

To Your Health Newsletter

“Promoting Good Health Through Information”

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System

Veteran Health Education Newsletter • Winter 2010

March is Brain Injury Awareness Month

Rose Marie Salerno, RN & Jill Storms, OTR/L

What is brain injury?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines a traumatic brain injury (TBI) as a blow, jolt, or penetration to the head that disrupts brain function. A brain injury can range in severity from mild, also called a concussion, to severe.

The signs and symptoms of a TBI can also be subtle and may not appear until days or weeks following the injury. Most TBIs are mild, and people who sustain them usually recover completely within 1 to 3 months. However, a moderate or severe TBI can result in significant long-term problems. Brain injury may affect a person cognitively, physically and emotionally. The resulting disability associated with a TBI may impact a person's ability to return to home, school or work, and community.

How common is brain injury?

The prevalence of TBIs may surprise you. Did you know that an estimated 5.3 million Americans currently live with disabilities from TBIs? Each year an estimated 1.4 million individuals in the United States sustain a TBI. While anyone can sustain a TBI, the risk is highest among young children and young adults.

Prevention and awareness are crucial!

There are many ways to reduce the risk of a TBI including wearing seat belts, using child safety seats, and wearing well-fitted and maintained helmets during sports and activities that place you at risk for TBI. If a known or suspected TBI or concussion does occur, the individual should be evaluated by an appropriate health care professional.

Military duties increase the risk of sustaining a TBI. Blast exposure is currently the leading cause of TBI in the war zone. Helmets help to protect the brain from injury and research continues to identify ways to increase safety. However, when injury occurs, help is available and access is encouraged. The Real Warriors Campaign, sponsored by the Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury (DCoE), is a public education effort designed to combat the stigma associated with seeking care for psychological stress and TBI. It encourages service members, veterans and their families to use the resources available to them. Reaching out is a sign of strength!

References and Resources:

Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center
1-800-870-9244, www.dvbic.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1-800-232-4636, www.cdc.gov/injury

Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury
1-877-291-3263, www.dcoe.health.mil

Recipe for Health

WINTER CRISP

Only 1 tablespoon of margarine is used to make the crumb topping of this cholesterol-free, tart and tangy dessert.

Ingredients:

FILLING

1/2 cup sugar
3 Tbsp all-purpose flour
1 tsp lemon peel, grated
3/4 tsp lemon juice
5 cup apples, unpeeled, sliced
1 cup cranberries

TOPPING

2/3 cup rolled oats
1/3 cup brown sugar, packed
1/4 cup whole wheat flour
2 tsp ground cinnamon
1 Tbsp soft margarine, melted

Directions:

1. Prepare filling by combining sugar, flour, and lemon peel in medium bowl. Mix well. Add lemon juice, apples, and cranberries. Stir to mix. Spoon into 6-cup baking dish.
2. Prepare topping by combining oats, brown sugar, flour, and cinnamon in small bowl. Add melted margarine. Stir to mix.
3. Sprinkle topping over filling. Bake in 375 °F oven for approximately 40–50 minutes or until filling is bubbly and top is brown. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Health Information:

Yield: 6 servings

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

Each serving provides:

Calories: 252

Total fat: 2 grams

Saturated fat: less than 1 gram

Cholesterol: 0 mg

Sodium: 29 mg

Total fiber: 5 grams

Protein: 3 grams

Carbohydrates: 58 grams

Potassium: 221 mg

www.nhlbi.nih.gov

Resolve and Remember

Amy Kelsey RN, Community Mental Health Rehabilitation Services

Every year millions of Americans make New Year's resolutions about their health. Many of these resolutions are forgotten by the end of January!

New Year's resolutions are easier to remember if you:

- Set realistic, achievable goals. Don't set yourself up for failure by making big goals. Try losing 5 pounds instead of 20.
- Make it simple. Don't make your self-improvement too complicated.
- Do it daily. Repetition will make the resolution become a habit!

Here are some more ways to stick with a diet or exercise change:

- Learn more about your health needs, read new material about health on the internet, in the paper, or listen to health news.
- Sign up and show up to exercise, get a friend to go with you, make an exercise bet with a friend.
- Find a way to make exercise and diet fun. For example make favorite food with a non fat recipe or if you love sports find a team to join and enjoy yourself.
- Take comfort in your improved health, let your mind and body work together to produce a sense of well-being and relaxation in your life that will benefit you and your family for years to come.

Medications for Cold and Flu Symptoms

Alana Lee, Pharmacy Student

What is cold? What is flu?

Cold and flu are both viral infections, but different types. They can both be spread from person to person or from touching contaminated objects. Cold and flu share some similar symptoms such as sore throat, cough, and fatigue. However, flu tends to have more severe fever and body aches, whereas cold tends to have symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose or stuffy nose.

What can you do when you get a cold or flu?

- Rest
- Drink plenty of fluids and eat a nutritious diet.
- Use a humidifier, cool mist vaporizer, steamy showers. Can also use saline nasal sprays or drops.
- Wash your hands, cover mouth when sneezing or coughing, and throw away tissues promptly.

What can medications do for me?

- There are no medications that cure or get rid of the cold or flu.
- Over-The-Counter (OTC) medications can help make you feel better by treating specific symptoms.
- When choosing an OTC cold or flu product, choose ones that contain ingredients targeting your symptoms. Avoid ingredients for symptoms you don't have.
- Always look at the back of the medication box to look at the active ingredients in that product.
- Check the label for warnings and cautions; Some OTC medicines warn you NOT to take them if you have high blood pressure or diabetes.

What Over-The-Counter Medications Can You Use to Help Fight the Cold/Flu?

If You Have These Symptoms

Body aches, Fever

Choose These Ingredients

Pain relievers

Acetaminophen, Ibuprofen, Naproxen

While Considering These Important Facts

Maximum dose of acetaminophen for healthy adult is less than 4 grams per day. Talk to your provider if you have liver or kidney problems, or have stomach bleeds.

If You Have These Symptoms

Cough

Choose These Ingredients

Cough suppressants

Dextromethorphan

Expectorant

Guaifenisin

While Considering These Important Facts

Side effects include stomach upset, nausea, dizziness, drowsiness, and headache.

If You Have These Symptoms

Sore throat

Choose These Ingredients

Antiseptic

Menthol, Camphor, Phenol

Anesthetic

Benzocaine, Dyclonine

While Considering These Important Facts

If you are diabetic, choose sugar-free products.

If you have had allergic reaction to anesthetics, avoid products with benzocaine.

If You Have These Symptoms

Stuffy nose

Choose These Ingredients

Decongestant

Pseudoephedrine, Phenylephrine

While Considering These Important Facts

Caution: these can raise blood pressure and heart rate. Do NOT take these products if you have uncontrolled high blood pressure.

Do NOT take nasal decongestant sprays for more than 3-5 days.

If You Have These Symptoms

Runny nose, Sneezing

Choose These Ingredients

Antihistamine

Diphenhydramine, Chlorpheniramine

While Considering These Important Facts

These products will make you very drowsy. Caution when driving or operating heavy machinery.

Can also cause dry mouth and blurred vision.

Tips for Staying Well this Winter

- **Wash your hands** frequently using either soap and water or waterless hand gel
- Cover your coughs and dispose of used tissue appropriately; **Wash your hands** after you do this
- Get plenty of rest
- Avoid large, crowded areas
- **Wash your hands**
- Stay home if you are running a fever
- **Wash your hands**
- Get your flu vaccine when available

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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

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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

- If you find it difficult to be active after work, try it before work.
- Use spices instead of salt. Start by cutting salt in half.

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:

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