

To Your Health Newsletter

“Promoting Good Health Through Information”

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System

Veteran Health Education Newsletter • Fall 2010

Recipe for Health

MOCK-SOUTHERN SWEET POTATO PIE

This heart-healthy pie crust is made with vegetable oil and skim milk.

Ingredients:

Crust:

- 1 1/4 cups flour
- 1/4 tsp sugar
- 1/3 cup skim milk
- 2 tbsps vegetable oil

Filling:

- 1/4 cup white sugar
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/4 tsp nutmeg
- 3 large eggs, beaten
- 1/4 cup evaporated skim milk, canned
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 3 cups sweet potatoes (cooked and mashed)

Directions:

Preheat oven to 350° F.

Crust:

1. Combine the flour and sugar in a bowl.
2. Add milk and oil to the flour mixture.
3. Stir with fork until well mixed and then form pastry into a smooth ball with your hands.
4. Roll the ball between two 12-inch squares of waxed paper using short, brisk strokes until pastry reaches edge of paper.
5. Peel off top paper and invert crust into pie plate.

Filling:

1. Combine sugars, salt, spices, and eggs.
2. Add milk and vanilla. Stir.
3. Add sweet potatoes and mix well.
4. Pour mixture into pie shell.
5. Bake for 60 minutes or until crust is golden brown.

6. Cool and cut into 16 slices.

Health Information:

Yield: 6 servings

Serving size: one 3/4-inch by 2-inch piece

Each serving provides:

Calories: 147

Total fat: less than 3g

Saturated fat: less than 1g

Cholesterol: 40mg

Sodium: 98mg

www.nhlbi.nih.gov

8 Ways to GO GREEN and GET HEALTHY!

Amy S. Kelsey, RN

What could be better than helping our planet and your well-being at the same time? You can do both with a little creativity and motivation. Here are some suggestions to get you going, but we're sure there are lots more. Making these small changes can inspire you to develop your own "**GO GREEN and GET HEALTHY!**" strategies.

- Make one day per week "meatless." A vegetarian diet is lower in saturated fats and higher in healthy fats. Livestock produce a surprising amount of greenhouse gas. Just one meatless day per week can reduce both greenhouse gases and your cholesterol.
- Take public transportation whenever you can. Taking a bus or train will require more walking—a simple way to get more exercise. Less reliance on your car will result in less air pollution.
- Grow something good to eat. Having a garden or planting in containers increases your physical activity and provides food that does not have to be transported into the area. If you grow organic produce, you can reduce pesticide exposure to yourself and the environment.
- Carry your own meals and snacks when you are out. Avoiding convenience and fast foods is a great way to make healthier meal choices. Buy re-usable containers for your food when you do choose to eat out to take leftovers home—food packaging can add a lot of waste to landfills.
- Stop buying bottled or canned drinks. Despite the fact that recycling does reduce bottle and can waste, it also consumes energy and produces other waste products. Tap water is proven to be as safe as water in bottles. If you dislike the taste of water, add your own flavoring. Use travel mugs when buying fountain drinks or for carrying your own water.
- Reduce TV and internet time. Replace it with reading books, doing puzzles, learning something new, or playing games. You can save energy and benefit your brain, your attention span, and your family health.
- Stop smoking. It's probably the best single thing you can do for your health. By not smoking, you're also reducing air pollution.
- Become a no-waste champion. Save and eat your leftovers and use up the foods you buy. If you can, compost garbage and use it in your garden. Recycle, donate, and buy used items. Making recycling and creative re-use a hobby is a healthy way to use your mind, stay sharp, and give back to your community.

VA Healthy Diet Initiative

Eileen Stein, MS, RD, CDE, Clinical Dietitian, Nutrition and Food Services

“Eat healthier!” You hear it from every health care provider you see. As a leader in health care and disease prevention, the VA feels strongly about leading by example. Now any time you are in the hospital, the Nutrition and Food Services department will be helping to make that easier for you using the VA Healthy Diet guidelines.

The guidelines are based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) eating plan and the MOVE! weight management program principles. There are specific goals for the amount of fats, cholesterol, sodium, fiber and even sweets served to patients in the hospital. Our goal is to meet these guidelines while still providing delicious food.

While Nutrition and Food Services has always tried to provide healthy meals, we will make a few gradual adjustments to meet the new guidelines by the end of 2010. Some of the bigger changes will include:

Serving more fish and plant-based main dishes. Beef and pork will still be served, but we will be using the leanest cuts. These changes will lower unhealthy saturated fats.

Overall fat intake will be no more than 30% of total calories, with minimal—if any—trans fats or hydrogenated fats. This will also make the diet more heart-healthy.

Sodium content of the diet will be limited to 2000-3000 milligrams/day. Extra sodium can lead to high blood pressure and other health problems. Since many people are used to the taste of salt, this could be one area where you might notice a difference. However, we will work to provide foods that taste great, even without the salt!

Sweet desserts (like cakes, pies and cookies) will still be served, but less often. The sugars and calories in sweet desserts can contribute to weight gain.

Even your providers will tell you an occasional splurge is okay. To that end, Nutrition and Food Services will still provide special meals for the various holidays, including seasonal dishes that we would not serve normally. Not to worry—no one will mess with your Thanksgiving pumpkin pie!

We hope that the menu changes you experience while in the hospital will inspire you to make the same types of changes in your diet when you go home. If you want help making these changes, ask for a referral to the dietitian or to the MOVE! program. We all want to help you be healthier!

Update on Smoking Regulations

Rosemary M. Gill, RN, MS, CDE

VA Palo Alto Health Care System is committed to promoting the health and safety of patients, visitors and staff. This includes providing a smoke free environment. Secondhand smoke can cause disease and early death in non-smokers. The Surgeon General's report shows that even very short exposure to secondhand smoke can cause heart and lung problems, including asthma attacks and an increased risk of heart attack.

Smoking has not been allowed inside VA buildings for many years. There are designated smoking locations on the grounds of each of our VA campuses. For the safety of all, we want to remind patients, visitors and staff where smoking is and is not allowed at all of our sites.

You can get specific information at each site, but there are some general principles.

- Smoking is not allowed within 35 feet of any building entrance unless noted.
- Smoking is not allowed on any walkways.
- You may smoke in most parking lots (except the Emergency Department parking lot at Palo Alto), but you need to be at least 35 feet from any walkway.

Help is available if you would like to quit smoking. You may contact the TeleQuit program at 1-800-999-5021 extension 60557. Or you can call for an appointment in the Smoking Cessation Clinic:

- Palo Alto (650) 493-5000 x 67915
- San Jose Clinic (408) 363-3037
- Stockton Clinic (209) 946-3400 x 43407

Those who are not VA Palo Alto patients can use the California Smokers' Helpline, 1-800-NO-BUTTS. Please talk with your provider about help in quitting smoking.

Please be aware that the VA police may issue a Federal Violation Notice with a \$75 fine for smoking in a smoke free area.

You Are What You Burn: Avoiding Metabolic Syndrome

Hank Winkenwerder, PT

You're getting older: your six-pack abs have become a keg, your blood pressure is up and you may have diabetes or cholesterol problems. Your provider has said you might have "metabolic syndrome." What is this syndrome and what can you do to minimize its effects?

20-25% of people in America have the factors typical of metabolic syndrome. "Metabolism" is how your body turns food into energy, while a "syndrome" is a combination of symptoms or factors that describe a medical problem and not just one disease. People with metabolic syndrome have fat accumulation around the waist (40+ inch waist in men, 35+ in women), plus at least 2 of the following medical conditions:

- Impaired glucose tolerance (pre-diabetes or diabetes)
- High triglycerides (high fats in the blood)
- Low HDL (low good cholesterol)
- Hypertension (high blood pressure)

Any one of these conditions can increase the risk of heart disease and stroke, but their combination can make it more likely. Some researchers believe the basic problem is impaired glucose tolerance, which leads to the increased weight and heart disease.

The common factor in all patients with metabolic syndrome is abdominal obesity (belly fat). This fat doesn't just sit there; abdominal fat cells release chemicals into the blood stream and may play a role in contributing to heart disease. Thus, a simple – though by no means easy – way of improving your health is losing weight. Regular moderate daily exercise will burn calories and stress.

Besides reducing the total calories you eat per day, changing what you eat may also help with weight loss. Avoid highly processed high-fat or sugary foods. Think about incorporating more lean proteins into your weekly meal plans. Some studies note daily dairy consumption may reduce heart disease risk. Talking to a dietician can help you with diet changes.

Metabolic syndrome may make it seem like your body needs a major overhaul, but a simple tune-up can get you back on the fast track:

- Payload reduction: weight loss
- Spark plug change: improve blood glucose control
- Premium gasoline: healthy meal choices
- Oil change: improve cholesterol
- New fuel pump: improve blood pressure control
- Practice laps: regular exercise
- Special additives: medications and advice from your providers

Making these changes can keep you in the race and avoiding the red flag for years to come.

VA Palo Alto Health Care System Facilities

VA PALO ALTO DIVISION

3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304
(650) 493-5000

VA LIVERMORE DIVISION

4951 Arroyo Road
Livermore, CA 94550
(925) 373-4700

VA MENLO PARK DIVISION

795 Willow Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
(650) 493-5000

VA CAPITOLA OPC

1350 N. 41st Street,
Suite 102
Capitola, CA 95010
(831) 464-5519

VA MODESTO OPC

1524 McHenry Avenue,
Suite 315
Modesto, CA 95350
(209) 557-6200

VA MONTEREY OPC

3401 Engineer Lane
Seaside, CA 93955
(831) 883-3800

VA SAN JOSE OPC

80 Great Oaks Boulevard
San Jose, CA 95119
(408) 363-3000

VA SONORA OPC

19747 Greenley Road
Sonora, CA 95370
(209) 588-2600

VA STOCKTON OPC

7777 Freedom Drive
French Camp, CA 95231
(209) 946-3400

World Wide Web Address:

www.palo-alto.med.va.gov

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

Tips for Healthy Living

- Portion out your snack on a plate, not from the bag, to stay aware of how much you're eating.
- Be realistic. Make small changes over time in what you eat and the level of physical activity you do. Small steps often work better than giant leaps.

www.smallstep.gov

Questions or Comments?

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

Ariane R. Wilson, PharmD

Pharmacy Practice Resident

VA Palo Alto Health Care System

3801 Miranda Avenue #119 (Pharmacy)

Palo Alto, CA 94304

(650) 493-5000, ext.66573

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

Editorial Board:

Randell K. Miyahara, PharmD

Rosemary Gill, RN, MS

Ariane R. Wilson, PharmD

Kris Morrow

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