

to your

Health!



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Revisiting Resolutions

*Krista Thorne-Yocam, MA, MOVE! Program;
VA Palo Alto Health Care System*

It's spring time! Many of you made the brave decision to tackle a goal or make a resolution at the beginning of this year. The word "resolution" really means trying to solve something that isn't yet solved. By this time you may have made great progress, or you may have become discouraged. This article is for people in both camps.

If you've made progress, congratulations! How did you do it?

If you are discouraged, bravo!



See Revisiting Resolutions – page 3

Spring is in the Air — It is Allergy Season

Allison Li, Pharm. D., Pharmacy; VA Palo Alto Health Care System

With warmer winter weather, allergy season has come early this year. As pollen fills the air, people affected by seasonal allergies begin to groan. Millions of Americans suffer from the all too familiar stuffy noses and watery eyes that accompany allergies. Seasonal allergies, also called hay fever and allergic rhinitis, can make anyone miserable. But before you settle for plastic flowers and staying indoors to avoid pollen, try these simple strategies to keep seasonal allergies under control.

First, know what triggers your allergies to act up. Triggers, or allergens, can vary from animal dander to pollen to mold. A plant can produce a billion pollen grains in a season, and the grains can travel up to 400 miles due to their light weight.

Outdoor molds can be found in raked leaves, and are usually more abundant after rain.

Once you have identified your triggers, find ways to avoid contact with those allergens. Steps may include:

- Wearing a protective mask when gardening or doing yard work
- Changing air condition filters often
- Wearing sunglasses when outdoors to reduce the amount of pollen that travels into your eyes
- Exercising in the morning or later in the day, when pollen counts are lower

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- Frequently washing your pets if they play outside

If these steps do not help reduce your seasonal allergies, talk to your primary care provider or pharmacist about an over-the-counter or prescription medication. There are a variety of medications that can help improve symptoms of your seasonal allergies.

Nasal congestion, more commonly referred to as stuffy nose, is a very common symptom of seasonal allergies. Nasal congestion is when your nasal passages become blocked and it becomes hard to breathe through your nose. There are a few over-the-counter nasal sprays such as Afrin (oxymetazoline) and Sinux (phenylephrine) that can help clear up your sinuses.

For these nasal decongestant sprays it is important to remember that you should only use these nasal sprays for three days or less. If they are used longer, rebound congestion can occur, meaning your stuffy nose may become worse. When using nasal sprays, blow your nose to clear out mucus before using the medicine. Shake the bottle gently before using. Tilt your head forward and direct the nozzle inside one nostril and then use a finger to close your other nostril, squeeze the pump as you begin to breathe in slowly through your nose. Try not

to blow your nose immediately after spraying because much of the medication will be lost.

Oral antihistamines such as Allegra, Claritin, and Zyrtec are available over-the-counter. Histamine is a chemical that is released during an allergic reaction and that chemical is the culprit for causing the symptoms of allergies, such as stuffy noses and watery eyes. Antihistamines work by preventing more histamine from being released. Like all medications, antihistamines have side effects. Newer medications such as Allegra, Claritin, and Zyrtec are associated with fewer side effects, but Benadryl is associated with a lot of drowsiness. People older than 65 should generally avoid taking Benadryl. Benadryl can cause sleepiness, confusion, urinary retention, dry mouth, and dizziness. People who are older than 65 should try nasal decongestants first before trying oral anti-histamines.

Although there is no real cure for seasonal allergies, it is possible to relieve symptoms. Start by reducing exposure to allergens. If minimizing contact with allergens is not possible or ineffective, nasal decongestants or antihistamines can help ease allergy symptoms.

Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or topics you would like addressed in the [To Your Health](#) newsletter, feel free to contact

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Grape Fruit Juice & Medicine: A Deadly Mix?

*Lin Wan Pharm. D., Pharmacy;
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Grapefruit juice can be a part of a healthy diet. But it can also be harmful when you take it with certain medications. Compounds in grapefruit and grapefruit juice can change the way your medicines work, both prescription and over-the-counter medications. Most of the time, grapefruit can increase the amount of drug being taken up into your bloodstream. This may lead to more side effects and dangerous results. Side effects that may occur are different with each medicine. Problems can include an abnormal heartbeat, difficulty breathing, muscle breakdown, and kidney damage. Here are some examples of drugs that grapefruit may interact with:

- some cholesterol lowering drugs, such as simvastatin (Zocor®), atorvastatin (Lipitor®).
- some blood pressure lowering drugs such as nifedipine.
- some medicines to help with your allergies, such as fexofenadine (Allegra®).
- some medicines that help with mood/ anxiety.

[See Grape Fruit Juice – page 4](#)

This means you've made an effort to work on something that's important to you! Now is the time to remember the reasons you attempted to solve something in the first place and take steps to get back on track. Here's how it works (be prepared to write down these questions and as many answers to them as you can):

What is most important to you?

This step is often overlooked and stumps many people. Some people say, "Losing weight is important to me." Great, however, why do you want to lose weight? It could be for health reasons, but it may be that spending time with your grandchildren is most important, and losing weight would allow you to do more with them. Answering this question may take some time, but it is well worth it! These answers are the heart of the motivation that will help you reach your goals.

Where do you want to be, or, how would you like things to be different one year from now?

This is a long-term picture of where you see yourself in a year. Some folks want to be able to dance again or build a fort with their grandkids; some want to lose a set amount of weight. Think in terms of what you would reasonably like to do. Being able to jog like you did when you were 18 is probably not attainable so choose something you really think you could achieve in a year, like walking 5 miles or losing 25 pounds.

Where do you want to be one month from now?

This is a short-term picture, or goal. You may want your clothes to fit better, be signed up for dancing lessons, or lose 5 pounds. This step helps you create an achievable weekly goal.

What are you willing to do this week to get to where you want to be in a month?

You are creating your weekly goal with this step. Will you exercise 2 days this week for 20 minutes, add a vegetable to your lunch meal, find a local dance studio to inquire about lessons? Be as specific as you can, "Eat healthy" isn't a goal, it's more like a wish. "Add a vegetable to lunch 4 times this week" is a satisfactory goal. "Add celery, carrots, or broccoli to lunch on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Saturday" is even better!

What will get in your way of exercising, adding a vegetable, or finding a dance studio?

Be honest, this is crucial. Saying that you don't like to exercise is okay—you are not alone. If you don't like it, what do you think would help you do it anyway? Asking someone to go with you? Waking up earlier to get it done first thing in the morning? Get creative, even silly, to get ideas flowing.

What got in my way? What helped me?

Don't skip this step! Before you make your goals for the next week, look back and write down anything that got in your way or made it difficult to reach your goal. Then, write down anything that helped you reach your goal. Use this information to brainstorm ideas that you think will help. Ask a friend or provider for ideas, too!

Stuck? Discouraged?

- Go back to the first step and remind yourself why you are doing this in the first place. The things that are most important to you are important! Take a deep breath and keep going.
- You are making big changes; it takes motivation, effort, time, and energy. Focus on the little chunks and before you know it, you'll be where you want to be.
- If you want to improve your health through weight loss and lifestyle changes, contact the MOVE! Program by calling 650-493-5000 Ext. 69327.



Grape Fruit Juice – continued from page 2

You may wonder how much grapefruit or juice it takes to cause the problem. It does not take much. Just 1 grapefruit or about 6 ounces of juice can lead to dangerous amounts of drug in your bloodstream. It is not enough to avoid taking your medicine at the same time as grapefruit. You must avoid eating grapefruit the entire time you are taking your medicine.

It is always a good idea to check with your pharmacist, provider or nurse to see if any of your medicines interact with grapefruit. You can also check the patient information sheet or medication guide. If it is necessary for you to avoid grapefruit or grapefruit juice, make sure to check the ingredients label on bottled drinks or juices to make sure they don't contain any grapefruit.



A Mobile Application for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Karen M. Wall, MA, RN-BC, BSN, Mental Health Nursing Educator; VA Palo Alto Health Care System

What if your smart phone could help with your post-traumatic stress? The VA has created just such an application (app) for smart phones. It was developed to help Veterans recognize and manage PTSD symptoms. You can also use it to monitor your symptoms and find support in times of crisis.

The app is available for both the iPhone and android models and has four main windows. From the four windows, you can learn about PTSD, take a self-assessment, manage symptoms and find support. There is also a "Setup" option at the bottom of the HOME page for you to add your own soothing music, soothing images, and personal contacts for support from your existing phone contact list. Let's explore the activities one-by-one to get a better idea of what the app has to offer:

Learn:

1. Learn About PTSD- You can listen to a wide range of information about PTSD, such as what it is, how it develops, how common it is and other problems that may happen at the same time. There is also information on treatment, and what to do if you have, or you think you may have PTSD.
2. Learn About Professional Care- You will be able to learn more about why treatment is needed and how to work around the stigma of seeking help. This section will tell you how each member of the treatment team will be able to support you.

Self Assessment:

1. Take Assessment- You are guided through 17 questions about possible symptoms. Once you answer the questions, you will be asked if you want to schedule a reminder to do the assessment at selected intervals. Next, you will be able to see the assessment based on your responses, as well as view your symptom history on an easy-to-understand grid.
2. Track History- You can look at your history of symptoms and track your progress, or need for improvement, in managing your symptoms.
3. Schedule Assessments- You can customize how often you want the app to send a reminder to do a self-assessment. This option can also be determined with the help of your provider/treatment team based on your current status.

Manage Symptoms:

1. You can choose from the list of topics- Reminded of Trauma, Avoiding Triggers, Disconnected from People, Disconnected from Reality, Sad/Hopeless, Worried/Anxious, Angry, or Unable to Sleep.
2. Example: If you chose "Avoiding Triggers" you will first be asked to indicate your level of distress on the "Distress Meter". You will then be guided through a series of inspiring quotes, and simple exercises such as breathing exercises. You will then be asked again to indicate your level of distress on the meter to see if the exercise has helped you.
3. You can choose your favorite exercises throughout the section by selecting the "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" icons at the bottom of the page. These favorites are then saved and listed in the Manage Symptoms page for future quick use.

Find Support:

1. Get Support Right Now- If you select this option, the next screen will advise you to call 911 or call the Veterans Crisis Line (1-800-273-8255).
2. Setup My Support Network- You will be prompted to choose from your contact list anyone you feel you can call for support if you are in crisis. The app links directly to your phone/device's contact list for ease of selection.
3. Find Professional Care- You can have a list of providers as well as other professional care available.

This app is easy to learn and use. The developers have thought about the difficulties experienced by Veterans who have PTSD, and have designed the app in a way that is user-friendly for Veterans with different coping levels. A goal of treatment in mental health is to teach you how to self-monitor and find effective ways to deal with your illness between appointments and in times of crisis. This mobile app is one that you can have in your pocket for a "quick check-in". The app does not ask for, or share any patient health information, therefore your personal information is kept safe.



Couscous with Peas and Onions

Ingredients

- 1 cup onion (finely chopped)
- 1/2 teaspoon sage (ground)
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 1/3 cup water
- 1 cup green peas (frozen)
- 1 cup couscous
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (optional)



Directions

1. Combine oil and onions in heavy skillet.
2. Sauté for 5-10 minutes until lightly browned.
3. Add the peas, sage, water, couscous, and salt if desired.
4. Cover and cook on low for about 5 minutes or until peas are tender but still bright green and all of the water is absorbed.
5. Fluff with fork.

Notes

- Serve with lemon wedges or balsamic vinegar.
- May use poultry seasoning in place of ground sage.
- May use any vegetable oil in place of olive oil.

Each serving provides:

Calories	190
Total fat	1.5 g
Saturated fat	0 g
Cholesterol	0 mg
Sodium	45mg

Yield: 4 servings

Serving Size: 1 cup

Source: choosemyplate.gov



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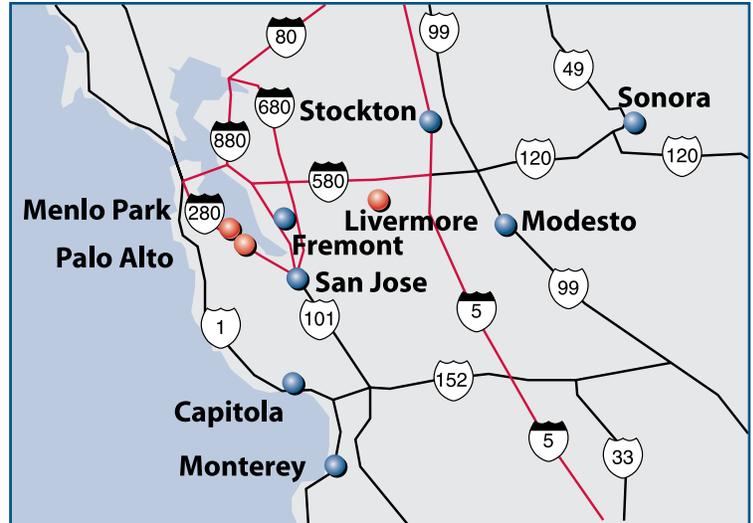
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VA Palo Alto Health Care System Division



VA Palo Alto Health Care System
Community Based Outpatient Clinic

Food and Nutrition Quiz

See how savvy you are about food and nutrition by taking this little quiz. Some questions have more than one answer.

- Only one juice is high in iron. Is it...
 - orange
 - prune
 - carrot
 - apricot
- True or false: Trimming the fat eliminates most of the cholesterol from meats.
- Sulforaphane, a compound thought to protect against cancer, is found in...
 - broccoli
 - cabbage
 - tea
 - kale
- True or false: Pink grapefruit usually costs more than white, but it's more nutritious.
- True or false: Despite some rumors, a lime juice marinade cannot really "cook" raw fish or shellfish and kill all bacteria.
- Which of these provides enough vitamin C to meet the daily RDA?
 - an ounce of Cheddar cheese
 - a cup of orange juice
 - a cup of broccoli
 - a medium-size baked potato with its skin

Answers: 1.) b, 2.) False, 3.) a,b and d, 4.) True, 5.) True, 6.) b & c **Source: kdheks.gov**

