



Women veteran vitality

VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System

SPRING 2010

Human Papillomavirus

There are 12,000 newly diagnosed cases of cervical cancer every year.

Every year 6 million people (most are women) are diagnosed with genital human papillomavirus (HPV) infection—the most common sexually transmitted infection (CDC, 2009). HPV is transmitted through sexual intercourse and those infected and can cause serious health problems. There are 40 identified HPV types, many that cause multiple health problems.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) there are 12,000 newly diagnosed cases of cervical cancer every year. When HPV invades the cervix, most often the signs and symptoms are not apparent until it has reached advanced stages. Routine cervical cancer screenings are an important method for early detection.

Additionally, vaccine (Gardasil®) is available for females ages 9-26. This vaccine protects against cervical, vulvar and vaginal cancers, genital warts or precancerous lesions. Veterans who are not pregnant or planning to become pregnant, are encouraged to get the HPV vaccine series.

Not all types of HPV are visible and although a condom can protect against some transmission of the virus, it can be transmitted by skin-to-skin contact outside the area of the condom.

All women should talk to their health care provider about how to protect against this disease, about sexually transmitted disease (STD) prevention and contraception methods.

Contraceptive Management

You forgot your daily dose, what do you do?

If you miss one pill, just take it as soon as you can, even if it means taking two the next day. If you are in the first two weeks of your pack and have missed two doses, take two pills for the next two days. If you miss two pills in week three OR three pills at any time, continue as prescribed until Sunday, discard the remaining pills and start a new pack. In these instances, use back-up birth control for seven days.

If your NuvaRing® is expelled or removed, rinse it in cool to luke-warm water and re-insert it. If the ring is not re-inserted within three hours, effectiveness will be decreased and back-up should be used. If the ring is left in place longer than four weeks, pregnancy must be

ruled out before a new ring is inserted. Back-up contraception must be used for seven days.

If your Ortho Evra® patch becomes partially or completely detached, reapply it to the same place or replace it with a new patch. If detached for more than 24 hours, apply a new patch, and use that day as the new “patch change day.” Use back-up contraception for seven days.

Onset of menses usually occurs 1-3 days following the last active pill or removal of ring or patch. Remember that these forms of contraception do not protect against STD's. Ask for the card with tips about using these forms of contraceptives, and call your provider if you have questions.

—Continued on Reverse



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WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE
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the best care anywhere.



Your Sexual Vitality

Every woman can enhance her ability to respond to her sexual desires.

Health consists of a healthy mind in a healthy body. As VA adapts to taking care of the physical health of women Veterans, their mental health, which includes sexual health must not be overlooked. Emotional well-being in the sexual area is reflected in a woman's comfort with her body, her interpersonal relationships, and her overall life circumstances.

Over 40 percent of women experience distress related to sexual desire, arousal, orgasm or pain. The most common area of discomfort is low sexual desire. Lack of sexual desire affects a woman's quality of life, physical and emotional satisfaction, and overall happiness.

The feeling of sexual desire is tied to hormones, but it also depends on the availability of a partner, relationship conflict, life stress, body acceptance and past sexual experience. Women in the military can have a high level of self-confidence based on being fit and capable; however, they can still feel vulnerable in the sexual arena.

To counteract the effects of life stress and relationship strain, women can set aside specific time to focus on their sexual desires. Desire usually increases when a woman is relaxed, pays attention to her senses (especially smell, touch, and taste), and feels close to her partner. Specific "date" times can be arranged, so she can let go of everyday concerns, focus on her own

and her partner's feelings, and allow her natural sexual desires to surface. It is important to close out distractions and interruptions. As much as possible, relationship conflicts should be set aside in favor of creating this "special time." There is a reason it is called "love making." Satisfying sexual interactions deepen our love for our partner.

A major barrier to a woman's ability to feel desire is embarrassment about her physical appearance. The outside package is emphasized so strongly in our culture. It takes active effort to put aside that mental critique. If she can focus on the moment and her growing sexual feelings, those insecurities can be kept at bay. Focusing and seeing her partner's sexual interest may heighten her own desires.

With practice, every woman can enhance her ability to respond to her sexual desires. This is one key to better sexual health!

Military Sexual Trauma

MST, like any form of sexual assault, can affect a person's mental health.

April was Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Military sexual trauma (MST) is sexual assault or harassment that occurred while the Veteran was in the military. Some examples of MST include: physical assault; promotions depending on sexual activity; persistently being made the butt of sexual innuendo; sexual touch or grabbing; or threatening and unwelcomed sexual advances.

Women are more likely to be the victims of MST, but because the military is made up of more men than women, the actual number of male and female MST cases is about the same. This holds true nationally and for Nebraska and western Iowa. About one in five women and one in 100 men have told their VA health care provider that they have experienced MST.

MST, like any form of sexual assault, can affect a person's mental health. The victim of sexual assault may have persistent unwanted memories or images; sudden strong emotions or numbness; problems with attention, concentration, or memory; difficulties in relationships; problems with alcohol or other drugs; and even physical health problems.

VA provides free, confidential counseling and treatment to men and women who have experienced MST. Veterans can ask to be seen by a provider of either the same or the opposite sex. To be eligible for MST-related care, it is not necessary to have reported it at the time or to have other documentation that it occurred. It is not necessary to have a

service-connected disability. Veterans who are not eligible for other VA care may qualify for treatment for MST. Veterans are screened for MST as part of their routine health care exam. We know that people can recover from trauma. VA has services to help Veterans recover.

For more information, Veterans can speak with their health care provider, contact their facility's MST Coordinator, visit <http://vawww.mst.va.gov>, or contact their local Vet Center.

MST Coordinators for VA NWHCS are:

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