Great Lakes VA
HEALTHVIEWS
The Newsletter about Health for Veterans in VISN 12

VA Great Lakes Health Care System

Volume 7, Issue 2 Summer 2009

Do You Have Diabetes?

Know the Hypoglycemia "15-15" Rule

Hypoglycemia means low (hypo) blood sugar (glycemia). A blood sugar of **less than 70** is considered low!

Symptoms of low blood sugar

Mild	Moderate	Severe
Shakiness	Difficulty moving	Seizure
Sweating	Confusion	Coma
Fast heart beat	Unusual behavior	Combativeness
Dizziness		
Hunger		
Blurred vision		
Difficulty thinking		
Anxiety		
Headache		
Tiredness		

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Causes of low blood sugar

- Taking too much insulin or oral diabetes medicines.
- Delaying or skipping a meal or snack.
- Not eating enough carbohydrates at your meal or snack.
- Exercising harder or more than usual.
- Drinking alcohol on an empty stomach.

How to treat low blood sugar – the "15-15 Rule"

1. Test your blood sugar. If it is low (less than 70), **take 15 grams of carbohydrate**.*
   * If your blood sugar is less than 50, first take 30 grams of carbohydrate, then 15 grams if you need to repeat steps 1 to 3.

2. **Wait 15 minutes** – this is important! It takes 15 minutes to feel better, no matter how much carbohydrate you have taken. **Treat, but do not over-treat low blood sugar!**

3. **Recheck your blood sugar.** If it is still low (less than 70), or if you still have symptoms, repeat steps 1 through 3. If it remains below 70, call your VA Nurse Advice Line.

4. Once your blood sugar is above 70, be sure to eat a meal or snack within an hour.

Sources of 15 grams of carbohydrate

- 1 15-gram tube of glucose gel
- 3-4 glucose tablets
- Candy (for example: 4-5 Life Savers™, 8-10 jelly beans)
- 8 ounces (1 cup) of low-fat milk
- 4 ounces (1/2 cup) of fruit juice, **NOT** tomato or V-8™ juice
- 6 ounces (1/2 can) of regular soda (not diet)

Keep a source of **15 grams of carbohydrate** within reach at all times. Carry some in your pocket and in your car. Keep some at your bedside and any place you think you might need it.

Remember

- Always carry a quick source of sugar with you.
- Check your blood sugar before driving. Never drive when your blood sugar is low.
- If you are unable to swallow a quick source of sugar, call 911.

Source:

Hypoglycemia "15-15" Rule. Department of Veterans Affairs. 2006. http://vaww.nutrition.va.gov/clinicalNutrition/ptEd.asp#Basic-Diabetes. Accessed 7/8/2009.

My Health, My Care: 24/7 Online Access to VA

My HealtheVet is VA's award-winning health web site. This site gives Veterans access to trusted health and benefits information.

Register at www.myhealth.va.gov today. You will be able to:

- Order VA prescription refills using the prescription number.
- Look for trusted health information.
- Record your health information in the online personal health record.

In-Person Authentication

If you go though the In-Person Authentication (IPA) process, you will have even more information available to you.

- You will be able to see the **name** of your prescription when you order it online, instead of just the prescription number.
- You will have **Wellness Reminders** that alert you to important tests or procedures that you should schedule to protect your health. You will only see the reminders that apply to you.

In-Person Authentication can be done at any VA Medical Center and some Community Based Outpatient Clinics.

Here is what you need to do:

1. Watch a short video that is available at your medical center (or online at www.myhealth.va.gov).
2. Sign a release of information that is available at the medical center (or online at www.myhealth.va.gov).
3. Bring the release and a government issued ID (such as a drivers license) to the My HealtheVet coordinator at your medical center. The coordinator will be able to help you get started and answer any questions you have about using the system.

In the near future, Veterans who have gone through IPA will also be able to see their lab results and VA appointments.

Your My HealtheVet Coordinator:

Hines	Kathleen Kirk 708-202-4430
Iron Mountain	Sherry Aichner 906-774-3300 ext. 32517
Jesse Brown	Levi Laroco 312-569-6450
Madison	Jill Everson 608-280-7173
Milwaukee	Chris Alberti 414-384-2000 ext. 42140
North Chicago	Alfreda Rhodes-King 224-610-5744
Tomah	Phyllis Goetz 608-372-1716 ext. 66261

Listening to Veterans

ASK AN EXPERT

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus (staph) is a common germ that can cause infections. Methicillin-Resistant Staph Aureus (MRSA) is a particular kind of staph that is resistant to some antibiotics.

How is MRSA spread?

MRSA is spread from person to person. Most of the time, it is spread by your hands. It may also be spread if you touch an item and then it is used by someone else.

What are the symptoms of MRSA?

People may have MRSA on their skin or in their nose without having an actual infection. When MRSA enters your body through a cut or an open wound, it can cause an infection.

Can MRSA be treated?

Although MRSA is resistant to many antibiotics, there are some that can be used. If an antibiotic is prescribed for you, it is very important to take it exactly as directed by your health care provider.

What is the VA doing to control the spread of MRSA?

Hospitalized patients are at a greater risk for MRSA infections. To prevent the spread of MRSA:

- Patients are offered MRSA testing.
- Hospital staff wear gloves and gowns when caring for patients with MRSA.
- Hospital staff must wash or disinfect their hands before and after seeing a patient.

How is MRSA testing done?

Testing for MRSA takes only a few seconds. It is done by gently rubbing a cotton swab inside the nose.

Answered by:
Katherine Matteson, MSN
Infection Control Practitioner

Linda McKinley, RN, MPH, CIC
Infection Control Practitioner

It does not hurt, but it may tickle. Depending on the type of test, it may take several days to get the results.

What does a positive test result mean?

If you have a positive test result, it means you are a carrier of MRSA. Even though you may not have symptoms, you can still shed the bacteria and pass it to others. You may need to receive treatment if the MRSA is causing an infection or if you are having major surgery. In some cases, MRSA may go away on its own.

What precautions should be taken if someone at home has MRSA?

You don't need to follow the same precautions as the hospital. If someone in your home is a carrier of MRSA, follow these basic hygiene steps:

- Wash hands often during the day.
- Avoid touching your nose.
- If you have a cut in your skin, keep it clean and dry.
- Do not share personal items such as razors or towels.

If someone in your home has an infection caused by MRSA, you should also:

- Keep sores clean and covered with dry bandages. Pus or drainage from the sore is infectious.
- Wear gloves if changing bandages or dressings. Wash hands after removing the gloves.

- Dispose of bandages and gloves in a plastic bag, and then dispose of them in the regular household trash.
- If others in your home develop similar infections, tell your health care provider.
- People with active infections should try to limit close contact with others who have open wounds or skin lesions.

MRSA will not harm healthy people. However, healthy people who are carriers of MRSA can spread the germ to those who are at a greater risk for complications.

If you have any questions or concerns about MRSA, be sure to discuss them with your health care provider.

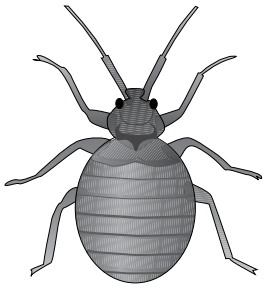
MRSA Prevention Initiative

Getting to Zero!

Bed Bugs 101

Bed bugs were common in the United States prior to the 1940s. With the development of insecticides, their presence dropped noticeably. However, in recent years bed bugs have become a problem again. They are most often found in homes, apartments, hotels, cruise ships, dormitories and shelters.

What are Bed Bugs?



Adult bed bugs are small, wingless, brownish insects that are just less than 1/4" long and relatively flat. Hatchling bed bugs are see-through about the size of pinhead, but may also appear to be reddish-brown. Bed bugs feed on the blood of mammals. Humans are its main source of food. Bed bugs need to feed in order to reproduce or mature. However, an adult bed bug can survive for a year without feeding!

Where do Bed Bugs live?

Bed bugs are active at night and usually hide during the day. Bed bugs stay close to their food source, often hiding in mattress seams and folds. However, they have been found just about anywhere. They may be hiding in electrical outlets, window/door frames, draperies, baseboards, floor/wall cracks, headboards and even in wall-to-wall carpeting.

How do you know if you have a Bed Bug infestation?

- You see a live bug or crushed bugs in your home.
- You see dark brown or reddish droppings on your sheets, mattress, or walls near the bed.
- You have small, itchy, red bumps on your body when you wake up in the morning.

What should you do if you have Bed Bugs?

It is very difficult to get rid of bed bugs, because they often hide in hard to reach areas. You need to hire a licensed pest control company to identify and eliminate the bugs.

It is also important to:

- Get rid of all clutter and mess in your home.
- Wash your bed linens and clothing in hot water and detergent.
- Follow any other instructions given to you by the pest control company.

If you have bed bug bites talk to your health care provider. Some people may develop an allergic reaction to the bite. You should not scratch the bites and may want to use a cream that will relieve the itching.

How can you avoid new Bed Bug infestations?

Bed bugs usually move to a new location by hiding in items such as luggage and furniture. Always check these items carefully for bed bugs before bringing them home or taking them to another location.

When staying in places such as hotels or transitional housing, inspect the bed and area around it for evidence of bed bugs. If you think the room has bed bugs, request a different room or move to a different place.

Second-hand or discarded furniture can be infested with bed bugs. Inspect them carefully before bringing them into your home.

Reduce the possible bed bug hiding places in your home. Seal cracks and crevices, repair torn wallpaper and furniture, and use covers to enclose your mattress.

Vacuum at least once a week and wash your sheets in hot water (97°F).

For more information:
MedlinePlus http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/insectbitesandstings.html

Source:

Bedbugs. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. 2007. http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/bedbugs/DS00663. Accessed 7/8/2009.

Department of Veterans Affairs. Under Secretary for Health Information Letter. *Bed Bugs*. Washington DC, August 8, 2008.

Submitted by:
Kassaundra Escalera
Zablocki VA Medical Center

Great Lakes VA Healthviews Editorial Committee:

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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.

Phone Numbers for VISN 12 Hospitals

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.

E-mail address:
SrEditorGreatLakesVAHealthviews@va.gov

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

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One Renaissance Boulevard
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181
1-800-994-6610