

to your

Health!

“Promoting Good Health Through Information”

Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System • Patient Education Newsletter • Fall 2006

Don't Fall in the Fall!

Hank Winkenwerder, PT

More than one third of people over the age of 65 had at least one fall last year. Falls are the fifth leading cause of death in older people (sometimes due to broken bones requiring surgery or prolonged convalescence). If you have had a scare this year, including “almost falling” by reaching out for a wall or other object to prevent a tumble, take some time and review three areas that will help keep you upright and out of the doctor’s office or emergency room.

1) Create a safe home environment

- Reduce trip hazards such as loose rugs, electrical cords and clutter.
- Add a night light in the hall or bathroom (many falls occur at night when sleepy people stumble to the bathroom).
- Have grab bars installed in your bathroom if needed (don't rely on towel or toilet paper holders which may pull out of the wall) and put non-skid surfaces in the tub and shower.
- Keep objects you use often in cabinets at the level between your knees and shoulders to avoid stooping or climbing step ladders.
- Wear good non-slip footwear “where the rubber meets the road.”

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Recipe for Health

1-2-3 PEACH COBBLER

Ingredients:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon | 1 Tbsp tub margarine |
| 1 Tbsp vanilla extract | 1 C dry pancake mix |
| 2 Tbsp cornstarch | 2/3 C all-purpose flour |
| 1 C peach nectar | 1/2 C sugar |
| 1/4 C pineapple juice or peach juice (if desired, use juice reserved from canned peaches) | 2/3 C evaporated skim milk as needed |
| 2 cans (16 oz each) peaches, packed in juice, drained, (or 13/4 lb fresh) sliced | nonstick cooking spray |
| | 1/2 tsp nutmeg |
| | 1 Tbsp brown sugar |

Directions:

1. Combine cinnamon, vanilla, cornstarch, peach nectar, and pineapple or peach juice in saucepan over medium heat. Stir constantly until mixture thickens and bubbles.
2. Add sliced peaches to mixture.
3. Reduce heat and simmer for 5-10 minutes.
4. In another saucepan, melt margarine and set aside
5. Lightly spray 8-inch-square glass dish with cooking spray. Pour hot peach mixture into dish.
6. In another bowl, combine pancake mix, flour, sugar, and melted margarine. Stir in milk. Quickly spoon this over peach mixture.
7. Combine nutmeg and brown sugar. Sprinkle on top of batter.
8. Bake at 400 °F for 15-20 minutes or until golden brown.
9. Cool and cut into 8 pieces.

Yields: 8 servings Serving Size: 1 piece

Each serving provides:

Calories: 271	Total fiber: 2 g
Total fat: 4 g	Protein: 4 g
Saturated fat: < 1 g	Carbohydrates: 54 g
Cholesterol: < 1 mg	Potassium: 284 mg
Sodium: 263 mg	

www.smallstep.gov

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Visit our new patient education website at <http://www.palo-alto.med.va.gov/patienteducation/patienteducation.htm>



Telemedicine at the VA!

Noelle K. Hasson, PharmD

You may be able to send your blood sugar results, weight or blood pressure readings to your VA provider electronically. Telemedicine is a new approach to ongoing medical care that can allow VA staff to monitor a patient's health status without the patient having to come in for frequent appointments. The focus is on supporting the care of veterans in their homes.

Special monitors are used to send information from the patient to the provider. Eligible patients are assigned a special Telehealth monitor. Nurses train the patients how to use the monitor. The monitor connects to a telephone line in the patient's home. Each day the patient enters their information (e.g. blood sugar values, weights, etc) into the monitor. That information is then sent to a secure website. Nurses regularly review all of the information entered by the patient and alert a provider when necessary. Providers

evaluate the information without the patient having to visit the provider. If a change is necessary but not serious enough to justify a visit by the patient, the provider can adjust treatments without inconveniencing the patient. This can allow the veteran to spend more time doing other things besides traveling to the VA all the time!

Telemedicine offers a unique solution for patients who live far away and who might have multiple chronic health issues that require frequent monitoring and management. The VA has established telemedicine programs which focus on veterans with diabetes, chronic heart failure, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. In the future the VA hopes to also serve patients with PTSD, depression and spinal cord injury through the Telehealth program. If you are interested in learning more, speak with your provider.

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Don't Fall in the Fall!

2) Have good health.

- Make sure your vision is adequate with yearly eye checkups and wear glasses as needed.
- Have your doctor review your medications for ones which might lead to falls. Some medications cause dizziness which can lead to a fall.
- Orthostatic hypotension (where the blood pressure drops when you stand) can lead to dizziness. Often, just counting to 5 and letting the dizziness pass will prevent a fall, but if this persists, inform your doctor.

3) Maintain strength and coordination.

- It is true if you don't use something you lose it.
- Walk regularly to preserve strength and try some simple exercises that use your balance and coordination.
- For example, stand up and sit down slowly to a three count. Vary this by placing one leg further forward so more weight is on one side.
- You can also do a small squat or practice standing on one leg at a kitchen countertop. Balance with fingertips on the counter and a chair behind for safety if needed.
- Toe raises are another good exercise, but don't stop there!
- Try standing tall and lifting your toes off the ground keeping your heels down. This challenges your balance backwards.

Don't fall like the leaves this autumn. Do a safety check at home, keep your health up and stay active. ■

Want to learn more?



Medications are a huge part of many treatments. Here are a few new books to look for in your library or bookstore:

The AARP Guide to Pills, by American Association for Retired Persons, published by Sterling, 2006. The information is comprehensive, written to be concise and easily understood, with photographs, and a section on drug/food/supplement interactions. An excellent general resource.

Safe Medicine for Sober People: How to Avoid Relapsing on Pain, Sleep, Cold, or Any Other Medication, by Jeffrey Weisberg, published in 2004 by St. Martin's. A useful guide to safe and risky drugs for those who are at risk from alcohol, mood-altering drugs, or other addictive ingredients.

Taking Your Medicine: A Guide to Medication Regimens and Compliance for Patients and Caregivers, by Jack Fincham. Published by Pharmaceutical Products Press, 2005. Your medications are only as good as you make them by understanding the right timing, dosage, and ways to take them. Here's what to ask, how to read the bottle, and valuable sections on drug interactions, drug assistance programs, online resources, mail-order pharmacies, and generic drugs. ■

Staying Active in the Fall/Winter

Alisa Krinsky, MS, CTRS, RTC

It's easier for most of us to maintain an active lifestyle during the warm, summer days. As the weather changes and there is a chill in the air or perhaps rain, it becomes more difficult to motivate ourselves to stay active. However, keeping an active lifestyle throughout the year is important to maintaining your fitness and keeping those few extra pounds off. Here are some simple ideas to keep yourself fit! For those of you who prefer to stay at home, KCSM, Public Television Channel 43 South Bay, offers a daily broadcast of various physical fitness programs for all ability levels. The following are four examples of exercise programs:

10:00 Classical Stretch -More Yoga for the Rest of Us

10:30 Stretch and Flex -Traditional stretch and flex exercises with emphasis on broad audience of various abilities

11:00 Sit & Be Fit -Ideal for more fragile persons who need low impact fitness

11:30 Body Electric -Light weights and aerobics for very accessible yet progressive exercises.

For those of you who prefer to venture out, here are some other ideas. Take an exercise class at a local senior center or parks and recreation department. Several offer adapted exercise programs for older adults. In addition, several of the local colleges have adapted physical education classes like De Anza College in Cupertino or College of San Mateo. You are welcome to participate in the fitness and wellness programs offered here at VA Palo Alto. Just request a consult from your primary care provider. VA Palo Alto offers aquatic exercise, fitness options including treadmills, stationary bikes and strength enhancement equipment. In addition, walking laps in the gymnasiums at the Palo Alto Division or the Menlo Park Division is an option too!

The goal is to stay active, keep fit and maintain an active lifestyle all year round! You will feel better both physically and emotionally and your body will too! ■

Guard Against Slips & Trips: Fall Prevention Quiz

In 2002, how many people died as a result of a fall?

- a. 1,000
- b. 5,100
- c. 14,500

Answer: c. According to the National Safety Council, only motor-vehicle crashes and poisoning cause more unintentional injury (accidental) deaths. One in five visitors to a hospital emergency room for an injury is there because of a fall.

What percentage of falls occur at home?

- a. 10%
- b. 25%
- c. over 50%

Answer: c. So says NSC publication, Injury Facts®. Since more time is spent at home than anywhere else,

that's where falls are more likely to occur, especially if steps are not taken to reduce the risk.

True or False? Most fatalities resulting from falls involve sporting events like mountain climbing or parachuting.

Answer: False. Fewer than 4 percent of falling fatalities involve sports. According to the Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC), more people died as a result of tripping on a level surface than in mountain climbing.

What accounts for the most falls that result in death?

- a. Ladders
- b. Stairs and steps
- c. Slippery tile

Answer: b. More falling deaths result from stairs and steps, according to the CPSC. Beds rate second, while ladders are in third place.

If you're over 65, what are your chances of falling?

- a. 1 in 20
- b. 1 in 5
- c. 1 in 3

Answer: c. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), seniors have a 33 percent chance of falling in any year. Older adults are five times more likely to be hospitalized for a fall-related injury than for other injury-related reasons.

True or False? Seniors account for many more falling injuries than children.

Answer: False. The NSC publication, Injury Facts® indicates there were 11,081,000 falling injuries. Of this total, seniors age 65 and older account for 2,459,000, and children under 12 account for 2,173,000.

What's Your Score?

- 4-6 correct: Standing tall!
- 2-3: Have a good grip
- 0-1: On shaky ground

<http://www.nsc.org/issues/ifalls/falquiz.htm>

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

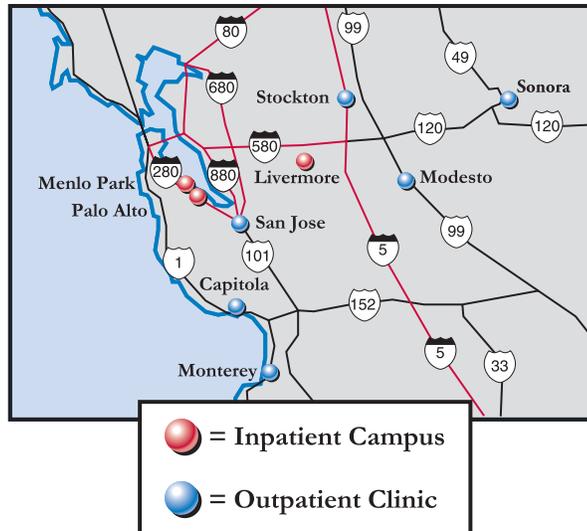
1350 N. 41st Street,
Suite 102
Capitola, CA 95010
(831) 464-5519

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

500 W. Hospital Road
Stockton, CA 95231
(209) 946-3400

World Wide Web Address:

www.palo-alto.med.va.gov



Flu Season is just around the corner!

If you are an enrolled veteran, 50 or older or have a chronic illness, Flu Shots are available October through December at the following locations:

1. At your scheduled Medical or Surgical appointment.
2. For patients without an appointment:

Palo Alto: Daily, 8:30 – Noon, 1:00 – 3:30

Livermore: Daily, 8:30 – Noon, 1:00 – 3:30

San Jose & Monterey: Daily, 1:00 – 4:00

Stockton, Modesto, Sonora: Daily, 2:00 – 3:00

Or, enrolled Veterans can come to the Saturday Flu Clinic October 21st, 2006

Monterey Clinic: 9am–3pm;

San Jose Clinic: 10am–2pm;

Modesto Clinic: 9am–2pm ;

Livermore Clinics, Building 62: 9am–2pm;

Palo Alto Clinic Area A, Building 100: 9am–2pm

and on Saturday October 28th, 2006

Stockton Clinic and Sonora Clinic: 9am – 2pm

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

Try a new fruit or vegetable. (Ever had jicama, plantain, bok choy, starfruit or papaya?)

Get a dog and walk it.