to your Health!

"Promoting Good Health Through Information"

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System • Veterans Health Education Newsletter • Summer 2011

Be an Expert *Travelin' Man* or *Woman!*

Tips for Safe and Healthy Travel

Ariane Wilson, PharmD

Summer is a great time of year to get out and about. Whether it's a trip to a tropical paradise or a quick jaunt to see family and friends, traveling can be a great way to make the most of the season. If you are planning on taking advantage of the sunshine and long days to do some traveling in the coming months, the following tips and tricks can help make your summer vacation a memorable and healthy one. If you have any specific questions relating to traveling and your state of health, ask for advice from your provider.

General Travel Tips

- To be safe, delay your trip if you're not feeling well. Be considerate of other travelers' health and take care of yourself.
- Whether traveling by car, plane, train or boat: stay well-hydrated, eat sensibly and stand up and stretch your legs if you're sitting for long periods.
- Avoid unnecessary stress by planning ahead: arrive early where you can, pack well and have plans for unexpected bumps in the road.
- Practice good hygiene while traveling—including regular hand washing—to avoid having your trip ruined by illness.

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Recipe for Health

SCALLOP KABOBS

Perfect for summer grilling, these colorful kabobs use scallops, which are naturally low in saturated fat.

Ingredients:

- 3 medium green peppers, cut into 1½ -inch squares
- 1½ lb fresh bay scallops
- 1 pt cherry tomatoes
- ¼ C dry white wine
- ¼ C vegetable oil
- 3 tbsp lemon juice
- A dash of garlic powder
- Black pepper to taste
- 4 skewers

Directions:

1. Parboil green peppers for 2 minutes.
2. Alternately thread first three ingredients on skewers.
3. Combine next five ingredients.
4. Brush kabobs with wine/oil/lemon mixture, then place on grill (or under broiler).
5. Grill for 15 minutes, turning and basting frequently.

Yield: 4 servings **Serving size:** 1 kabob (6 oz.)

Each serving provides:

Calories: 224
Saturated fat: 1 g
Sodium: 355 mg
Protein: 30 g
Potassium: 993 mg
Total fat: 6 g
Cholesterol: 43 mg
Total fiber: 3 g
Carbohydrates: 13 g

www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health

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Tips for Safe and Healthy Travel

Tips for traveling by plane:

- Wear loose, comfortable clothing and easy-to-remove shoes for your flight.
- If you sometimes have air sickness, ask for a window seat over the wing or plan ahead with medications to treat air sickness.
- If you must wear oxygen while traveling, be sure to alert the airline well in advance. Federal air regulations don't allow you to carry your own oxygen on a plane; the airline may charge you a fee. Also, plan ahead for your oxygen needs during layovers.
- Stand up at least every 2 to 3 hours or flex your feet and legs to help prevent clots in your legs.

Tips for traveling out of the country:

- Put together a travel health kit. The CDC website offers a list of items you can include: http://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/yellowbook/2010/chapter-2/travel-health-kits.aspx
- Make sure you are up-to-date on your immunizations.
- Never buy local medications or remedies unless you're familiar with them!
- Certain medications are not permitted in certain countries, especially controlled substances. Travelers should contact the embassy or consulate of their destination country to check ahead.
- Plan ahead if your trip will involve a major time change. This may affect the timing of how you take your medications, especially medications like insulin.

Tips for managing medications while traveling:

- Always carry your medications with you—never pack it in baggage you're planning to check. Checked luggage can be lost, stolen or exposed to temperature extremes.
- Take your medications in their original containers clearly labeled with your name, your provider's name and the name of the medication. Pillboxes can be filled once you arrive at your destination.
- Pack enough of your medicines to last your whole trip, plus some extra doses. That way you will have enough if your return trip is delayed or you accidentally drop a pill or two.
- If you have a chronic condition such as diabetes, epilepsy, or take warfarin, carry a medical alert card, bracelet or necklace. This is a good way to make it easier for emergency personnel to help you in a situation where you are incapacitated.
- Carry a list of your current medications and their directions. It will come in handy every day!

My Health*e*Vet: The VA's Online Personal Health Record

*Renee Kawahara, Program Specialist/ My Health**e**Vet Coordinator*

My HealtheVet, the VA's award-winning online Personal Health Record, can be accessed at www.myhealth.va.gov. Launched nationwide in 2003, My HealtheVet is the gateway to web-based tools that empower you to become an active participant in your health care. One of the newer features you can now take advantage of is Secure Messaging.

Secure Messaging is a web-based, encrypted communication between you and your health care team through your My HealtheVet account. Secure Messaging will eventually communicate with a full range of providers, clinics and other VA services. For now, it is being offered for Primary Care contact. By the end of 2012, all clinical and non-clinical services will be using secure messaging to assist with your questions.

Are you interested in using Secure Messaging? It's easy!

1. Go to www.myhealth.va.gov
2. Click the REGISTER TODAY button. Complete the registration page as a VA PATIENT and establish a User ID and password. Remember to click the SAVE button at the bottom of the page.
3. Get the upgraded account with the In-Person Authentication (IPA). As a security measure, you must appear at your nearest VA Release of Information Office or Business Office, present your picture identification and sign a Release of Information form with a VA staff member.

For additional questions about My HealtheVet, please call Renee Kawahara, My HealtheVet Coordinator at (650) 849-0393.

Medication Reconciliation: Being a Proactive and Empowered Patient

Katie Ahn, Pharmacy Student

The Institute of Medicine estimates that about 1.5 million adverse drug events occur every year in the United States. These events can range from mild reactions such as experiencing bothersome side effects, to serious errors that can put patients' health at risk. What can be done about it? Healthcare providers do their best to head medication errors off at the pass, but patients can play an important role in preventing errors, too. A simple way that patients can reduce their risk of having an adverse drug event happen to them is taking initiative through a process called "medication reconciliation."

Medication reconciliation is simply making sure all of your healthcare providers know ALL of the medicines, vitamins and herbal supplements that you are taking. For example, if you have a private physician and a VA primary care provider, you need to make sure BOTH of your providers know your complete medication list. This is why your VA primary care provider, nurses and pharmacists, will go over your medication list with you on many occasions—to make sure your medication list is accurate and up to date.

Your role in medication reconciliation is simple yet crucial. Here are a few easy steps to help your healthcare providers review your medication list:

- Carry one list of medications that includes prescription medications, over-the-counter medications, vitamins, and herbal products.
- This list should include medication name, medication strength, dosing frequency, and indication.
- List any medication allergies you have and include what happened (for example: you had a rash, became dizzy or short of breath).
- Make sure to update this list every time you get a new medication, or when medications are stopped.
- Keep this list with you at all times! Share this list with all of your healthcare providers.
- Do not hesitate to ask your healthcare providers if you have any questions about the use of your medications.

Medication reconciliation can help stop problems before they happen by:

- Making sure you and your healthcare team have the same medication list,
- Preventing medication problems, and
- Working with your healthcare team on making decisions about your medications and health care.

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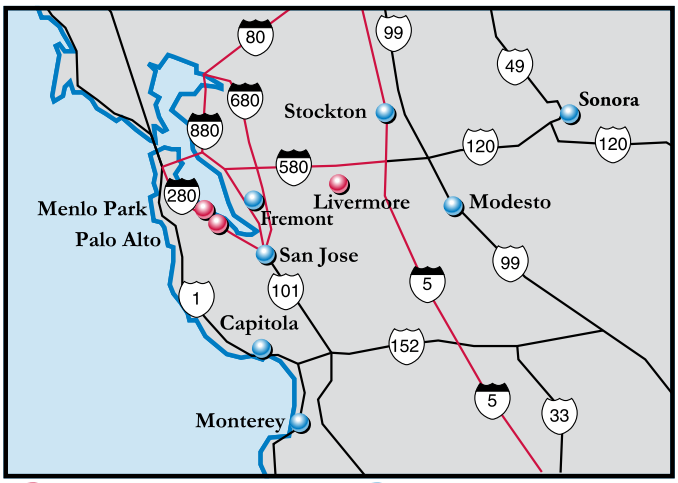

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Taking an active role in your care can help prevent medication errors! Carry your medication list with you at all times!

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

- Choose a checkout line without a candy display.
- Replace high-saturated fat/high calorie seasonings with herbs grown in a small herb garden in your kitchen window.

www.smallstep.gov