

# To Your Health Newsletter

“Promoting Good Health Through Information”

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System

Veteran Health Education Newsletter • Spring 2012

# Healthy Living Messages

## *Getting on the Path to a Longer and Healthier Life*

*Veronica Reis, Ph.D., Health Behavior Coordinator*

Did you know the VA Health Care System has launched a nationwide campaign to focus on preventing illness before it even starts? The VA has created 9 Healthy Living Messages that cover most of the causes of illness and injury. These Healthy Living Messages can put you on a path to a longer and healthier life. The Healthy Living Messages are:

- Be Involved in Your Own Health Care
- Be Tobacco Free
- Limit Alcohol
- Manage Stress
- Strive for a Healthy Weight
- Eat Wisely
- Be Physically Active
- Get Recommended Screenings and Immunizations
- Be Safe

Most of the messages are self-explanatory, but some can use a little more explanation. For example, Be Safe includes practical things you can do to protect yourself and those you love from harm. Wearing your seatbelt, practicing safe sex and preventing falls are proven to save lives.

Be Involved in Your Healthcare includes things such as writing down questions or concerns you have and bringing these to your appointments to discuss with your Patient-Aligned Care Team (PACT). Participating in decisions about your health care, speaking up with questions or concerns and asking for written information and instructions are other examples.

Managing Stress is something we've all heard is a good thing to do, yet are you aware that the root of many physical complaints and illnesses is stress? Those who are overly stressed often report symptoms such as: difficulty concentrating, headaches, sore muscles, increased heart rate and/or blood pressure, being grumpy with others, and feeling exhausted. Too much stress over a long period of time can put your health at risk so managing it early may prevent illness. One way to manage stress is to engage in regular physical activity. Good time management and engaging in pleasant activities are other stress-busters.

Do you see an area you'd like to improve? Not sure where to start? Talk with members of your PACT staff - they are trained to help you create goals for change related to healthy behaviors. You can get a jump-start on this process on your own by creating goals that are SMART:

- S** = **specific**
- M** = **measurable**
- A** = **action-oriented**
- R** = **realistic**
- T** = **timetable to complete**

For example, "I will walk for 10 minutes each day 3 times a week for the next 2 weeks" is a SMART goal whereas "I am going to be more physically active" is a smart idea but not a SMART goal. Look for the Healthy Living Messages posters and handouts and set your goals today! And remember - the members of your PACT are here to help you reach your goals so please share your goals, barriers and successes with them during your next appointment.

# Recipe for Health

## BLACK SKILLET BEEF WITH GREENS & RED POTATOES

*A heart-healthy one-dish meal that is made with lean top round beef, lots of vegetables, and a spicy, herb mixture.*

### Ingredients:

1 lb top round beef  
1 Tbsp paprika  
1-1/2 tsp oregano  
1/2 tsp chili powder  
1/4 tsp garlic powder  
1/4 tsp black pepper  
1/8 tsp red pepper  
1/8 tsp dry mustard  
8 red-skinned potatoes, halved  
3 C finely chopped onion  
2 C beef broth  
2 large garlic cloves, minced  
2 large carrots, peeled, cut into very thin 2-1/2-inch strips  
2 bunches mustard greens, kale, or turnip greens, stems removed, (1/2 lb each) coarsely torn as needed nonstick spray coating

### Directions:

1. Partially freeze beef. Thinly slice across the grain into long strips 1/8-inch thick and 3 inches wide.
2. Combine paprika, oregano, chili powder, garlic powder, black pepper, red pepper, and dry mustard. Coat strips of meat with the spice mixture.
3. Spray a large heavy skillet with nonstick spray coating. Preheat pan over high heat.
4. Add meat; cook, stirring for 5 minutes.
5. Add potatoes, onion, broth, and garlic. Cook covered, over medium heat for 20 minutes.
6. Stir in carrots, lay greens over top, and cook, covered, until carrots are tender, about 15 minutes.
7. Serve in large serving bowl with crusty bread for dunking.

**Yield:** 6 servings

**Serving size:** 7 oz

### Each serving provides:

Calories: 342  
Total fat: 4 g  
Saturated fat: 1 g  
Cholesterol: 45 mg  
Sodium: 101 mg  
Total fiber: 1 g  
Protein: 21 g  
Carbohydrates: 23 g  
Potassium: 292 mg

[www.nhlbi.nih.gov](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov)

# Non-Prescription Pain Medicines and Your Blood Pressure

*Michelle Bryson, PharmD, Pharmacy Resident*

When you have occasional aches and pains, you might take an over-the-counter (OTC) medicine to help. Even though you don't need a prescription to buy these medicines, you should let your provider know that you are taking them, especially if you have high blood pressure. Some OTC pain medicines can make your blood pressure go up!

Some examples of OTC pain medicines you might take are aspirin, acetaminophen (Tylenol®), or a class of drugs called NSAIDs, which stands for Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs. NSAIDs, such as ibuprofen (Motrin®, Advil®, etc), and naproxen (Aleve®) are the OTC pain medicines that can increase your blood pressure. Aspirin, in doses larger than 81 mg, might also increase your blood pressure. The chance of this is higher for men who are older, overweight, have diabetes, or have problems with their heart, kidneys or liver.

If you have high blood pressure, you can still take an NSAID every once in a while. Studies show that taking an NSAID every day for just 1 week can increase blood pressure. It is also possible for your blood pressure medicine to not work as well when you take an NSAID, which also leads to higher blood pressure. This is why it is important to check in with your provider if you find yourself in pain that doesn't get better after a few days.

If you need to take a pain medication every day and are waiting to talk to your provider about it, acetaminophen (Tylenol®) might be a better choice than an NSAID like Motrin® or Aleve®. Try to use the smallest dose for the shortest time possible that helps the pain. Monitor your blood pressure at home or at your local pharmacy. If your provider agrees you need an NSAID every day, they might change your blood pressure medicines to ones that are not affected by NSAIDs as much.

# The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program

*Kayla Forster, RTC, Recreation Therapist - Fitness & Wellness Clinic*

## **Do you have a chronic disease?**

Many Veterans do. Nationwide, more than half of VA patients have high blood pressure, 36% are obese and 24% have diabetes. Chronic diseases are conditions which last more than 3 months. Other examples include heart disease, lung disease, arthritis, cancer, and stroke. Chronic diseases can cause loss of physical conditioning, fatigue, anxiety, stress, difficult emotions and depression.

## **What can I do to help manage my chronic condition?**

The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program (CDSMP) is a workshop that shows people how to manage their chronic disease. The VA Palo Alto Health Care System offers this 6-week workshop that teaches Veterans ways to manage symptoms and be more in charge of their chronic disease. Each session is 2 ½ hours long, and spouses and other loved ones are encouraged to attend with you.

## **Is CDSMP a cure for my chronic disease?**

Self-management is not a cure for chronic disease, but it can help you positively manage your illness. The goal is to achieve the greatest possible physical capability and pleasure from life.

## **Who teaches these courses?**

What's special about the CDSMP is that the course is led by people who have a chronic disease themselves. These leaders have been trained in working with groups of people with a wide range of different chronic conditions.

## **What are some of the topics I would learn about?**

- Making an action plan
- Problem-solving
- Fitness/exercise
- Better breathing
- Pain management
- Fatigue
- Future plans
- Nutrition
- Medication usage
- Making treatment decisions
- Depression

## **What do people say after they have finished the program?**

Some benefits the participants of this program have experienced are better symptom management, coping, and communications with their physicians. They also have reported they have improved their health and spent fewer days in the hospital.

## **I have a chronic disease and would like to participate in the program. How do I sign up?**

To learn more about this program, speak to your Primary Care Provider about "The Chronic Disease Self-Management Program" or call 650-493-5000, ext. 69376.

# 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.paloalto.va.gov](http://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!*

# Tips for Healthy Living

- Good posture can help prevent back pain – sit up straight with your feet flat on the floor.
- Keep track of your important health information.  
Start by writing down the names of the medicines you take.

[www.smallstep.gov](http://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

If you would like to subscribe to the electronic version of this newsletter, send a request to [toyourhealthsubscription@va.gov](mailto:toyourhealthsubscription@va.gov)