

to your

Health!

"Promoting Good Health Through Information"

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System • Patient Education Newsletter • Spring 2008

Defrosting Winter's Creaky Joints

Ernest H. Winkenwerder, PT

As winter rains and cold temperatures give way to spring, we start to think about getting out the patio furniture and wonder why the cold weather seems to affect our knees and back. Cold weather does tend to keep people at home more and moving less.

As we get older, muscle mass and strength tend to decrease due to less activity. Tendons, which connect our bones to muscle, become less elastic making injury more likely. Joint swelling and cartilage wear and tear can also occur.

Our bodies are meant to move, remember the saying if you don't use it you'll lose it? This applies to your bones, joints and muscles.

As we walk the motion of the knee joint increases blood flow which provides nutrition to the bones, joints and muscles and produces synovial fluid (the body's WD-40). The number one hint on preserving your joints and bones is to keep moving. A daily walking or biking routine (as little as 15-30 minutes per day at a comfortable level) will keep vital fluid moving and the muscles and tendons from tightening up. This can help to build up bone and muscle, and prevent bone loss (which your provider may call osteoporosis).

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Recipe for Health

CHILLIN' OUT PASTA SALAD

Ingredients:

2 1/2 cups (8 ounces) medium shell pasta	1 1/2 cup celery, chopped
1 cup (8 ounces) plain nonfat yogurt	1 cup green onion, sliced
2 Tbsp. spicy brown mustard	1 lb. small shrimp, cooked
2 Tbsp. salt-free herb seasoning	3 cup (about 3 large) tomatoes, coarsely chopped

Directions:

1. Cook pasta according to directions – but do not add salt to the water. Drain and cool.
2. In a large bowl, stir together yogurt, mustard and herb seasoning.
3. Add pasta, celery, and green onion, and mix well. Chill for at least 2 hours.
4. Just before serving, carefully stir in shrimp and tomatoes.

Yields: 6 servings

Serving Size: 1 cup

Each Serving Provides

Calories: 280
Saturated Fat: 1 gram
Sodium: 270 mg
Protein: 28 grams
Potassium: 590 mg

Total Fat: 2 grams
Cholesterol: 120 mg
Total Fiber: 2 grams
Carbohydrates: 38 grams

www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Because Your Safety is Important to Us!



*Taking an active role in your care can help prevent medication errors!
Carry your medication list with you at all times!*

What is Medication Reconciliation?

Medication Reconciliation means collecting information about ALL the medicines that you are taking including prescription medications, over-the-counter

medications, vitamins, and herbal medications.

Why is Medication Reconciliation important?

Across the United States, approximately 1.3 million people become ill or have adverse side effects from medical therapy each year. Medication reconciliation can help prevent those errors from happening. The Institute of Safe Medication Practice estimates that 50% of medication errors and 20%

of adverse medical events could be eliminated with proper medication reconciliation.

What can I do to help with Medication Reconciliation?

Keep an updated list of your medicines with you at all times. Tell us at every clinic visit which medicine you have stopped taking or any new medications that you have started taking. If you develop an allergy or adverse effect from a medication, let your provider and pharmacist know. If you cannot remember what you are taking, bring your current medicine bottles with you to your appointment.

Ask for information about your medicine. If you do not understand something, ask your provider or pharmacist to explain. Always talk to your provider before taking herbal products or supplements. ■

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Defrosting Winter's Creaky Joints

Of course, check with your provider on what is an appropriate activity for you. Some people who cannot bear much weight can participate in a swimming program to keep those muscles moving and the blood flowing.

Make sure you warm up slowly and do some light stretching. When starting a new exercise program, begin little by little. Generally if you sleep better the night after you exercise and have some SLIGHT muscle soreness, you challenged the old machine well. Strength training with light weights (less than 10 pounds) in a comfortable range of motion can also help build strong bones.

Studies have shown that people into their eighties can safely begin a light exercise program and improve their health. But because the body recovers more slowly as we age don't go overboard. Make sure to eat a balanced diet and you may want to ask your provider about vitamins or supplements which may help some people with joint problems.

So, "use it or lose it" this spring to help keep the "spring" in your step! ■



Want to Learn More?

The Best Care Anywhere: Why VA health care is better than yours by Phillip Longman (2007) discusses what we can offer as a model for other healthcare systems.

The Essential Guide to Psychiatric Drugs by Jack Gorman (2007) is up to date, balanced, and is a strong general guide to symptoms, diagnoses and drug treatments.

How to Prevent Your Stroke by J. David Spence (2006) has practical, easy-to-follow advice about prevention and risks, with medical terms, drugs, and diet issues clearly described. ■

Feeling Down? The VA Can Help!

Jenny Herschelman, Pharm.D. & Nadine Shirley, LCSW

Did you know that depression affects about 14.8 million adults in the United States each year? No one knows exactly what causes depression, but depression and suicide are closely related. Many of the symptoms of depression and the warning signs for suicide are the same.

Symptoms of Depression

- Feeling down
- Eating too much, eating too little
- Fatigue or lack of energy
- No interest in once pleasurable activities
- Sleeping too much, sleeping too little
- Agitation or slowing of movements
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- "Can't think straight," or make decisions
- Feelings of worthlessness or helplessness
- Irritability or restlessness
- Persistent aches, pains or headaches
- Digestive problems

Warning Signs for Suicide

- Rage or anger
- Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from friends & family
- Sleep problems
- Agitation or anxiety
- Sense of hopelessness
- Feeling trapped
- Acting reckless
- Thinking about, planning ways to harm oneself.

The good news is there are many effective treatments for depression! The most common include medications or talk therapy, or both.

Medications for depression, called antidepressants, help balance natural chemicals in the brain. One important thing to remember is that antidepressants do not work overnight. They have to be taken everyday, and it may take as long as four weeks for people to notice an improvement. That is why it is important to always talk to your provider before stopping a medication.

Another way to treat depression is through a method called talk therapy. This helps people think and behave in new ways. Like medications, talk therapy does not work overnight and people must stick with it for it to work. For some people, when talk therapy is combined with medications, treatment is even more successful.

Statistics show that veterans with depression are seven to eight times more likely to attempt suicide. However, veterans who are treated for depression are no more likely to attempt suicide than anyone else. The VA offers many services to veterans who may be depressed or have other mental health concerns. If you think you may be depressed, please talk to your provider and he or she will help you get the help you need.

If you ever have feelings of hurting yourself please call the VA's Suicide Prevention Hotline immediately at 1-800-273-TALK (8255). This hotline is available 24 hours a day and will get you in contact with a mental health professional that will help you! ■

Steps to Reduce Indoor Allergies: A Spring Cleaning Checklist

Use the following checklist to guide your spring cleaning and to rid your home of indoor allergens:

- Get rid of clutter that may be collecting dust.
- Clean windows, book shelves and air conditioning vents thoroughly as they may have collected dust and mold throughout the winter.
- Put mattresses, box springs, and pillows in allergy-proof or "non-allergenic" cases.
- Vacuum carpeting, or replace it with washable throw rugs.

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San Jose, CA 95119
(408) 363-3000

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VA STOCKTON OPC

7777 Freedom Drive
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= Inpatient Campus = Outpatient Clinic

World Wide Web Address:

www.palo-alto.med.va.gov

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Steps to Reduce Indoor Allergies: A Spring Cleaning Checklist

- Wash blankets, sheets, and pillowcases in 130-degree water and dry in a hot dryer (this should be done every week).
- Fix leaks - they leave surfaces wet and allow mold to grow.
- Clean moldy surfaces, such as the corners of showers or under sinks, with a cleaning solution that is 10 parts water to one part bleach.
- Clean under stoves, refrigerators, or toasters where loose crumbs can accumulate and attract cockroaches.
- Block cellar doors, outside drains, and wall, window, or floor cracks where cockroaches could enter your home.

www.aaaai.org

Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or topics you would like addressed in *To Your Health* feel free to contact:

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To Your Health is published quarterly for VAPAHCS veterans and their families.

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Tips for Healthy Living

- Before going back for seconds, wait 10 or 15 minutes. You might not want seconds after all.
- Order your latte or hot chocolate with fat-free (skim) milk.

www.smallstep.gov