



# Great Lakes VA HEALTHVIEWS

The Newsletter about Health for Veterans in VISN 12



Volume 9, Issue 3

Fall 2011



## Immunizations

### A Life Long Responsibility

Many adults believe that the shots they received as a child will protect them for the rest of their lives. But staying properly immunized is a lifelong job. As you age, your risk is greater for developing a serious illness caused by common infections. Some vaccines lose their effectiveness over time. There are also new vaccines that were not available to you in the past.

**Surprising fact:** Most Americans who die from a disease that *could have been prevented by a vaccine* are adults.

Each year the Adult Immunization Schedule is reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) and CDC. They want to be certain that the schedule is accurate and up to date.

### These are the 2011 recommendations for adults:

**Every Year:**

**Influenza (flu)** – Up to 200,000 hospitalizations and 49,000 deaths have been caused by the flu in just one year in the U.S. (CDC, 2010). The flu shot changes every year. You need a new dose every fall (or winter) to protect you and the people around you. The flu shot is recommended for everyone!

*(continued on page 2)*

**Also in this issue...**

Cover your Cough.....Page 3

**Secondhand Smoke:**  
A Hidden Danger .....Page 4

What is Obstructive Sleep Apnea? .....Page 6

## Every 10 Years:

### **Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis** –

There are two vaccines that protect against tetanus (lockjaw), diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough). The Td vaccine has been used for many years. But it only protects against tetanus and diphtheria. The Tdap vaccine protects against all three diseases. It is being offered to adults again because of recent outbreaks of pertussis in the community.

All adults should get a booster dose of the Td vaccine every 10 years. Adults who never received the Tdap vaccine should get it instead of Td when your next booster shot is due. Pertussis is deadly in infants. If you have close contact with children younger than 12 months old, including grandchildren, ask your provider about Tdap.

Tetanus is different from other vaccine-preventable diseases because it does not spread from person to person. Tetanus bacteria are usually found in the environment. They enter our bodies through breaks in the skin.

If you get a deep cut or dirty wound, you may need a new dose sooner than scheduled. This is most important if it has been over five years since your last Td booster shot. Contact your provider as soon as possible.

## One Time Dose:

**Chicken Pox** – Any adult who does not have evidence of being immune to varicella (chicken pox) should receive two doses of varicella vaccine. They should be given one month apart if you have not been previously vaccinated. You may be immune if:

- Your healthcare provider ever diagnosed you with chicken pox or shingles.

- Your lab work shows evidence that you are immune.
- You were born in the United States before 1980.
- Pregnant women and healthcare workers born before 1980 may need still the vaccine. Please talk with your provider.

**Pneumonia** – The vaccine for pneumonia has proven success. It prevents severe disease, hospitalization, and death from pneumococcal pneumonia. All healthy adults ages 65 and older need one dose. Any adult 19 through 64 years of age who is a smoker or has asthma should get the pneumonia shot. Anyone between the ages of 2 and 64 with a long-term health problem or weakened resistance should also get it.

**Shingles** – The herpes zoster vaccine is a one-time shot to prevent shingles. Adults ages 60 and older should get it. It is the only way to reduce your risk of developing shingles. Even if you have had shingles, you can still receive the shingles vaccine to help prevent future outbreaks. There is no maximum age for this vaccine.

Vaccines are one of the safest most effective tools we have to prevent disease and protect our families. You can never “retire” from keeping your immunizations up-to-date. Please don’t leave your healthcare provider’s office without making sure you have all the vaccines you need!

---

Submitted by:

By Gretchen Springer, Student Nurse  
William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital  
Madison, Wisconsin.

Resources:

Center for disease control [CDC]. (2010) Estimates of death associated with seasonal influenza – United States, 1976-2007. MMWR; 59(33):1057-1062.

[www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/schedules/adult-schedule.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/schedules/adult-schedule.htm)  
[www.adultvaccination.com](http://www.adultvaccination.com)



# Cover your Cough

We all know that coughing or sneezing without covering your mouth or nose can spray germs into

the air. The flu virus and other infectious respiratory illnesses are spread when we cough and sneeze.

To help stop the spread of germs, it is important that you cover your cough.

But covering your cough the right way is also important. If you cough into your hands and then touch other objects or people, you're leaving behind germs for others to catch.

## **There are several ways to prevent this:**

- Use a tissue to cover your cough or sneeze and then dispose of it in the trash.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your elbow or upper arm.
- Wash your hands frequently. Washing with soap and warm water for 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand rub helps stop the spread of germs.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you have been exposed to someone who has a cold or flu, don't touch your mouth, eyes, and nose until you can wash your hands. If you think you are sick, stay home and prevent others from catching your illness.

Remember - flu season is here! Getting your vaccinations, practicing good health habits and preventing the spread of germs will help keep you and your family healthy and well.

---

Submitted by:  
Brian Washington, Health Administration and Patient Education  
Student Intern  
William S Middleton Memorial VA Hospital  
Madison, WI

## References

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/covercough.htm>



# Healthy Living Message

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

## **Get recommended Screening Tests for Cancer!**

Recommendations depend on your age, gender, health status, and family history. Find out which screening tests are recommended for you!

*Sponsored by your Health Promotion/Disease Prevention Program*





## The Women's View

# Secondhand Smoke: A Hidden Danger

We have heard that smoking is bad for our health, but did you know that just being near a smoker is dangerous too? When you are close to someone who is smoking, you are being exposed to toxins. They linger in the air, putting you at risk for hours afterward.

### **What is in secondhand smoke?**

The smoke that a person exhales is called mainstream smoke. The smoke that comes directly from the burning cigarette or cigar is called side stream smoke. Both contain thousands of chemicals, such as benzene, cyanide, chromium, formaldehyde and lead. We would not normally allow these dangerous chemicals in our homes. These poisons from smoking can remain for hours in the air we breathe and can cling to hair, clothing, bedding, furniture and carpeting.

These invisible poisons have been linked to asthma, lung diseases, heart disease and cancer. They put us at higher risk for colds, pneumonia and ear infections.

When pregnant women are exposed to smoke, their babies are in danger. The chance of having a low birth weight baby or sudden infant death (SIDS) rises. Children, who are still growing, are even more at risk for problems from secondhand smoke than adults are.



## What Can You Do to Clear the Air?

- ⊗ Do not allow smoking in your home at all. Don't fool yourself into thinking that an air conditioner, fan or an open window will make it ok.
- ⊗ Do not allow smoking in your vehicle.
- ⊗ Keep your distance from smokers. If you must share space with people who are smoking, sit as far away from them as possible.
- ⊗ Support smoke-free businesses. When workers aren't forced to breathe secondhand smoke, they are healthier—a benefit to us all!
- ⊗ If your partner, friend or loved one smokes, encourage them to quit. If you smoke, take it outside—or put it out altogether!

Talk to your healthcare provider about what is available at your VA Medical Center to help you quit smoking. You can also call 1-800 QUITNOW.

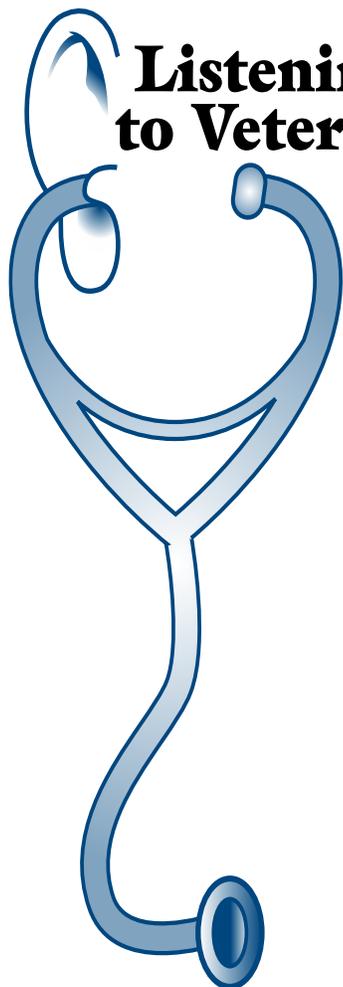
Let's clear the air!

---

Submitted by:  
Nicholas Borelli, Student Nurse Intern and  
Pamela McGranahan, RN  
Veterans Health Education Coordinator  
William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital  
Madison, Wisconsin

### References:

Benseñor IM, Cook NR, Lee IM, Chown MJ, Hennekens CH, Buring JE, Manson JE. (2001). Active and passive smoking and risk of colds in women. *Annals of Epidemiology*. 11(4). 225-31.  
[http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/secondhand\\_smoke/index.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/secondhand_smoke/index.htm)  
<http://www.epa.gov/smokefre/>  
<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/tobaccosmoke/factsheet.html>



## **What is Obstructive Sleep Apnea?**

Obstructive Sleep Apnea (AP-ne-ah) is a common sleep problem. Your airway collapses and interrupts your breathing. Any air that squeezes past this blockage can cause loud snoring. These breathing interruptions can last anywhere from a few seconds to several minutes. They can occur 5 to 30 times or more an hour. Normal breathing starts again after each pause, sometimes with a loud snort or choking sound.

About 18 million adults in the United States have sleep apnea. Only 10-15% have been diagnosed and treated. Doctors usually don't spot the condition during routine office visits and there are no tests for it.

Because they are asleep when it happens, most people who have sleep apnea don't know it until they begin to notice symptoms of poor sleep or find themselves waking several times at night. A family member or bed partner may be the first to notice the signs of sleep apnea, and may complain about the person snoring.

You are more likely to develop sleep apnea if:

- ✓ you are male
- ✓ you are overweight
- ✓ you have a family history of sleep apnea
- ✓ you drink alcohol, smoke cigarettes, or take certain medicines, such as opioid pain killers

Sleep apnea can affect your whole life. You may have daytime sleepiness and trouble concentrating. You may struggle with poor work performance and have a greater risk of accidents.

---

Answered by:  
Noor F. Husain, MD  
Advanced Research Fellow in  
Sleep Medicine and Women's  
Health  
William S. Middleton  
Memorial Veterans Hospital  
Madison, WI 53705

Sleep apnea has also been linked to:

- ✓ High blood pressure
- ✓ Higher risk of heart attacks and stroke
- ✓ Depression and irritability
- ✓ High blood sugar
- ✓ Erectile dysfunction in men
- ✓ Fatigue and trouble concentrating

Treatment often includes wearing a mask while you sleep. The mask delivers pressurized air using a positive airway device. The mask blows air into your throat, keeping the airway open. Your breathing becomes regular and the snoring stops. But to be completely successful, you may also need to lose weight and avoid alcohol.

If you or a family member are having symptoms of sleep apnea or are worried about your sleep, please talk with your provider. Prevention and early treatment are key to a good night's rest and good health!



## 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 HealthVet Coordinator at your facility or your Primary Care Clinic for more information.**

**Great Lakes VA  
Healthviews Editorial  
Committee:**

Jill Zahn  
Senior Editor  
Milwaukee VAMC

Kathleen Ford  
Hines VAH

Jeanne Chouinard  
Iron Mountain VAMC

Constance Cornett  
Jesse Brown VAMC

Alfreda Rhodes-King  
Lovell FHCC

Pamela McGranahan  
Madison VAMC

Kathy Johnson  
Tomah VAMC

Kim Chapman  
Layout and Design  
Milwaukee VAMC

**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](http://www.visn12.va.gov) Click on the Newsletters link on the left side of the page.



*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

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:

Division of Accreditation Operations  
Office of Quality Monitoring  
The Joint Commission  
One Renaissance Boulevard  
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181  
1-800-994-6610