



Great Lakes VA HEALTHVIEWS

The Newsletter about Health for Veterans in VISN 12



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What is Mental Health “Recovery”?

Recovery is a personal journey of growth, health, and healing. It encourages a person with a mental health diagnosis to live a meaningful life in the community of his/her choice. Basically, recovery is about living well. It is about moving beyond the label of the illness. It is about defining for yourself who you are, rather than accepting how others have defined you. It is about creating a satisfying life of your own choosing. Instead of asking, “What is wrong with you,” recovery focuses on **“What is right with you?”**



Do people really recover?

Absolutely! Mental illness does not have to lead to a lifetime of disability. While some individuals become free of symptoms, others learn new ways of living in and adjusting to their world. No matter what your life circumstances, there is always a reason to be hopeful.

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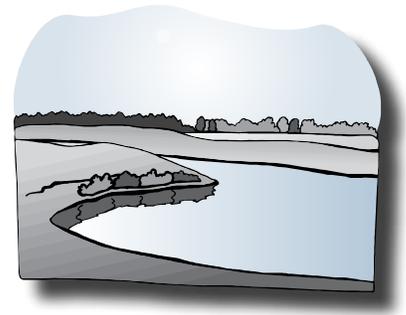
What promotes recovery?

There are many things that can play a part in recovery and wellness. One is a sense of empowerment and control over one's life. In addition, having a sense of personal responsibility and purpose is important. Others include:

Community	Faith/Spirituality	Nature	Vitamins
Eating well	Feeling Valued	Peer Support	Volunteering
Education	Friendships	Pets	
Employment	Medicines	Relaxation	
Exercise	Music	Therapy	

What is involved with the recovery process?

- Treatment focuses upon wellness, health, and hope.
- Health care decisions are based on a partnership between you and your provider.
- Recovery goals and choices reflect your strengths and abilities.
- Access to peers and other Veterans helps you understand the recovery process.
- Care is custom-made to fit your own individual needs and circumstances.



What works for one person may not work for another. Recovery depends on your unique needs, desires, and ideas about life and wellness. It is an ongoing process with ups and downs as you move toward enjoying a more meaningful life. Recovery begins when you gain awareness that positive change is possible.

The Veterans Health Administration is making exciting changes in the delivery of mental health care.

Each VA medical center has a Local Recovery Coordinator who promotes and coordinates recovery services. In VISN 12, contact the following staff for information related to mental health recovery:

VISN 12 Local Recovery Coordinators	
Hines	Mary MacMartin
Iron Mountain	TBA
Jesse Brown	Bruce Kawasawa
Madison	Elizabeth Lucht
Milwaukee	Michael McBride
North Chicago	Shirley Hoffman
Tomah	Debra Day

Submitted by:
 Shirley A. Hoffman, MSW, LCSW
 Local Recovery Coordinator
 North Chicago VAMC

H1N1 (Swine) Flu and You

What are the symptoms of Swine Flu?

The symptoms are the same as the seasonal flu we have every winter:

- ✓ Fever (over 101° F)
- ✓ Cough and runny nose
- ✓ Sore throat
- ✓ Body and muscle aches
- ✓ Headache
- ✓ Tiredness and weakness
- ✓ Some people also get loose stools (diarrhea) and vomiting.

How does Swine Flu spread?

You can not get Swine Flu from eating pork! It spreads from person to person when someone who has it coughs or sneezes. You may also get the flu if you touch something with flu virus on it and then touch your own mouth or nose before you wash your hands.

A person with flu can infect others:

- ✓ ONE day before symptoms start and
- ✓ Up to 7 or more days after getting sick.

That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else:

- ✓ Before you know you are sick and
- ✓ While you are sick.

If you get sick with the flu, the CDC recommends that you stay home from work or school and limit contact with others to keep from infecting them.

What should YOU do to keep from getting the flu?

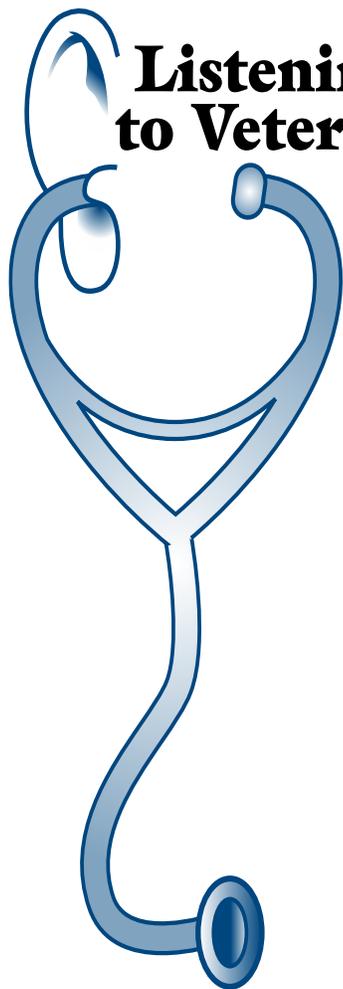
- ✓ WASH your hands often.
- ✓ Try to stay in good general health and wash your hands often.
- ✓ Get plenty of sleep and wash your hands often.
- ✓ Be physically active and wash your hands often.
- ✓ Manage your stress and wash your hands often.
- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids, eat nutritious food and wash your hands often.
- ✓ Do not touch surfaces that may be contaminated with the flu virus (and wash your hands if you do).
- ✓ Avoid close contact with people who are sick and (YES) wash your hands often.

What should I do if I get sick?

Contact your healthcare provider. Antiviral drugs can make your illness milder and make you feel better faster. Antiviral drugs work best if you start taking them soon after you get sick (within 2 days of symptoms).

Stay home and avoid contact with other people so you do not spread your illness to others. Remind family members to wash their hands too.

For more information, check the CDC webpage at <http://www.cdc.gov>



Is it True That Women Should Worry About Heart Attacks as Much as Men Do?

It may surprise you to find out that heart disease is the number one cause of death in women. In fact, one of every three women has some form of heart and blood vessel disease. Heart disease kills nearly twice as many women as all forms of cancer put together.

Chest pain or discomfort is the most common symptom of a heart attack. It may not be severe pain; it may just be a discomfort. The pain is usually in the center of the chest and either lasts several minutes or it may come and go.

But sometimes, the signs of a heart attack may be different for women than for men. Women don't always have chest pain. Women may describe the pain of a heart attack as a feeling of "tightness," "heaviness" or "ache." The pain may be located between the shoulder blades, in the back, or in the jaw. Other signs of heart attack in women include trouble breathing, breaking out in a "cold sweat," feeling sick to the stomach, unusual feelings of nervousness, or fatigue.

If you feel the signs of heart attack, do not delay. Do not wait for more than a few minutes before deciding to call 9-1-1.

Fortunately, it is never too late to reduce your risk for heart disease. If you start making changes toward a healthier lifestyle, you can live a longer and stronger life.

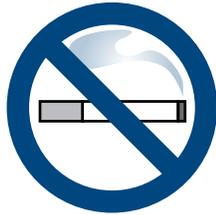
Submitted by:
Kathy Dong
North Chicago VAMC

Increase Physical

Activity: Your heart is a muscle and needs a workout! Take part in at least 30 minutes of moderate physical activity, such as brisk walking, on most days of the week.



Quit Smoking: The most preventable risk factor for heart disease in women is smoking. Quitting smoking will reduce your risk of heart disease at any age. Please see your provider for help in quitting smoking.



Eat Healthy: A healthy diet is one of the best weapons you have to fight heart disease. The food you eat (and the amount) can affect your cholesterol, blood pressure, and weight. Choose foods that have vitamins, minerals, and fiber but are lower in calories. The key is a diet rich in vegetables, fruits and whole-grains. In addition high-fiber foods, fish, lean protein and fat-free or low-fat dairy products are important. Don't forget about foods that are tops at protecting your heart. Have a bowl of oatmeal or oat bran. Choose olive and canola oils. Eat foods with omega 3 fatty acids such as salmon, sardines and walnuts.

Reduce Cholesterol: Fat lodged in your arteries can cause a heart attack or stroke. Reduce your intake of fatty foods, especially saturated fats and trans fats. Get screened and know your numbers!

Know Your Blood Pressure: Be aware of your blood pressure and work with your provider to make sure it is in a healthy range. Your goal is a blood pressure of less than 120/80.

Keep Your Body Weight Under

Control: A waistline of 35 inches or more increases your risk for a heart attack. Dropping just 5-10% of your weight can improve blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Eat at least three meals per day. Cut back on sugar by drinking less fruit juice and regular soda. Pay attention to your body; when you feel full, stop eating.



Limit alcohol: Drinking too much alcohol can raise blood pressure and lead to heart disease.

Reduce stress: Stress in a person's life may affect the risk factors for heart disease and stroke. For example, people under stress may overeat, start smoking, or smoke and drink alcohol more than they normally would.

Sometimes lifestyle changes are not enough, and medicine must be used to manage your heart disease. Talk to your provider or pharmacist about side effects you may have. Remember to take your medicine exactly as you were told.

Thousands of Americans took part in "Wear Red Day" on February 6th as a sign of support in the fight against heart disease in women. We want you to join the fight by talking to your provider about steps you can take. Remember, the good news is that heart disease is often preventable.

Source:

American Heart Association. www.americanheart.org
HHS website Women's Health.gov www.4woman.gov

Returning Home From the War May Not Be Easy for Female Veterans

Women have served in the military since the American Revolution. However, the difference among women serving in the current OEF/OIF war is that more women are serving with men. In the current war, the battlefield is not clearly outlined and so, for the first time, women are serving in combat zones.



Any service man or woman returning home from war may have problems returning to a normal life. However, according to one VA study, OEF/OIF female Veterans report more emotional problems than OEF/OIF male Veterans. Another VA study shows some women have a harder time returning to their civilian life than men do. In addition, a woman experiences war differently than a man does. Finally, women report a higher rate of military sexual trauma as compared to men.

Here is a list of behaviors, physical problems and feelings you may experience when returning from combat. These issues are seen in both men and women.

- Trouble concentrating
- Jumpy and easily startled
- Being on guard, always alert
- Bad dreams or flashbacks
- Work or school problems
- Feeling withdrawn, detached and disconnected
- Trouble sleeping
- Upset stomach, trouble eating

- Headaches and sweating when thinking of the war
- Lack of exercise, poor diet or health care
- Rapid heartbeat or breathing
- Too much drinking, smoking or drug use
- Other health problems becoming worse
- Feeling nervous, helpless, or fearful
- Sad, guilty, rejected or abandoned
- Easily upset or annoyed
- Experiencing shock, being numb, unable to feel happy
- Feeling hopeless about the future
- Irritable or angry
- Not trusting others, having lots of conflict

Returning home from war can be hard for Veterans and families. But there is help available through the VA. There are VA counselors trained to help any Veteran who is having a difficult time adjusting to their life after returning home from war.

Call your local VA Medical Center and ask to speak to the **Seamless Transition Coordinator** today!



References:

Katz, L.S., Bloor, L.E., Cojucar, G. and Taylor, D. (2007). Women Who Served in Iraq Seeking Mental Health Services: Relationships Between Military Sexual Trauma, Symptoms, and Readjustment. *Psychological Services* 4(4), 239-249.
 Returning From the War Zone. National Center for PTSD 2006. Accessed July 10, 2008 from <http://www.ncptsd.va.gov>

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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 by going to www.visn12.va.gov



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

***"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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