to your Health!

"Promoting Good Health Through Information"

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

# Heart Attack Warning Signs

A heart attack is a frightening event. You probably don't want to think about it. But, if you learn the signs of a heart attack and what steps to take, you can save a life-maybe your own.

What are the signs of a heart attack? Many people think a heart attack is sudden and intense, like a "movie" heart attack, where a person clutches his or her chest and falls over.

The truth is that many heart attacks start slowly, as a mild pain or discomfort. If you feel such a symptom, you may not be sure what's wrong. Your symptoms may even come and go. Even those who have had a heart attack may not recognize their symptoms. Another attack can have very different symptoms.

It's vital that everyone learn the warning signs of a heart attack. These are:

**Chest discomfort.** Most heart attacks involve discomfort in the center of the chest that lasts for more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back. The discomfort can feel like pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain.

**Discomfort in other areas of the upper body.** Can include pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach.

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

# Recipe for Health

## DELICIOUS OVEN FRENCH FRIES

*Grill, steam or bake instead of frying.*

**Ingredients:**

4 (2 lb) large potatoes
8 C ice water
1 tsp garlic powder
1 tsp onion powder
1/4 tsp salt
1 tsp white pepper
1/4 tsp allspice
1 tsp hot pepper flakes
1 Tbsp vegetable oil

**Directions:**

1. Scrub potatoes and cut into 1/2-inch strips.
2. Place potato strips into ice water, cover, and chill for 1 hour or longer.
3. Remove potatoes and dry strips thoroughly.
4. Place garlic powder, onion powder, salt, white pepper, allspice, and pepper flakes in plastic bag.
5. Toss potatoes in spice mixture.
6. Brush potatoes with oil.
7. Place potatoes in nonstick shallow baking pan.
8. Cover with aluminum foil and place in 475 °F oven for 15 minutes.
9. Remove foil and continue baking uncovered for additional 15-20 minutes or until golden brown. Turn fries occasionally to brown on all sides.

Yields: 5 servings – Serving Size: 1 cup
Each serving provides:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Calories: | 238 | Total fiber: | 5 g |
| Total fat: | 4 g | Protein: | 5 g |
| Saturated fat: | 1 g | Carbohydrates: | 48 g |
| Cholesterol: | 0 mg | Potassium: | 796 mg |
| Sodium: | 163 mg | | |

*www.smallstep.gov*

# "Act In Time To Heart Attack Signs" Quiz

**See if you know what to do if a heart attack happens. Take this True/False quiz.**

*http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/actintime/taha/quiz.htm*

1. Discomfort or a heavy feeling in the chest can signal a heart attack.

   True or False

2. Women do not frequently experience heart attacks.

   True or False

3. African-American women die of heart attacks at the same rate as white women.

   True or False

4. Some people who are experiencing the symptoms of a heart attack often wait hours or even days before seeking needed medical care.

   True or False

5. Being treated within about an hour of the first symptoms can make a significant difference.

   True or False

6. Many heart attack victims say their heart attack wasn't what they'd expected.

   True or False

7. A family member, such as a spouse, can persuade a loved one having a heart attack to seek help immediately.

   True or False

8. Calling 9-1-1 for chest pain alone would probably turn out to be a waste of the emergency medical personnel's time.

   True or False

9. Most heart attacks occur in people over 65.

   True or False

10. The major issue in delay is how long it takes for emergency medical personnel to find the address and deliver the patient to the hospital.

    True or False

### Answers to "Act In Time" Quiz

1 True; 2 False; 3 False; 4 True; 5 True;
6 True; 7 True; 8 False; 9 True; 10 False

*(continued from page 1)*

## Heart Attack Warning Signs

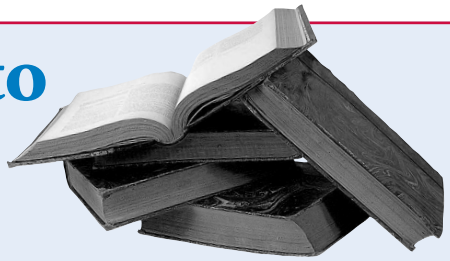
**Shortness of breath.** Often comes along with chest discomfort. But it also can occur before chest discomfort.

**Other symptoms.** May include a cold sweat, nausea, or light-headedness.

Learn the signs-but also remember: Even if you're not sure it's a heart attack, if you have symptoms, call 9-1-1. Fast action can save lives-maybe your own.

*http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/actintime/haws/haws.htm*

## Want to learn more?

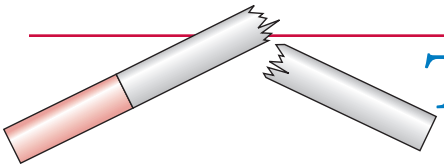


Here are some titles to consider:

*The Joslin Guide to Diabetes: a program for managing your treatment*, by Richard S. Beaser. 2005 revised edition. An excellent introduction and reference.

*The No Sweat Exercise Plan: simple steps to lose weight and improve your health without spending hours in the gym*, by Harvey B. Simon. Highly recommended, and includes a chapter on exercise therapy.

*On Killing: the psychological cost of learning to kill in war and society*, by Lt. Col. Dave Grossman. This is not for every PTSD sufferer, but many have benefited from its approach and explanation of the psychological pressures of war and military training.



# The VA Can Help You Kick Butts

*Precious Rivera RN, BSN, OCN*

Since the 1970's, more than 40 percent of adults who have ever smoked have quit. Today, about 48 million Americans still smoke cigarettes but most smokers are actively trying to quit or are at least thinking about it.

To make any lifestyle change, it's important to review the benefits and risks associated with that change. This process applies to smoking.

## Some potential risks of smoking

Smoking is the leading cause of respiratory diseases such as asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), emphysema and lung cancer. It also causes heart problems and leads to stroke. It can also cause bladder cancer and impotence. Smoking is also the leading cause of preventable death.

## Some potential benefits of quitting

- Reduce wrinkling/skin aging
- Improve sense of smell and taste
- Have healthier children
- Improve health
- Set good examples for children
- Perform physical activities better
- Save money! The average smoker can buy 2 concert tickets if they quit for 1 month. If you quit for 1 year, you could buy yourself a trip to Hawaii!

## Help is on the way!

The VA Palo Alto Smoking Cessation Clinics are located in Palo Alto, San Jose, and Stockton. Patients can be referred by their doctor or can refer themselves. Besides medications, individual and group counseling can help.

VA Fact Sheets have important information and advice on how to stop smoking. Ask your VA provider or nurse to print a copy from the VA website for you.

Telequit is a new research program that provides nicotine patches and gum in addition to telephone counseling to any veteran in our region. Ask your provider to refer you. Once the referral is made you will be contacted by telephone to arrange for patches, an interview and a referral to the 24 hour helpline. You will also receive handouts and information on how to stop smoking.

# *Resources at the VA to Keep You Healthy*

*H. Winkenwerder*

5 Patient Education materials: Right now you're reading "To Your health", the quarterly patient education newsletter with timely advice on healthy habits for your health. You can find other pamphlets and flyers available in the waiting rooms on a variety of topics. The VA has a large library of materials that is available to providers to give to patients on conditions from headaches to diabetic foot care. Ask your provider for written information on your particular condition and what to do about it. "Healthwise for Life" is a book that covers many common conditions and is available at patient orientation.

4 Personal Health Journal: This is the book where you keep all your appointments and lab and test results. You can record your blood pressure and blood sugar readings, weight, current medications, etc. This way you and your provider can spot any trends that may need to be changed. Although the VA has the most extensive and secure medical record system available on computer for your provider to access, it is a good idea to keep track of your health status yourself (very useful if you travel to another area of the country on vacation and need medical care elsewhere).

3 My HeatheVet can be found at www.myhealth.va.gov. It is a secure on-line resource for veterans to access three trusted sources of medical information (VA health information, MedlinePlus® – a government resource, and Healthwise® – a new consumer health education resource). You can also keep track of your personal health information online and now reorder and track your medications. Start with the registration wizard to set up your free, personal, private account now.

2 Telephone resources: Telephone Care Plan (TCP)-(650)496-2579 or (800) 455-0057. You can speak to a patient services advisor who can answer questions on appointments and medications. For health issues, a telephone

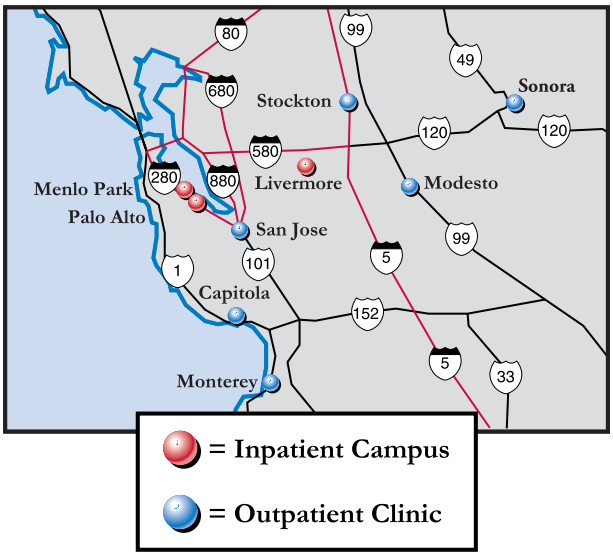
*(Continued on page 4.)*

# 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 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

**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

**World Wide Web Address:**
www.palo-alto.med.va.gov

VA PAHCS
Veterans Affairs
Palo Alto Health Care System

# Resources at the VA to Keep You Healthy *(Continued from page 3.)*

advice nurse can assist you in deciding what to do and where to go if you are ill or have had a change in medical condition. Urgent advice is available 24 hours a day, though normal TCP hours are Monday through Friday 8-4pm. This is NOT an emergency service and should never be used in an emergency when you should call 911.

The automated telephone information system (TIS) can be reached at (650)496-2580 or (800)311-2511 is available 24 hours a day for automated telephone refills and information on your future appointments in the next 30 days.

1 YOU! – Obviously, your primary care provider is key to your health. They assess your needs and order any tests, procedures, medications and specialist appointments. YOU are the one ultimately in charge of your care. So, arm yourself with any information you can using the resources above and three questions: 1) what is my main problem? 2) what do I need to do about it? 3) why is this important to me? The answers to these questions can lead to better health. Write them down in your personal health journal and bring it to your next appointment.

## *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

**Go for a half-hour walk instead of watching TV.**

**Use nonfat or low-fat sour cream, mayo, sauces, dressings, and other condiments.**