to your Health!

"Promoting Good Health Through Information"

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System • Veterans Health Education Newsletter • Summer 2010

Allergy Care

Amanda Wight, Pharmacy Student

Allergies occur when the body activates your immune system in response to a harmless substance that is mistakenly seen as harmful. These substances are also known as allergens. The activation of the immune system causes inflammation and swelling in the eyes and nose. Common allergy symptoms include itchy or watery eyes, runny nose or congestion, sneezing, and headaches.

Here are some tips to help prevent and treat allergy symptoms:

- Use saline nasal sprays and nasal irrigation to clear the sinuses
- Avoid triggers such as dust, pet dander, and pollens
- Keep doors and windows closed
- Use covers on pillows and mattresses to prevent mites and wash bedding in hot water weekly
- Use HEPA filters to remove allergens in the air
- Minimize moisture indoors to prevent mold growth
- After coming in from the outdoors, wash your hands and/or shower to remove pollens

Some over-the-counter medications help control allergy symptoms. The following are some medications you can use to help relieve symptoms:

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Recipe for Health

ITALIAN VEGETABLE BAKE

This colorful low-sodium cholesterol-free vegetable baked dish is prepared without any added fat.

Ingredients:

- 1 can (28 oz) whole tomatoes
- 1 medium onion, sliced
- 1/2 lb fresh green beans, sliced
- 1/2 lb fresh okra, cut into 1/2-inch pieces or 3/4 cup 1/2 10-oz pkg frozen okra
- 3/4 cup finely chopped green pepper
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice
- 1 tsp chopped fresh basil, or 1 tsp dried basil, crushed
- 1-1/2 tsp chopped fresh oregano leaves, or 1/2 tsp dried oregano, crushed
- 3 medium (7-inch long) zucchini, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 1 medium eggplant, pared and, cut into 1-inch cubes
- 2 Tbsp grated parmesan cheese

Directions:

1. Drain and coarsely chop tomatoes. Save liquid. Mix together tomatoes and reserved liquid, onion, green beans, okra, green pepper, lemon juice, and herbs. Cover and bake at 325° F for 15 minutes.
2. Mix in zucchini and eggplant and continue baking, covered, 60-70 more minutes or until vegetables are tender. Stir occasionally.
3. Sprinkle top with parmesan cheese just before serving.

Yield: 18 servings **Serving size:** 1/2 cup

Each serving provides:

Calories: 36
Total fat: less than 1 g
Saturated fat: less than 1 g
Cholesterol: less than 1 mg
Sodium: 86 mg

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health

Growing Your Own Garden

Camilla Coakley, MOVE! Wgt Mgt for Veterans, Program Coordinator

Some of my fondest memories as a child are those of working with my grandfather in his vegetable garden. I remember my hands smelling of tomatoes after stringing the vines to support posts, watching worms wiggle their way down into the soil, and relishing our bounty of lima beans that we planted only weeks before…and I didn't even like lima beans! Little did I know that those memories would inspire me to plant my first garden – 30 years later!

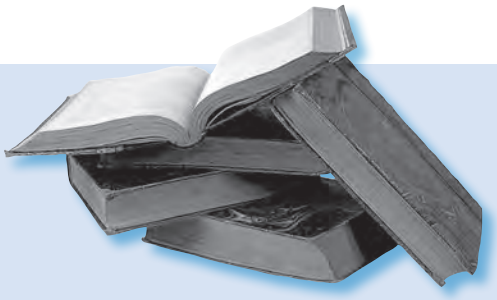
Gardening is making a comeback for a number of reasons today. Produce comes from the ground, not from a plastic bag or from between the buns of a Number 1 at the drive thru. Nothing tastes better than eating something that you planted and nurtured yourself. Enjoying the fruits of your labor is one of the top benefits of growing your own garden. Just imagine going out into your garden and collecting fresh, organic, juicy strawberries – nature's candy, chock full of antioxidants! Now that's mm mm good!

With a little time and effort you can have yourself a wonderful plentiful garden, no matter how big or small! If you have a backyard, it's simple: Dig, plant, feed, and water. You can get a lot of information online, or you can go to your local gardening store and they will direct you with how to begin a backyard garden. If you live in the concrete jungle like I do, you have two choices. If you have the space, you can build a garden box. Assemble a rectangle of 2" by 8" wooden boards and purchase soil from your local nursery (it's cheaper than buying bags of soil). Buy some seeds, plant and water. For those that want a starter kit, just start with a simple window box. Herbs are easy, but you will get a lot more for your money if you plant lettuce or tomatoes.

In sum, having your own garden is a WIN, WIN, WIN situation: Your own garden can save you money, save your waistline, and save planet earth! According to Michael Pollan (the author of Food Rules) , a $70 home garden can yield you $600-$1,200 worth of produce – that's the cheapest, most local, most nutritious produce you can have. Gardening is a physical activity, so depending on how much time you are digging, planting and pruning, you are burning calories! Your body benefits even more because the vegetables and fruits from your garden are more nutritious and less caloric than processed foods from the grocery store. Making fewer trips in your car to the grocery store reduces your CO_2 emissions and by not buying produce from far off countries you will even further reduce your carbon footprint!

So, go ahead and plant your way into saving money, losing weight and helping planet earth. Happy Gardening!

Want to Learn More?



Try your local public library for:

Tips on how to grow your own garden:

- *McGee & Stuckey's Bountiful Container: Create Container Gardens of Vegetables, Herbs, Fruits and Edible Flowers* by Rose Marie Nichols McGee and Maggie Stuckey
- *All New Square Foot Gardening: Grow More in Less Space!* by Mel Bartholomew

Once you've got them, here's how to enjoy your vegetables:

- *Vegetables Every Day: The Definitive Guide to Buying and Cooking Today's Produce with over 350 Recipes* by Jack Bishop
- *The Best Vegetable Recipes* by Cook's Illustrated Magazine

Fruits and Vegetables – More Matters!

Eileen Stein, MS, RD, CDE

It will come as no surprise to anyone that eating a healthy diet means eating more fruits and vegetables. In fact, most people do not eat the recommended amount of fruits or vegetables. How much you should eat varies by age and how active you are. In general, though, you should try to eat 1½ to 2 cups of fruit a day, and 2½ to 3 cups of vegetables a day.

Fruits and vegetables provide a variety of vitamins and minerals that the body needs. Just taking vitamin and mineral supplements is not really enough, because vitamins and minerals are only part of the story. Fruits and vegetables also provide fiber and antioxidants, which can help reduce the risk of chronic diseases. Recent studies have shown that taking antioxidant supplements is not as effective as getting the antioxidants from foods. In other words, your mother and your grandmother were right – eat your veggies!

When selecting fruits and vegetables, think color. If you eat a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables, you will get a variety of different nutrients. If the only fruits you eat are bananas and apples, try some new fruits – kiwis or berries, peaches or cherries. Add some variety to your vegetables with red or yellow peppers, sweet potatoes, or add some spinach or other greens in with your regular lettuce salad.

Try different fruits and vegetables, too. You may be surprised at what you like now – even the vegetables you didn't like growing up. Your tastes really do change as you mature, so keep trying. If you find you don't like cooked vegetables, eat them raw; if you find you don't like them boiled, try roasting, grilling or stir-frying them. Try using herbs and spices for more flavors, but try not to use a lot of butter, margarine, mayonnaise or salad dressing. Let the taste of the veggies shine through! Keep fruit on the counter, so it's easy to see and easy to grab when you want a snack. Adding some berries or other fruit to your morning cereal instead of sugar will add plenty of sweet taste, as well as the vitamins, minerals and fiber.

Visit your local farmers' market or fruit stand. They will likely have some fruits and vegetables you haven't tried before. They also have the produce that is in season, which will provide you with the most nutrients. If you aren't sure how to prepare the vegetables, ask the people selling or buying the vegetables. You may get some new ideas.

For more information on the benefits of fruits and vegetables, suggestions for how to store them and more recipes, visit the CDC website www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov.

Allergy Care

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Medication	Helps to relieve	Be aware that…
Benadryl® (diphenhydramine)	Itchy nose and eyes, sneezing, and runny nose	May cause drowsiness
Chlor-Trimeton® (chlorpheniramine)	Itchy nose and eyes, sneezing, and runny nose	May cause increased heart rate, dry eye and mouth, blurry vision, and drowsiness
Zyrtec® (cetirizine)	Itchy nose and eyes	Causes less drowsiness than diphenhydramine, but use with caution until you know how you will be affected
Claritin®/Alavert® (loratadine)	Itchy nose and eyes	Causes less drowsiness than diphenhydramine, but use with caution until you know how you will be affected
Nasal decongestants (sprays, pumps, drops)	Congestion	Limit use to 3-5 days to prevent worsening congestion upon stopping use of medication
Sudafed® (pseudoephedrine)	Congestion	May cause increased blood pressure and restlessness or nervousness
Nasalcrom® (cromolyn sodium) nasal spray	Itchy nose and eyes, sneezing, and runny nose	Sneezing and/or stinging may occur after use

VA Palo Alto Health Care System Facilities

VA PALO ALTO DIVISION
3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304
(650) 493-5000

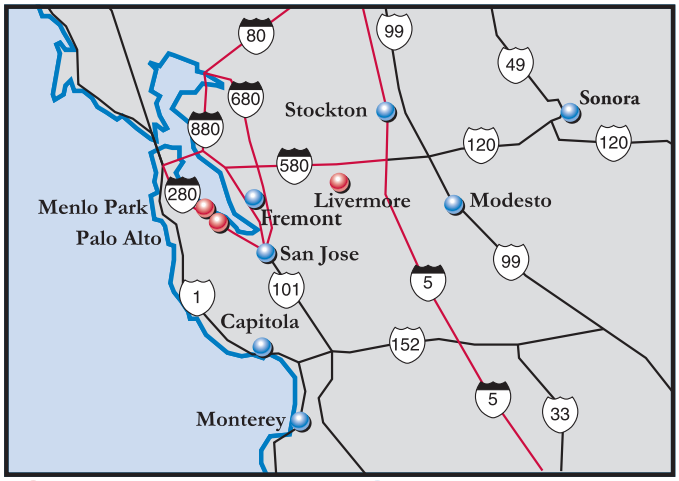
VA LIVERMORE DIVISION
4951 Arroyo Road
Livermore, CA 94550
(925) 373-4700

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 FREMONT OPC
39199 Liberty Street
Fremont, CA 94538
(510) 791-4000

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



= Inpatient Campus = Outpatient Clinic

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
13663 Mono Way
Sonora, CA 95370
(209) 588-2600

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

World Wide Web Address:
www.paloalto.va.gov

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

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

- Take stairs instead of the escalator.
- Ask for salad dressing "on the side."

www.smallstep.gov