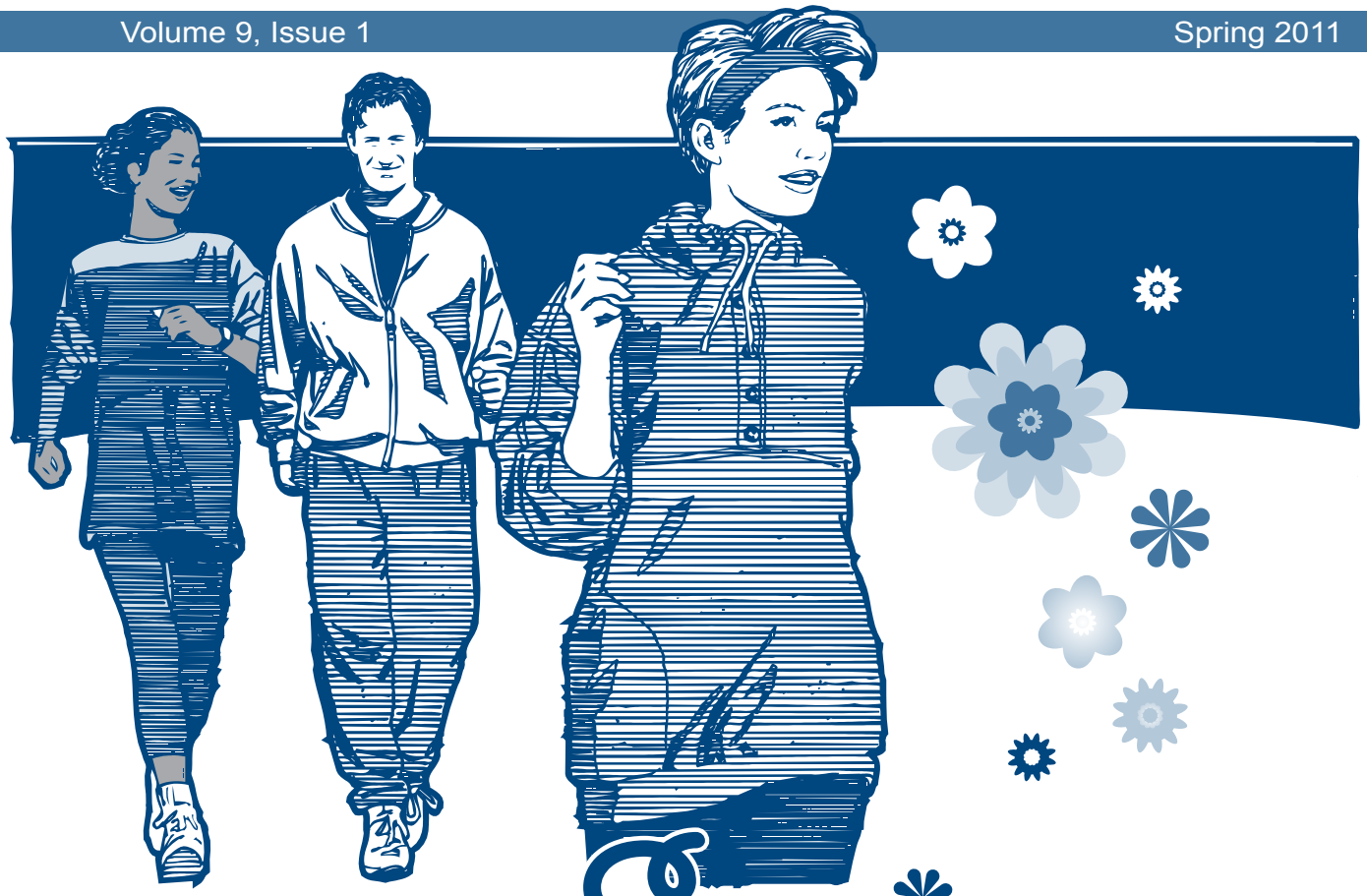
Great Lakes VA HEALTHVIEWS

The Newsletter about Health for Veterans in VISN 12

VA Great Lakes Health Care System

Volume 9, Issue 1 Spring 2011



Put a little Spring in your step

As we step into Spring, why not consider a walking program to help keep the pride in your stride. Walking can be done anywhere, it requires no equipment (except maybe a pair of proper fitting gym shoes), and best of all, it is FREE!! Walking is one of the best exercises you can do to keep yourself healthy and in shape.

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Let's take a look at some of the benefits of walking:

- Walking is good for your heart
- Walking strengthens your back and leg muscles
- Walking helps keep your bones strong
- Walking can decrease the risk of diabetes, colon cancer, and breast cancer
- Walking is good for your brain and can help decrease depression

How do I know if walking is safe for me?

Begin by talking to your health care team and discussing your health and fitness goals. Whether those goals are weight loss, a healthy heart, or being able to play with your kids or grandkids; your team can make sure that starting a walking program is safe for you.

What will I need?

Proper fitting shoes that are comfortable and give your foot and ankle good support are a must! Consider wearing loose clothing that will allow your body to breathe and move freely. A water bottle to keep you hydrated is also important.

Where should I walk?

When it is very hot or cold outside, consider walking in a local mall. If you belong to a gym or park district and have a running/walking track or treadmill machine available, that is a great option too. As the weather begins to warm up, try walking outdoors. The fresh air will give your senses a boost and can do wonders to brighten your mood.

How do I begin?

Your initial goal should not be how far or how long – but that you JUST DO IT! Beginners are often encouraged to walk 3 to 5 minutes out, then turn around and walk 3 to 5 minutes back (taking breaks as needed). As you get more comfortable, you can gradually increase how far, how long, and how quickly you walk.

So the next time you are fighting over the closest parking spot at the doctor's office, at the grocery story, or at your local mall – go ahead, give that spot away! Park further away and take those few extra steps knowing that you are doing something good for your body and mind. The fresh air will do you good and the extra steps will burn more calories.

LET'S STEP INTO SPRING FOR A HAPPY AND HEALTHY 2011!!

Sources:
http://www.medicinenet.com/walking/article.htm
http://www.tips-for-boomers.com/walking.html

Submitted by:
Poonam Bhargava, MPT
Physical Therapist
Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service
Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital

HOME CARE CORNER

Using a **Food Journal to Help You Lose Weight**

Weight loss has many positive health benefits, such as improving your sleep, blood pressure, blood sugar, and energy level. Weight loss can also decrease your risk for diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, bone disease, and some types of cancer.

As many people know, weight loss is not always easy. Luckily, there are tools to make it easier. Strong evidence shows that tracking your eating habits improves weight loss outcomes. In a study of 1,700 obese men and women, those who practiced self-monitoring lost twice as much weight as those who did not.

What is self-monitoring? Self-monitoring is done by keeping a journal of everything you eat and drink each day. You should also track the physical activity you perform each day. Your health care team may also want you to record your weight, glasses of water you drink, your stress level, and how many hours you sleep.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

S = Specific
M = Measurable
A = Attainable
R = Realistic
T = Timely

Your food journal can be even more useful if you write down how you were feeling when you were eating or drinking. For example, you may eat when you are hungry, bored, tired, or stressed. The information about your eating habits recorded in your food journal can help you identify triggers that make you overeat. It can also show which food groups you did not eat each day. Your food journal is a personal tool that will show each day's strengths and weaknesses and help you set S.M.A.R.T. goals for tomorrow.

Completing your food journal every day can be a difficult task. So keep it simple! Even writing down what you eat on a napkin or post-it note can be enough for you to think about what you are eating and how you feel. After a few days of writing in your food journal you may find yourself paying more attention to your eating habits. Self-monitoring can keep your weight loss goals in mind and help you stay on track every day.

So let's get started!

- ✔ Make photo copies of the food journal in this newsletter or design your own.
- ✔ Even a blank note book or journal can work!
- ✔ Use the electronic food journal on the MyHealtheVet website: www.myhealth.va.gov.

Keep in mind everyone has different nutrient needs. Ask for an appointment with your VA clinic dietitian to get advice about your personal calorie needs and food group recommendations.

Now, what was the last thing you had to eat?

Submitted by:
Julie Wilson, Dietetic Intern
Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital

Source:

MyHealtheVet Food Journal: https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/anonymous.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=foodJournal

Hollis et al. (2008). Weight Loss During the Intensive Intervention Phase of the Weight-Loss Maintenance Trial. American Journal of Preventive Medicine, 2008; 35(2): 118 126

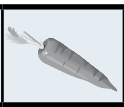
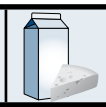
Enroll Now

- ✪ **Would you like to refill your prescriptions online?**
- ✪ **Would you like to have 24/7 access to health and benefit information?**

Contact the My HealtheVet Coordinator at your facility or your Primary Care Clinic for more information.

My Food Journal

Day:_____ Date:_____

Time and Place	Food/ Beverage and Amounts								Calories	Mood
	Daily Totals									
	Daily Goals									

Number of Hours of Sleep: 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10	Weight:
Check number of 8 ounce glasses of water:	Energy Level: Low/Medium/High

Physical Activity	Minutes:	Intensity: Low/Medium/High	Calories:

Notes/Goals:

Are You at Risk?

Trouble in the Latrine: How to Prevent Constipation

At one time or another, most people become constipated. You may be constipated if:

- three or more days have passed without a bowel movement.
- your stool is hard and dry.
- you must strain to pass it.

Constipation is definitely not fun. However, there are some simple tricks to keep this from happening to you.

Answered by:
Jennifer Jay
Dietetic Intern
Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital

1. Eat More Fiber

Fiber provides bulk to your stool and can encourage bowel movement. You can get fiber from foods like whole grains, fruits, vegetables, and beans. To see if a food is a good source of fiber, look at the nutrition label or look for the whole grain symbol. A food is high in fiber if it has five or more grams per serving. While you should aim for 20-35 grams of fiber per day, you should add fiber slowly to your diet along with water to reduce gas and bloating.

2. Soak Up Some H2O

Water is needed to keep your stool moist. When you are dehydrated, your stool becomes dry and is harder to pass. Try to drink eight glasses of fluid a day. Milk, juice, and soups can all be included in this amount. Try not to have a lot of drinks that contain caffeine, because they can dehydrate you.

3. Get Moving

Exercise can help stimulate your intestines. Try to have some kind of physical activity for 30 minutes a day on most days of the week.

4. Stop and Smell the Roses

Taking time to use the restroom can prevent constipation. People often don't like to use public restrooms or just feel they are too busy to take the time to have a bowel movement. However, while you are waiting to use the restroom, water is being absorbed from the stool. Without enough moisture, your stool will be dry and hard. After a while, you may stop feeling the need to go the bathroom, which can lead to constipation.

5. Go Easy On Laxatives

Be very careful when using laxatives. If used too often, you may only be able to have a bowel movement with a laxative.

Source:
http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus
http://www.gastro.org
http://www.mayoclinic.com

Healthy Living

Healthy Living Message

http://www.prevention.va.gov/Limit_Alcohol.asp

If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation and avoid binge drinking.

If you are concerned about your drinking, talk to your VA healthcare team about getting help.

Sponsored by your Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Program

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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 the VISN 12 webpage www.visn12.va.gov Click on the Newsletters link on the left side of the page.

VETERAN HEALTH CHOOSING TO CHANGE EDUCATION

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.

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VISN 12 VA Healthcare facilities are accredited by The Joint Commission. Joint Commission 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 Joint Commission. You may request a "public information interview." Requests can be made to:

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