



Women veteran vitality

VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System

SUMMER 2010

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

You are not alone, there is help for you.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is something that can be experienced by anyone who lived through or saw a traumatic event. Events can include military combat, natural disasters, serious accidents or violent personal assaults.

PTSD is being diagnosed in many Veterans. Symptoms can include irritability, trouble sleeping, nightmares and/or flashbacks of the event, feeling detached from others, in a “daze” and sometimes, increased heart rate and rapid breathing. Symptoms usually begin six weeks to three months after the event, but can surface much later. When left untreated, PTSD will not go away and will increasingly affect your life. Talk to your provider if you are experiencing any of these symptoms.

Women Veterans with PTSD often have other issues that contribute to their diagnosis, such as combat, military sexual trauma, feeling alone and worrying about their family back home. Often PTSD co-exists with other diagnoses, such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse.

VA has mental health counseling available at most facilities. In remote areas, telehealth services are available, linking Veterans to providers via satellite. Medication is also available with a prescription to help manage these symptoms.

Gender-specific PTSD groups are being developed through VA. Women can meet to learn about PTSD, share their experiences and gain support from other women Veterans. Many times, the knowledge of “not being in it alone” is very powerful.

MOVE! Weight Management Program

Manage your weight for a healthier you.

MOVE! is VA's weight management program that aims to help Veterans improve their health, lose weight and keep it off. The MOVE! program focuses on the health and overall well being of every Veteran.

The MOVE! program helps Veterans develop nutrition, activity and behavioral habits that will last a lifetime. Veterans will meet with a MOVE! provider to develop an individualized plan that includes goals. Following that meeting, Veterans will work with their MOVE! provider and participate in weekly group classes or the self-management portion to help meet their goals.

For more information contact:

Lincoln:

Helen 1-866-851-6052 ext. 9-6571

Omaha:

Adam 1-800-451-5796 ext. 9-3599

Grand Island, North Platte and Holdrege:

Barb 1-866-580-1810 ext. 9-2384

Norfolk:

Candece (402) 370-4576

Bellevue, NE, and Shenandoah, IA:

Miriam (402) 591-4506

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VA NWHCS, Omaha
4101 Woolworth Ave.
Omaha, NE 68105
(402) 346-8800
Toll Free:
(800) 451-5796

Bellevue CBOC
2501 Capehart Rd.
Bellevue, NE 68113
(402) 591-4500

Grand Island CBOC
2201 N. Broadwell Ave.
Grand Island, NE 68803
(308) 382-3660
Toll Free:
(866) 580-1810

Holdrege CBOC
1110 Burlington St.
Holdrege, NE 68949
(308) 995-3760

Lincoln CBOC
600 S. 70th St.
Lincoln, NE 68510
(402) 489-3802
Toll Free:
(866) 851-6052

Norfolk CBOC
710 S. 13th St., Ste. 1200
Norfolk, NE 68701
(402) 370-4570

North Platte CBOC
600 E. Francis, Ste. 3
North Platte, NE 69101
(308) 532-6906

Shenandoah, IA CBOC
512 S. Fremont
Shenandoah, IA 51601
(712) 246-0092

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE
You served, you deserve
the best care anywhere.

Depression

What you know can help you!

Everybody gets the blues from time to time. Depression, however, is more than feeling sad, it is an unhappy period lasting two weeks or more. You feel tired, have physical symptoms such as headaches, difficulty sleeping or sleeping all the time, weight loss or weight gain, difficulty concentrating or loss of interest in any activity. You can feel hopeless, helpless, worthless and sometimes you may feel like “life is not worth living.”

It is common for people with chronic medical problems such as high blood pressure, diabetes, and after a heart attack or stroke to also have depression. Other disorders such as substance use can also cause people to suffer depression. Depression can affect your life and relationships at home, work and in the community. You can start to feel better with available medical treatment. If you experience any of these symptoms, contact your provider, there are treatment therapies to help you feel better.

There are things that you can do to help yourself:

- Understand that feeling depressed is not your fault. Be patient, and take care of your body, mind and spirit while you recover.
- Do not isolate from others, try to be with people and take part in fun activities.
- Take care of your body, eat nutritional foods, drink plenty of water, exercise and get plenty of sleep.
- Avoid using drugs or alcohol as this will only make your depression worse.
- Relax! Consult your provider for ideas that will help you relax and relieve stress.

Prevent Skin Cancer

Let VA help.

According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, skin cancer is the leading form of cancer in the United States. The two most common types are basal cell and squamous cell cancer.

Less common, but more deadly, is melanoma, which forms in darker parts of the skin, such as moles. Nearly 24,000 women are diagnosed with melanoma each year, and 3,000 of those cases are fatal. The rate at which young women develop melanoma has more than doubled in the past 30 years.

Exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun is a risk factor for skin cancer. To reduce exposure:

- Use sunscreen with an SPF 15 or higher.
- Wear clothing to protect exposed skin.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat.
- Wear sunglasses that block UVA and UVB rays.
- Seek shade, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun's rays are strongest.
- Check medications for possible photosensitivity.
- A history of sunburns in fair skinned individuals may lead to skin cancers.
- Tanning beds also emit UV radiation and are best avoided.

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends clinicians be alert for skin abnormalities when conducting physical examinations

for other purposes. Also, if skin changes are noticed, they should be evaluated by a clinician.

While anyone can develop skin cancer, fair-skinned people are at greater risk. Moles that have changed shape, size, or color are of particular concern, as this is often the first sign of melanoma.

Women are now the fastest growing subgroup of U.S. Veterans. The number of women Veterans is expected to increase dramatically in the next ten years. VA health care is in high demand by the women Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom.

VA understands the health care needs of women Veterans and is committed to meeting these needs. Women Veterans served and they deserve the best quality care.

Contributing Women Veteran Vitality Authors

Adam Losey—VA NWHCS, Omaha

Isabel Morgan—VA NWHCS, Grand Island

Jill Peters, VA NWHCS, North Platte

Dr. James Regan—VA NWHCS, Omaha