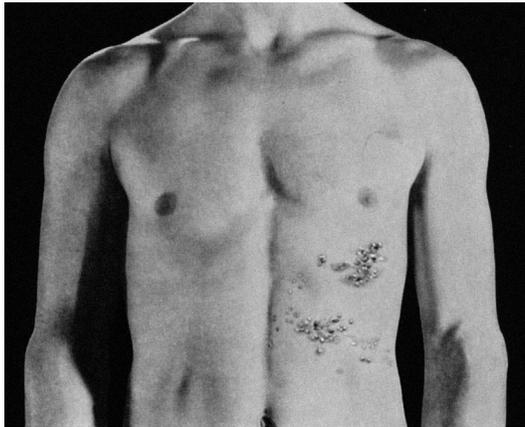
Look over this list of vitamin D rich foods and choose the foods you would like to add to your diet.

Natural Sources		Fortified Foods	
3.5 oz cooked salmon	360 IU	Cow's milk	100 IU
1.75 oz sardines	250 IU	8 oz orange juice	100 IU
3 oz tuna	200 IU	3/4 to 1 cup fortified cereal	40 IU
Egg yolk, large	20 IU		
3.5 oz beef liver	15 IU		

For example, 3.5 ounces of salmon, a cup of cereal with one cup of milk, and a glass of orange juice will meet your daily vitamin D needs if you are over 70. In other words, eat your fish, drink your milk, and take a walk in the sun for better health!

A New Vaccine to Prevent Shingles

In May 2006, a new vaccine was approved by the FDA to protect against shingles. Zostavax® is the brand name of the shingles vaccine. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend this vaccine for adults age 60 or older.



What is Shingles?

Shingles is a painful rash with many blisters. It is usually located in one area but it may spread. Pain is a common symptom and may be severe. The rash usually lasts from 2 to 4 weeks and may cause scarring and other long-term effects. In some people severe pain continues even after the rash has cleared up. You are more likely to

get shingles if you are 60 or older or have a weak immune system.

Shingles is caused by the varicella zoster virus. This is the same virus that causes chicken pox. If you have had chicken pox or the chicken pox vaccine, you will always have the virus in your body. The virus can become active later in your life and cause shingles.

Is shingles contagious?

You cannot catch shingles from another person or give shingles to someone else. However, a person that has never had chicken pox or the chicken pox vaccine can catch chicken pox from you! The virus can be spread by touching the shingles rash while it



is in the blister stage. Once the rash has dried into a crust you are no longer contagious. The virus is not spread by sneezing or coughing.

How does the vaccine work?

The Zostavax® vaccine prevents shingles in 60% of people. If you still develop shingles, it may be less painful and severe. It is given as one shot. It is a weakened version of the live virus and increases your body's ability to protect itself against this virus.

The shingles vaccine is safe for most people. There are possible side effects such as redness, itching and swelling at the site or headaches.

You should NOT have the vaccine if you:

- Have allergies to gelatin or neomycin.
- Are pregnant.
- Have active tuberculosis.
- Have a weak immune system. You have a weak immune system if you have HIV/AIDS, leukemia or lymphoma; are taking chemotherapy, radiation or long-term steroids; or you have had an organ transplant.



Ask your health care provider if you should get the shingles vaccine.

You can learn more about the shingles vaccine by contacting the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-232-4636 or visit their website at <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/shingles/default.htm>. You may also contact your local or state health department, or the manufacturer's website at www.zostavax.com.

Submitted by:
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2. Centers for disease control. <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/pubs/vis/downloads/vis-shingles.pdf>. Accessed on 10/18/07.
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4. Zostavax® [Zoster Vaccine Live (Oka/Merck)]. Whitehouse Station, NJ: Merck & Co., Inc.; 2007. Available at http://www.merck.com/product/usa/pi_circulars/z/zostavax/zostavax_ppi.html.

Torso image accessed 10/18/07 from <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/shingles/photos.htm>.

Centers for disease control. Permission not required for public domain images.

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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.

Phone Numbers for VISN 12 Hospitals

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North Chicago:	1-800-393-0865
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or Idea for Future Articles**

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