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VA HealthyLife[®] Handouts

For Good Health & Well-Being



American Institute for
Preventive Medicine

Ways to Use VA HealthyLife® Handouts

• Download, print and give to Veterans

• Download, enlarge and use as posters

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Prevent & Manage Health Problems

Take Action. Be Smart. Plan Goals.
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Be Skin Cancer Aware
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Control High Blood Pressure
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Deal with Sleep Problems
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Be a Healthy Role Model for Your Family
Living with a Mild TBI
Lower Risks of Diabetes Complications
Lower Your Risk for a Heart Attack
Manage Chronic Health Problems
Osteoporosis
Safeguard Your Hearing
Depression is a Treatable Illness
Protect Yourself from Hepatitis C
12 Tips to See Things Clearly
Better Sleep
Better Aging
Better Disease Prevention
Better Heart Health
Reduce Risk for Type 2 Diabetes

Cold & Flu

Control the Spread of MRSA
The Flu and You
Know What to Do for Colds and Flu
3 "G"s for Flu Protection Safety
Get a Flu Vaccine
Is it a Cold or the Flu
12 Tips to Cold & Flu Defense

FACT:

A Consumer Reports Survey reported that doctors believe it would be helpful for patients to take notes during their visits.

Knowing facts about your health can help you and your health care provider decide what to do.

Take your health insurance information, health history, and medications (or a detailed list) with you.



Prepare a list of questions and concerns before your visit.

At the visit, ask the most important question first.



Take notes, record what was said, or take someone with you to help you understand and remember what to do.



It is not easy to remember everything your health care provider discussed with you.





Be involved in your health care. Be proactive!

3 Steps to Turn this Message into ACTION

1. Before a visit or discussion with your health care team:

- **LEARN** about healthy living, disease prevention, and health conditions you have. Find out about these from My HealthVet at www.myhealth.va.gov.
- **LIST** your symptoms, needs, and questions from most to least important.
- **LIST** all the medications, vitamins, and herbals you take. Include allergies you have to medicines and foods. Have a list of your personal and family health histories.

Your health care team can better help you when you provide facts about your health and are honest and open about your needs.

2. During a visit or discussion with your health care team:

- **LET** your care team read or know what is on your list.
- **LISTEN** to your health care team's advice and treatment options.
 - Ask for information in terms you can understand.
 - Bring a friend or family member with you for support and as an extra set of ears to help you remember what was said.
 - Ask for a written care plan.
- **LOOK** carefully through your care plan with your health care team to fully understand and agree on what you both need to do.

3. After a visit or discussion with your health care team:

- **LET** your health care team know if and why you feel the need to vary your care plan.
 - Tell your care team what works and what does not work for you.
 - Discuss any problems you have with medicines you take.
- **LIVE** a healthy lifestyle to help prevent and manage health problems and to keep them from getting worse.
- **LET** your health care team know if you have to cancel an appointment. Make another one.

Ask questions if you do not understand what to do.



Be Involved in Your Health Care

Plan for Success

Speak up if you have questions or concerns about any aspect of your care or if treatment is not helping you or is causing bothersome side effects.

Understand your health conditions. Find out what could happen if you follow proposed treatment and what could happen if you do not. Ask if there is something else that can be done instead.

Carry, with you, an up-to-date list of all medications, vitamins, supplements, and herbals you take. Include allergies and adverse reactions you have had to medicines and foods.

Consult your health care team between visits if you have a health issue you cannot deal with.

Enlist a family member or friend to attend health care visits with you to help get and give information, as needed.

Share your beliefs, ideas, and values about your care and proposed treatment options with your health care team.

Schedule appointments with your health care team, as advised. If you cannot keep a scheduled appointment, call your "Cancel Appointment" number. Schedule another one.



Health care

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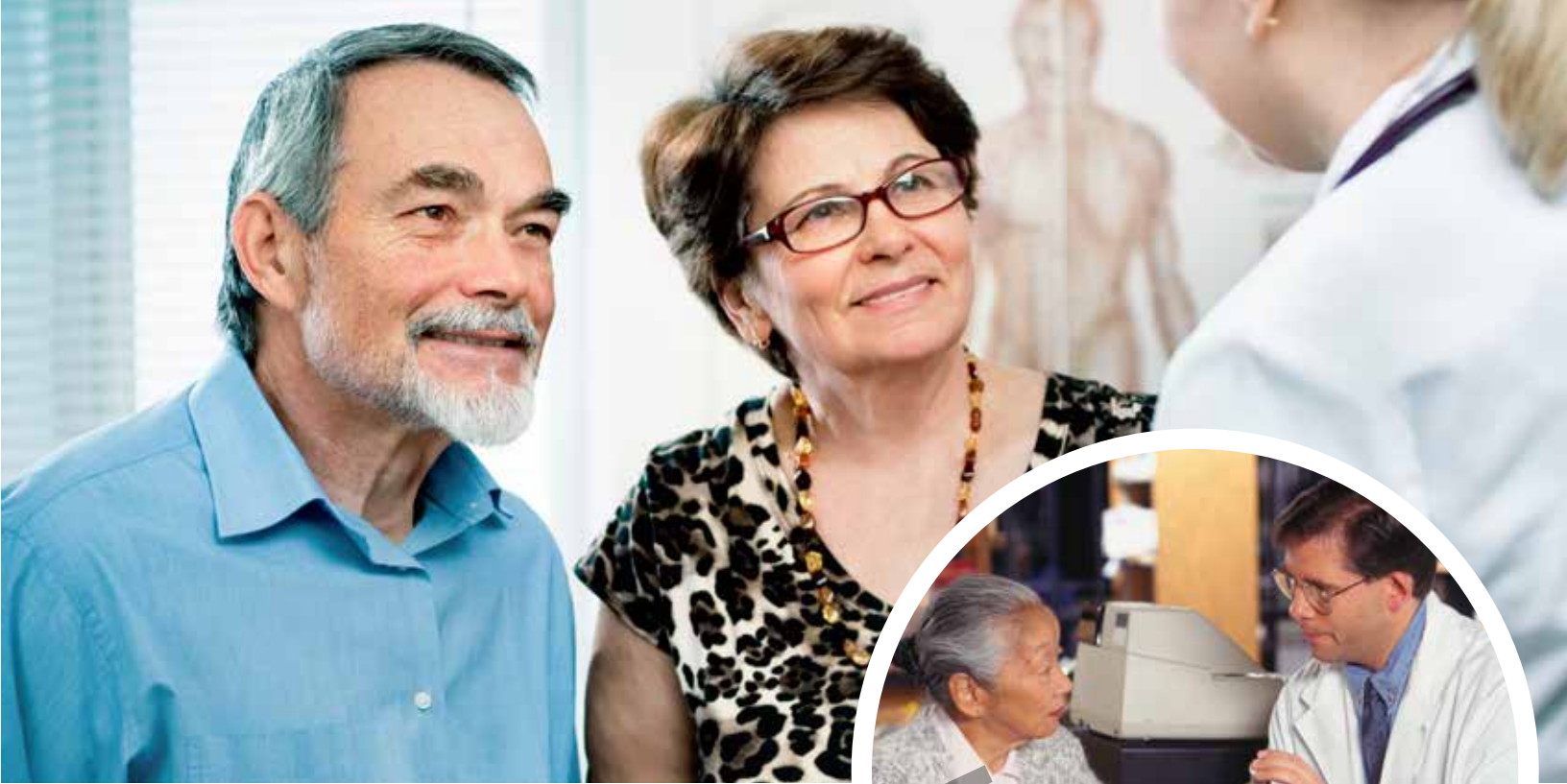
Be involved in your health care.

Being involved in your health care empowers you to make choices that can affect the length and quality of your life. Work with your doctor and health care team to make medical decisions best suited for your needs.

- **Give information.** Share your personal and family health history. At each health care visit, take a list of all of your medications and the top 3 questions you have.
- **Get information.** Ask for the benefits and risks of treatment options. Ask for things to be stated in terms you know. Get written directions for medications, medical care, and self-care measures.



Be involved. Make wise health care choices. Be well.



Be involved in your health care. Help prevent medical errors.

3 Steps to Turn this Message into ACTION

1. Be an active member of your health care team:

- Be able to tell your care team about your health history.
- State any allergies and adverse reactions you have had to medicines.
- Discuss the pros and cons of treatment options with your health care team.
- Take an active role in every decision about your health care.
- Speak up if you have questions or concerns. If you need help to do this, ask a family member or friend to assist you.

2. Take your medications safely:

- Work with your health care team to take the medications that are best for you.
- Let your health care team know if you do not take medications as advised or if you have problems taking them.
- Carry an up-to-date list of medications you take. Include all prescribed and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, minerals, herbals, and other dietary supplements. Show the list to your health care team and non-VA health care providers at each health care visit.
- VA uses a process called “Medication Reconciliation” to make sure the medications you take are safe for you and meet your needs.

3. Follow hospital safety tips:

- Ask all health care workers who have direct contact with you if they have washed or sanitized their hands. If not, request that they do.
- If you are having surgery, make sure that you, your doctor, and your surgeon all agree and are clear on what will be done.
- Before surgery, discuss VA’s “Ensuring Correct Surgery” steps with your health care team and VA hospital staff.
- Before you leave the hospital, ask for a written treatment plan to follow when you are at home. Ask questions if you do not understand what to do.

PARTNER WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE TEAM



How can you be a partner in your health care? Take an active role as a member of your health care team. This helps your health care providers do the right thing at the right time for your needs.

Be prepared.

If needed, have a family member or friend help you.

- » Keep your personal health record and medication list up-to-date.
- » Keep a list of symptoms and problems you have. Be able to describe them clearly.
- » Know which provider or team is in charge of your care and how to contact them.
- » Ask your VA provider about Home Telehealth. Messaging devices, such as Telebuddy, help you self-manage your health care needs from your home.

Follow your treatment plan.

- » Ask for a list of your medications and directions about taking them.
- » Ask for written directions about activities and treatments, too.
- » Call your provider if you have questions, have side effects, or if your symptoms get worse.
- » Schedule and keep appointments as needed.

How can you help avoid medical errors?

Speak up! Don't be afraid to ask questions. Voice your concerns.

- » Make sure each provider knows:
 - All the medicines you are taking
 - Any allergies you have
 - Bad reactions you have had to medications, foods, and anesthesia
- » Read medicine labels and warnings on them. Let your provider and pharmacist know if a medicine looks different than what you have been taking.
- » If you have a test or procedure, don't assume no news is good news. Ask for results. Ask if any part of your treatment plan needs to be changed.
- » If you are having surgery, make sure you and all persons involved agree and are clear on exactly what will be done. Ask about the VA's "Ensuring Correct Surgery" steps.

SPEAK UP FOR YOUR NEEDS!



Taking an active role in your health care puts the focus on you and helps you receive the right care in the right place and at the right time.

Describe your symptoms as clearly as you can. You may be asked to state your pain on a scale of 1-10. The higher the number; the more it hurts.

No Pain



0 1

Mild Pain



2 3

Moderate Pain



4 5



6 7

Severe Pain



8 9

Worst Pain



10



Ask Questions.

- » Ask for things to be explained in terms you know.
- » Ask about the pros and cons for screening tests.
- » Ask about the benefits and risks for treatment options.
- » Ask for written directions for:
 - Medicines
 - Medical treatments
 - Self-care measures
- » Ask if you should avoid any foods or drinks. This includes alcohol.
- » Ask what you should do if you have side effects from medicines and other treatments.
- » Ask when you need to see or contact your healthcare provider next.

what are your goals?

The best angle from which to make a healthy change is the try-angle.

- **Decide what YOU want to achieve.** Focus on your goals, not what someone else wants you to do.
- **Choose something you can achieve.** If you give yourself less than a 7 out of 10 chance, look at ways to break down the barriers or choose something you are confident you can accomplish.
- **Decide what you will do to achieve your goal.** Make it Action-Specific. Examples are, “I will drink water instead of soft drinks” and “I will walk 30 minutes a day.”



Plan it. Do it. Be well.



4 “T”s

for Medication Safety

1

TELL your doctor or health care provider if:

- You have had an allergic reaction or bad side effects from medications and foods, such as shrimp.
- You use alcohol, tobacco, or drugs.

2

TALK about all the medicines you take. This includes:

- Prescribed medications
- Over-the-counter (OTC) medications, vitamins, and herbal supplements
- Bring an up-to-date list (or all your medication containers) to every office visit.

3

TAKE medications as prescribed.

- Read instructions on prescribed and OTC labels.
- Don't stop taking medications or skip doses without your doctor's advice.
- Discuss any problems you have taking medications.

4

TRACK your usage of medications and when it is time to order refills so you do not run out of prescribed medications.



ON THE ROAD TO

Better Health Care

Learn how to get the most out of doctor visits.



4

4 ▶ REVIEW TEST RESULTS

Make sure to receive any test results, and ask your doctor to go over the results with you.



2 ▶ SHARE WITH YOUR DOCTOR

Make sure to ask many follow-up questions, and to share beliefs regarding your treatment.

3 ASK FOR WRITTEN INFO

Before leaving the doctor's office, get written information about your condition and treatment.

1 ▶ PLAN AHEAD

Before heading to a doctor's appointment, write down a list of questions to ask. Also, bring a list of all the medicines you take.

Why is it important to be an active patient?

Staying active in your health care ensures that any decisions made about your treatment will reflect your values and beliefs. This will make you more satisfied with your care and will give you better medical results.

Be Smart with Medications

Be proactive and safe about taking medications to get the best results for your health.

Ask Questions

Make sure your doctor explains why you need to take a medication, in a way that makes sense to you.

Identify Allergies

Tell your doctor about any problems you have taking certain medicines.

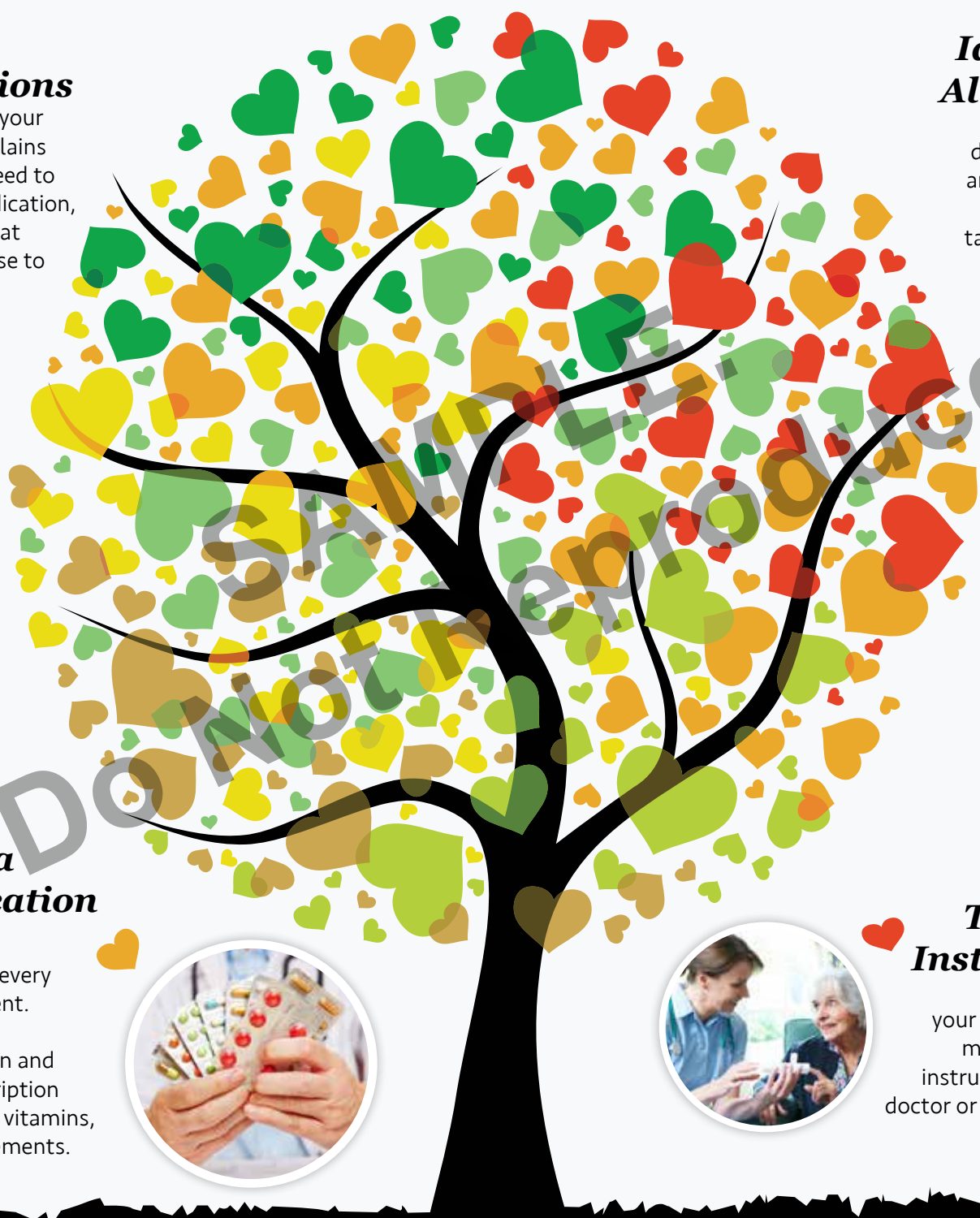
Keep a Medication List

Show it at every appointment. Include all prescription and non-prescription medicines, vitamins, and supplements.



Take as Instructed

Always take your prescription medication as instructed by your doctor or pharmacist.



Be physically active

FACT:

Less than 5% of adults take part in 30 minutes of physical activity each day. Plan for regular physical activity.

Setting aside 30 minutes at one time to exercise may not be practical for you.

Being active for 15 minutes twice a day or 10 minutes 3 times a day may be easier to do.

You do not have to jog or work out at a gym to be physically active.

Walk, garden, dance, or play with your kids.

Is it hard to exercise due to arthritis, back pain, or another health condition?

Regular exercise, as advised by your health care provider, is vital in treating these problems and preventing them from getting worse.





Be Physically Active

Plan for Success

Set a specific goal that you can reach. Write it down. Start small. An example is: "Instead of watching TV after dinner, I will walk with my family, my dog, or a friend for at least 15 minutes on 5 days this week." Keep track of steps you take to reach your goal.

Use items you have in the house to exercise on a budget.

- Use cans, instead of dumbbells, for biceps and triceps strengthening exercises.
- Use a bottom stair for a step exercise routine.
- Use pantyhose as a resistance band for stretching exercises.

Check out exercise programs on TV and DVDs that you find fun to do.

Couple physical activity with normal daily routines. For example, do chair exercises when you are sitting. Walk in place when you talk on the phone.

Exercise with family members or a friend.

Select activities that you enjoy and will look forward to doing.

Schedule time every day to do physical activity. Write it down on your calendar or daily task list.





Combine fun and fitness with family or friends.

Being active with family and friends is a way to spend quality time together. Here are some ideas:

- **Walk the walk and talk the talk.** Go for a daily walk at lunch or after dinner. Discuss what's on your mind.
- **A family that plays together stays together.** Play tennis, softball, or yard games. Take part in community sports or exercise classes. Go for a family bike ride.
- **Explore to learn more.** Visit museums and zoos. Take vacations that involve walking tours or other fitness activities, such as climbing or skiing.



Have fun. Get fit. Be well.



Be physically active. Set SMART goals.

3 Steps to Turn this Message into ACTION

1. Plan your physical activity goal(s).

If you are already doing at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity a week, good for you! If you're not, start planning, now, to reach this goal.

2. Use the SMART way to set your physical activity goal(s):

SMART	Examples
Specific – Know what, why, and how you are going to reach your goals.	One month from tomorrow, I will walk 15 minutes a day, 5 days a week. I will start with walking 10 minutes a day, five days a week and increase my walking minutes to 15 per day. I will walk on the track at the public high school that is 1 mile from my house.
Measurable – What tools will you use to measure your success?	I will keep track of minutes I walk in a small notebook or on the “Physical Activity and Pedometer / Odometer Diary” on www.move.va.gov .
Attainable – Choose goal(s) within your reach.	I am physically able to walk this much. I will walk after I drop my son off at school.
Realistic – Do you have the skills, the ability, and an OK from your health care team to reach these goals?	My health care team has advised me to start walking for at least 10 minutes a day until my next clinic visit in one month.
Timely – Set a timeframe for your goal.	I will start walking tomorrow.

3. Keep track of physical activities you do:

- Write down the minutes you exercise each week or track them on a smartphone app or fitness band.
- Post your goals in your calendar, on your refrigerator, or other spot you will see them. When you reach a goal, check it off.
- Use the “Daily Food and Physical Activity Log” on VA’s **MOVE!**® Web site: www.move.gov/handouts.asp.
- Share your log with your health care team.



4 "S"s

for Sports Safety

1

START out slowly.

- Build up gradually.
- Train on the exercise equipment you use to do it the right way.

2

STRAP on a helmet for sports that put you at risk for a head injury.

- Wear padding and other protective gear for the sport you do.
- Wear shoes and socks that fit well. The widest area of your foot should match the widest area of the shoe. Wear shoes that provide shock absorption and stability.

3

STRETCH to make your body more flexible.

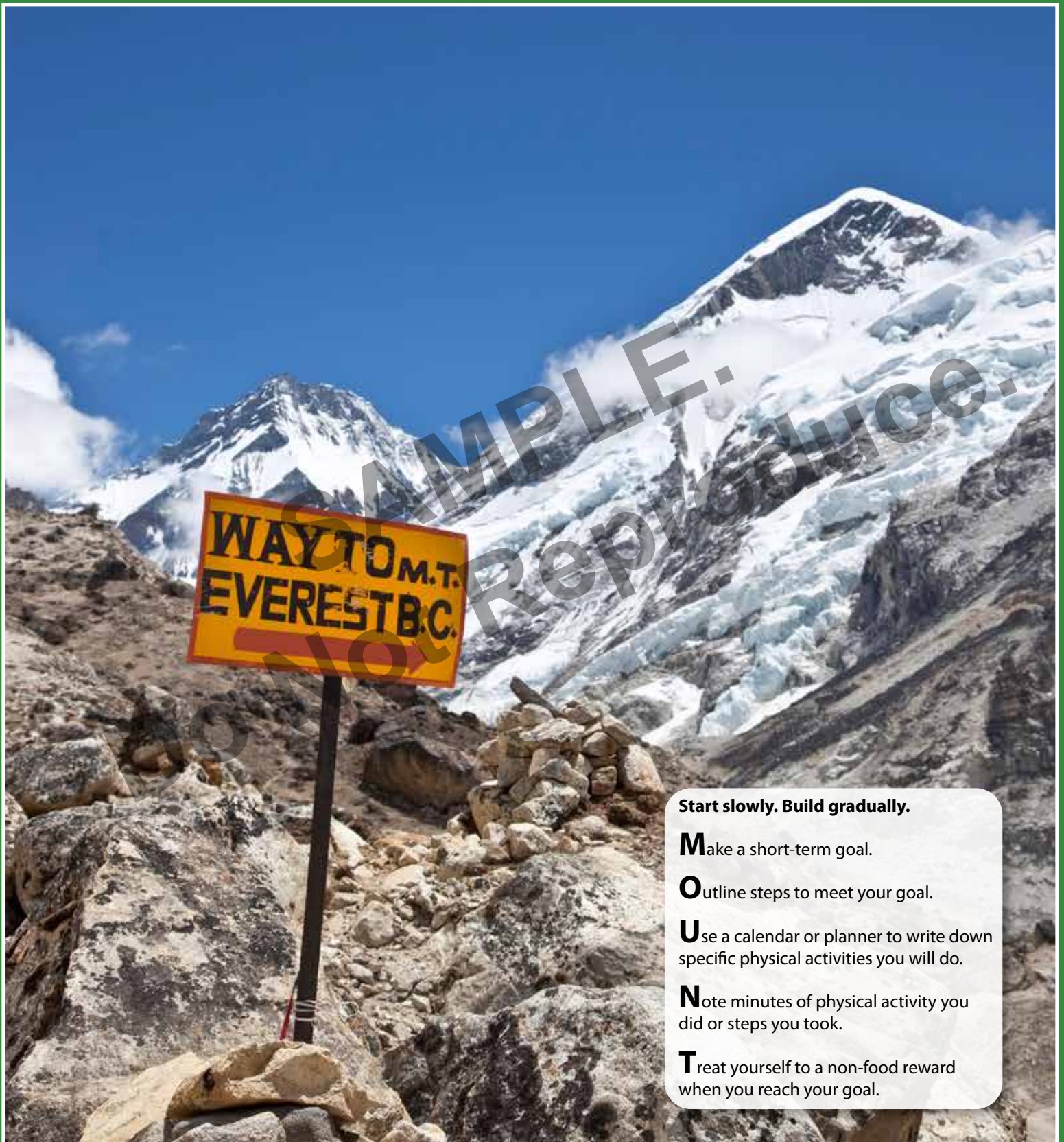
- Warm up before exercise by doing the exercise at a slower pace.
- Stretch after exercise when your muscles are warmed up.
- Try slow, relaxing stretches like those in yoga and tai chi.

4

STOP if you feel pain. Don't do the activity until you can do it without pain.



You don't have to climb Mt. Everest to be fit.



Start slowly. Build gradually.

Make a short-term goal.

Outline steps to meet your goal.

Use a calendar or planner to write down specific physical activities you will do.

Note minutes of physical activity you did or steps you took.

Treat yourself to a non-food reward when you reach your goal.

1 Find an activity that you enjoy.

2 Set a goal. Do you want to look better? Feel more energetic? Prevent health problems?

3 Invest in a good pair of shoes designed for the activity you've chosen.

4 Schedule time daily to exercise even if you have to wake up a half-hour earlier or spend your lunch hour at the gym.



Well/Thier by
the Dozen™

12 Terrific Tips to

GET ACTIVE & STAY ACTIVE

5 Work out to fitness DVDs at home. For variety, check out a different one each week at the library.

6 Don't eat much right before your workout. If you exercise before breakfast, for example, a small glass of juice or a piece of toast is enough.

7 Drink at least 8 to 10 ounces of water 10 to 15 minutes before you start to exercise. And, drink water during your workout even if you don't feel thirsty.

8 Warm up to the idea. Start with stretching for 5-10 minutes followed by a slow moving version of the activity you've chosen. If it's running, start with a brisk walk.

9 Fit exercise into your regular routine. Park farther away from the grocery store, take stairs instead of elevators, ride your bike to work.

11 Find a partner to participate in and support your efforts.

10 Work hard enough to break a sweat but not so hard that you can't carry on a conversation with another person.

12 Keep a journal of your progress. It's a good motivator to continue.



WALKING

FACTS



Aim to walk at least 30 minutes, 5 days a week.



Is slightly better than running for lowering heart disease



Keeps at least one foot on the ground at all times

Improves circulation, strengthens bones, improves your mood, helps you sleep better, slows mental decline, lowers cholesterol, lowers risks for cancer, helps prevent loss of muscle mass, helps prevent type 2 diabetes, manages weight

PROS



Less impact on bones and joints means low risk for injuries. Good option for people just starting an exercise program.

CONS

Have to walk longer and go further to get the same degree of health benefits as running



HIT THE BRICKS

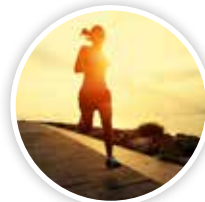
WALK OR RUN?

Many studies show that walking and running are great ways to get in shape. But what you do may depend on your preferences and fitness level. Here's the run-down!

Talk to your health provider before starting any exercise program.

RUNNING

FACTS



Aim to run at least 20 minutes, 3 days a week.



Is slightly better than walking for managing weight



Feet go airborne throughout a run

Improves circulation, strengthens bones, improves your mood, helps you sleep better, slows mental decline, lowers cholesterol, lowers risks for cancer, helps prevent loss of muscle mass, helps prevent type 2 diabetes, manages weight

PROS

Released brain chemicals give you a "runner's high." Decreases your appetite immediately after exercising.



CONS



High impact on bones and joints means increased risk for injury

RESISTANCE TRAINING

FACTS



Examples: Lifting free weights, using weight machines, push-ups, squats, etc.



Better for fat loss over cardio training

PROS



Reduces risks for type 2 diabetes and osteoporosis. Helps you manage weight. Improves muscle strength and toning. Improves posture and balance. Prevents loss of muscle mass as adults age.

CONS



Follow the proper form when lifting weights to avoid injury. Don't lift anything that strains your muscles too much.

CARDIO TRAINING

FACTS



Examples: Running, walking, cycling, dancing, etc.



Better for heart health over resistance training

PROS



Reduces risks for Alzheimer's, and colon, prostate and breast cancers. Improves circulation, prevents osteoporosis. Helps lower blood pressure and cholesterol.

CONS



Could injure yourself if you don't follow a cardio program suited to your age and fitness level.

PUMP IT UP

RESISTANCE OR CARDIO?

Cardiovascular (aerobic) and resistance training both pack a powerful punch. It's even better when you combine the two. But, what are the different benefits the two offer? Let's work it out.

Talk to your health provider before starting any exercise program.

ON THE ROAD TO Better Fitness

Move toward getting more active and staying fit.

2 ▶ START SMALL

If you haven't done regular exercise in quite a few years, start slow – walking for ten minutes at a time around the block.



1 TALK TO A DOCTOR

Want to start an exercise routine to lose weight? Before you start, talk to your doctor to make sure you're healthy enough to exercise.

3 ADD TIME & ENDURANCE LEVEL

After some time, you may find you can go longer without getting too exhausted. Move from walking to jogging for 30 minutes. Add some uphill runs to your route.

4 TRACK PROGRESS

Use an app on your smartphone to track steps and calorie-burn throughout the day. Weigh and measure yourself to see how your health is improving.

Why should we exercise?

Doing regular exercise every day can lower your risks for many diseases, such as heart disease, cancer, and type 2 diabetes. It can improve your sleep and help you age better.

5 WATCH OUT

Take steps to stay safe while getting fit, like buying a good pair of running shoes and talking to your doctor about any aches and pains you notice.

Be Winter Active

Exercise to avoid winter weight gain, fight infections with a strong immune system, and help beat the winter blues.

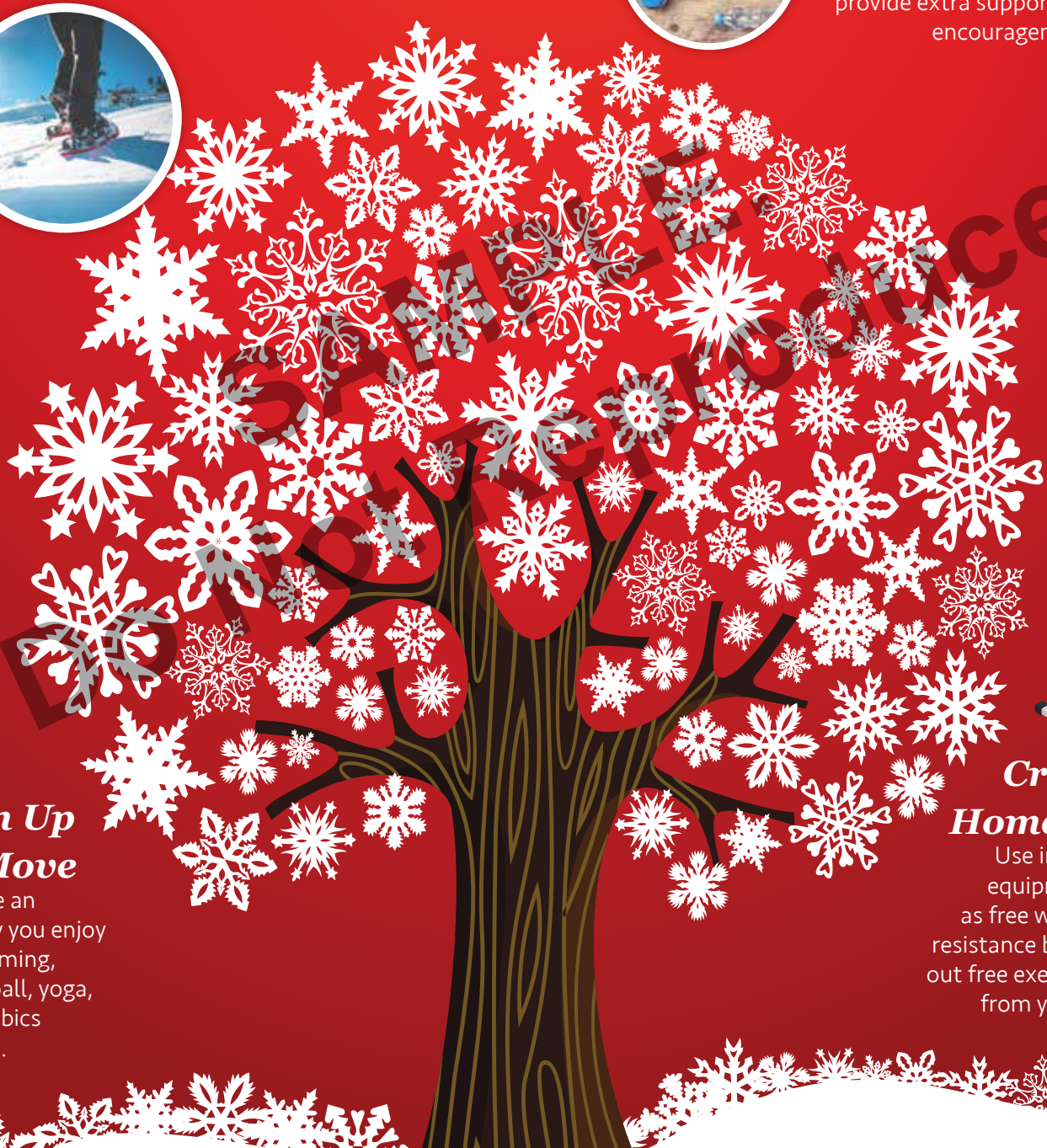
Head Outside

Enjoy outdoor activities - run, hike, ski, or skate.



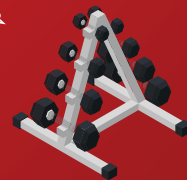
Walk Indoors

Join a mall-walking program or walk at an indoor track. Bonus - walking buddies provide extra support and encouragement.



Sign Up to Move

Choose an activity you enjoy - swimming, volleyball, yoga, or aerobics classes.



Create a Home Gym

Use inexpensive equipment, such as free weights and resistance bands. Sign out free exercise DVDs from your library.

FACT:

On average, only 14% of adults in America eat 2 servings of fruit and 3 servings of vegetables a day. Plan to eat at least 5-7 servings of fruits and vegetables a day.



Keep raisins and other dried fruits at work and in your backpack.

Avoid buying candy and cookies for snacks.

At fast food restaurants, opt for salads, fruit slices, and a grilled chicken sandwich with lettuce and tomato.



Choose restaurants that offer vegetables, vegetable soup, and salads (limit the salad dressings).

Grill fish and vegetable kebobs to put on your plate.



Barbecue foods other than ribs and steaks.



eat smart

Choose foods that give a lot of nutrients for the calories they keep.



- **Fill half of your plate with fruits and vegetables.** Nature's foods pack a powerhouse of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fiber for good health and chronic disease prevention.
- **Choose whole-grain breads, cereals, and pastas.** Fiber in these foods aids in digestion and relieves constipation.
- **Go lean with protein and fat-free or low-fat with dairy.** Limit total and saturated fats, but still get protein, minerals, and vitamins, such as calcium and vitamin D.

Eat smart. Focus on healthy nutrients. Be well.



Eat Wisely. Focus on Nutrition

Plan for Success

Shape healthy eating habits one or two at a time. Start with one you can easily accomplish. For example, if you drink whole milk now, switch to 2% milk for 1-2 weeks and then switch to skim milk.

Use fresh herbs, spices, and seasonings without salt or sodium in cooking and at the table.

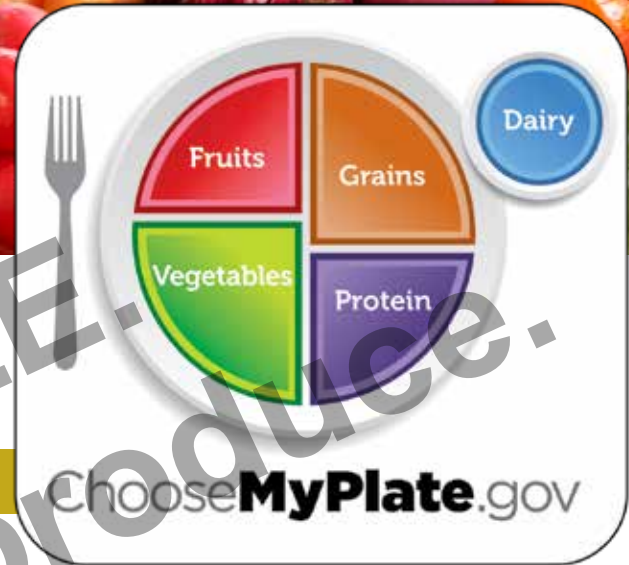
Choose whole-grain breads, cereals, and pastas over white, refined ones.

Choose fruits and veggies of different colors to get a variety of healthy nutrients. Include dark-green, orange, and red ones. Add salads to meals, but use only a small amount of salad dressing.

Eat less fast food. Make more meals at home. When you do eat fast food, opt for healthier choices, such as a grilled chicken sandwich instead of one that is fried.

Snack smart. Choose fruit, veggies, nuts, and seeds. Examples are apples, pears, carrots, almonds, walnuts, and sunflower seeds. Resist buying snacks high in fat, salt, and/or sugar.

Select whole fruit over juice. When you choose juices, get ones with 100% fruit juice. For a larger serving size without extra calories, mix 2-4 ounces of juice with 4 or more ounces of water.





Eat wisely to maximize your health. Focus on fruits and veggies.

3 Steps to Turn this Message into ACTION

1. Eat 5 or more servings of fruits and veggies a day!

Choose a rainbow of colors to get a variety of nutrients:

- **Purple and Blue** – Plums, prunes, raisins, blueberries, eggplant, and blackberries
- **Green** – Avocado, kiwi, broccoli, green beans and peppers, and leafy greens
- **Orange and Yellow** – Cantaloupe, peaches, carrots, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, and yellow squash and peppers
- **Red** – Beets, raspberries, strawberries, watermelon, red peppers, and tomatoes
- **White** – Cauliflower, mushrooms, parsnips, garlic, onions, and bananas

2. Plan for eating fruits and veggies:

- Buy fruits and veggies at markets or local places where they are fresh and look appealing. Choose ones you like. Try new ones, too.
- Buy veggies that are easy to prepare. Pick up pre-washed bags of salad greens and add baby carrots and grape tomatoes for a salad in minutes.
- Keep cut-up and ready-to-eat veggies in see-through containers in your refrigerator. Besides the usual carrots and celery sticks, have broccoli, cauliflower, cucumbers, and cut green, yellow, and red peppers.
- Buy fruits that are dried, frozen, and canned in water or 100% fruit juice. Choose packaged fruits without added sugars.

3. Enjoy fruits and veggies with meals and as snacks:

- If you don't like to snack on plain raw veggies, dip them in a fat-free or low-fat salad dressing, salsa, or hummus (chick pea spread).
- Use a microwave oven to cook fresh and frozen veggies quickly.
- Use leftover veggies for soups.
- Add bell peppers, broccoli, mushrooms or tomatoes to your egg or egg white omelet.
- Keep a bowl of fresh fruit on the counter or table.
- Add cut-up veggies and fruits to salads.
- Keep dried fruit, such as cherries, figs, dates, cranberries, blueberries, or raisins in your purse or pocket for an on-the-go snack.



Be safe.

Prevent foodborne illnesses.

3 Steps to Turn this Message into ACTION

1. Check for food recalls in the news and from www.Foodsafety.gov.

People have gotten sick and even died from foods tainted with harmful bacteria. Examples are *Listeriosis* from cantaloupe, *E.coli* from spinach, and *Salmonella* from packaged salads.

2. Keep foods safe to eat:

- Separate raw, cooked, and ready-to-eat foods when you shop for, prepare, and store foods.
- Wash your hands before you handle and prepare foods and use clean utensils and surfaces.
- Rinse raw fruits and veggies under running tap water before eating, cutting, or cooking.
- Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush.
- Dry the produce with a clean cloth or paper towel.
- Follow the food label instructions for proper storage and cooking.
- Thaw frozen foods in the refrigerator or in cold water. Use the microwave if the food is being cooked right away.
- Keep hot foods at 140° F or higher and cold foods at 40° F or lower. Bacteria grow rapidly between 40° F and 140° F.
- Eat cooked foods or put them in the refrigerator or freezer within 2 hours (1 hour if the air temperature is 90° F or higher).

3. Cook and keep foods at safe temperatures:

165° F	All poultry
160° F	Ground beef, veal, lamb, pork & eggs
145+° F	Raw beef, veal, lamb pork
140+° F	Hot foods
40° F	Refrigerator temperature
40° F or lower	Cold foods
0° F	Freezer temperature



Eat Wisely: Focus on Nutrition and Diabetes

Plan for Success

Set specific goals with your health care team for weight control, healthy eating, physical activity, and medications.

Use a daily food tracker for meals and snacks. Count carbohydrates, as advised by your health care team or registered dietitian.

Control your weight. Lose weight if you are overweight.

Cut back on high calorie snack foods and desserts, such as cakes, chips, cookies, and pies.

Eat meals at regular times. Follow a meal plan for breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks as advised by your health care team.

Space meals and snacks throughout the day. To curb hunger and keep your blood glucose levels stable, eat a meal or snack every 4 to 5 hours during waking hours. Examples for snacks are:

- ¼ cup low-fat cottage cheese with ½ cup unsweetened pineapple
- ½ cup nonfat milk and ½ cup bran flakes

Strictly limit saturated fats. Choose nonfat dairy products, as well as chicken and fish more often than red meat. Do not have *trans* fat. This is found in foods with “hydrogenated oils.” Read food labels.



drink
more
water.

Drink water instead of soda and other sugary drinks.

Here's the score: Water—0 grams of sugar and zero calories
One 12-ounce soda—10 teaspoons of sugar and 140 calories
A super-sized soda—28 teaspoons of sugar and 410 calories

- **Lose the sodas, lose weight.** Having water instead of one 12-ounce soda a day can help you lose 15 pounds in one year.
- **Drink two glasses of water before a meal.** This can help you feel full more quickly, so you don't eat as much.
- **Lower your risk of health problems.** Sugar and acid in soda causes tooth decay. Too much sugar in the diet has been linked to obesity, diabetes, and heart disease. Too much alcohol has health risks, too. After one or two drinks with alcohol, drink water!



Skip soda. Drink water. Be well.



4 "C"s

for Food Safety

1

CLEAN your hands before and after preparing food.

- Use clean utensils and surfaces.
- Use separate surfaces for fresh and uncooked foods.

2

COOK foods to safe temperatures.

- 165° F – All poultry, casseroles, leftovers
- 160° F – Ground beef, pork, veal and lamb; egg dishes
- 145° F – Fresh beef, pork, veal, and lamb. Add 3 minute rest time.
- 140° F or higher – Keep hot foods hot!

3

CHILL foods to keep bacteria in check.

- Refrigerate foods within 90 minutes of cooking.
- Keep refrigerator temp at 40° F or lower; freezer temp at 0° F or lower.
- Put ice and cold packs in picnic and lunch containers that have cold food.

4

CHECK for contaminated food outbreaks at www.fda.gov. Follow instructions.



Control Portions

20 YEARS AGO
1.5 ounce muffin
210 calories



TODAY
4 ounce muffin
500 Calories



Compared to years past, people are eating larger portions. The **super-sizing** of foods is one reason people's waistlines and body weights are **super-sizing**, too.

Get the facts

One portion of a food or beverage is often more than one standard serving. Get standard serving sizes from www.choosemyplate.gov. Just because soda comes in a 20-ounce size doesn't mean it counts as one serving. (It's actually 2½ servings.) Read the Nutrition Facts section on food labels. It lists serving size, number of servings, calories per serving, and other nutrition-related information.

Use simple measuring tools for serving sizes:

-  1 cup = 2 hands cupped or 1 clenched fist
-  ½ cup = Computer mouse or 1 hand cupped
-  2-3 oz. = Deck of cards
-  1 oz. = Size of 1 domino
-  1 Tbsp. = Volume of 1 thumb
-  1 teaspoon = 1 die or tip of 1 thumb

Action Step

Eat meals at regular intervals to avoid the urge to snack. Buy single-serving snacks or make them on your own. Avoid distractions, such as TV when you eat.

SALT



Can Shake Up Your Health

Too much salt and sodium can lead to or worsen high blood pressure which raises the risk for heart disease and stroke. What is too much?

Health guidelines advise limiting total sodium to 2,300 mg per day; less, such as 1,500 mg per day, if advised by your doctor.

Where's the salt & sodium?

One teaspoon of salt has about 2,300 mg of sodium, but for persons in the U.S., only 11% of sodium intake comes from adding salt to food while cooking or at the table. About 12% occurs naturally in foods and 77% comes from packaged, processed, and restaurant foods. These include:

- Breads and rolls
- Cold cuts and cured meats
- Soups
- Cheese
- Meat dishes
- Pizza
- Poultry
- Sandwiches
- Pasta dishes
- Snacks

Assault on salt tips:

- Remove the salt shaker from the table. If you've been used to the taste of salt, give yourself time to adjust to the flavor of foods without salt.
- Buy fresh, rather than packaged and processed foods.
- Eat more home-prepared meals and less fast food, take-out, and restaurant meals.
- When you eat out, ask that salt not be added to your foods.
- Use little or no salt when cooking. Kosher salt and sea salt count.
- Read nutrition labels closely. Choose foods with the words "low sodium" or "no salt added."
- Go easy on condiments, such as soy sauce, pickles, olives, ketchup, and mustard. Use ones lower in sodium.

Action Step

Spice up your life without salt. Use seasonings, such as bay leaf, marjoram, curry powder, garlic, and lemon juice for your meats. Add cinnamon, cloves, dill, rosemary, and tarragon to your vegetables.



Pick & Pack a Healthy LUNCH

Supersized fast-food lunches and large sit-down or buffet lunches feed your hunger. They supersize your waistline, too. A better option is to prepare your own lunch with fresh and healthier foods. This lets you eat what you like and control calories, salt, fat, and sugar.

Last night's leftovers

Fido may lick his chops at that last slice of turkey, but you are better off giving the dog a bone and saving the food for tomorrow's lunch. If salad and/or veggies are left, take them, too. Plan ahead. Make enough food for dinner and for lunch the next day. Or cook chili, rice and beans, and spaghetti sauce, etc. in bulk. Store these in single-serving containers. Refrigerate or freeze them for ready-to-go future lunches.

Items to stock for easy & healthy lunches:

- Whole-grain breads, pastas, and cereals
- Fruits galore – Apples, apricots, bananas, berries, grapes, oranges, peaches, pears, plums, and pineapples
- Vegetables – Avocado, broccoli, carrots, salad greens, spinach, squash, sweet potatoes, and tomatoes
- Freshly cooked lean beef and pork; game meats; chicken and turkey; and fish and shellfish. Canned tuna and salmon.
- Unsalted almonds, peanuts, walnuts, sunflower seeds, and peanut butter
- Chick peas, kidney beans, lentils, split peas and homemade or low-sodium soups made with these. Other low-sodium soups.
- Fat-free (skim) or low-fat (1%) milk or buttermilk; fat-free, low-fat, or reduced-fat cheese, fat-free or low-fat yogurt or yogurt smoothies
- Frozen fruit for smoothies
- Canned and dried fruit, such as raisins and prunes
- Single-serving frozen meals with less than 800 milligrams of sodium

Action Step

Set aside time in the evening to pack lunches and snacks. They'll be ready to take in the morning.

Lean toward healthy food choices.



Limit high fat meats, like bacon and sausage. Choose lean cuts of beef, pork, and poultry, as well as, fish and beans.

Enjoy plenty of fruits and vegetables, which are naturally low in fat and calories.

Add little fat to foods. Limit foods in creamy sauces.

Note the grams of fat per serving on food labels. Choose foods low in total fat, *trans* fat, and saturated fat.

Choose fruits and veggies from a rainbow of colors.

SAMPLE.
Do Not Reproduce.

Color your diet with fruits and veggies for a variety of nutrients:

Orange and **y**ellow ones for carotenoids that can help reduce risk of cancer, heart disease, and age-related macular degeneration.

Leafy **g**reens and other **g**reen ones for lutein which can help lower the risk for cataracts and age-related macular degeneration and idoles which can help lower the risk for some cancers.

Ones that are **p**urple and **b**lue for anthocyanins which may help reduce risk of cancer, stroke, and heart disease.

Red ones for lycopene that may help lower the risk for heart disease and some cancers, especially prostate cancer.

MEDITERRANEAN DIET

FACTS



Follows the diet of the people living around the Mediterranean Sea



Eat fish and seafood, whole grains, fruits & vegetables, beans, nuts, healthy fats like olive oil, herbs & spices



Eat less of red meat, sugary foods, processed foods, dairy, eggs

PROS



Lowers risks for heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, LDL ("bad") cholesterol, diabetes, some cancers. Doesn't prohibit any foods.

CONS

Many of the diet's staple foods are high in fat. Must track calories to lose weight.



DROP THE POUNDS

MEDITERRANEAN

OR

PALEO?

The Mediterranean and Paleo diets can help you manage weight and reduce your risk for chronic diseases. But they recommend very different eating approaches. What can you stomach?

Talk to your health provider before starting any new diet or making changes to your eating habits.

PALEO DIET

FACTS



Allows only foods you can hunt, fish and gather yourself, just like our Paleolithic ancestors



Eat meat (preferably wild game), fruits & vegetables, seafood (wild caught), nuts, eggs, roots, berries



Don't eat dairy, beans and legumes, grains, sugar, salt

PROS

Lowers risk for heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity, cancer. Helps control blood pressure and blood sugar.



CONS



Much of the foods in our modern diet are off-limits. Must work harder to meet some of your nutritional needs.

PEANUT BUTTER

FACTS



About 95 calories per tablespoon;
7 grams of protein per ounce



Twice as much saturated fat as almond butter



Richer in omega-6 fatty acids



More fiber per serving than almond butter

PROS

Provides most of the same benefits as almond butter for less price. Is more widely available.

CONS

Has less overall health benefits when compared with almond butter. Watch for varieties with added sugar.



GETTING CHOOSEY

PEANUT OR ALMOND?

Peanut butter was once the king of nut butters. But no more. Today, you have your pick of any number of "butters" with new varieties like almond butter gaining popularity. Not all nut butters are created equal. Here are some things to consider next time you shop.

ALMOND BUTTER

FACTS



About 100 calories per tablespoon;
4 grams of protein per ounce



25% more monounsaturated fat as peanut butter



3x more vitamin E, 2x more iron,
7x more calcium



Lower cases of salmonella contamination than peanut butter

PROS

Has slightly more health benefits than peanut butter. Substitute this or other nut butters if you have a peanut allergy.



CONS

Cost nearly doubles when you buy almond butter over peanut butter. Less variety and availability.



VITAMIN SUPPLEMENTS

FACTS



May come in pill, crystalized or liquid form



Sold in most grocery stores, health food stores and online

PROS



Helps you get your daily vitamins faster and easier. Could help you avoid bad effects from eating fresh food, like taking cod liver supplements to avoid mercury in fish.

CONS



You could get too much of one nutrient or have a bad reaction. A supplement and a medication might not go well together. Supplements can be pricey. Not all on the market are FDA-approved.

GET YOUR DAILY DOSE

SUPPLEMENTS OR SUPPER?

There are two ways to get enough vitamins and minerals each day. Eat foods that naturally contain vitamins and minerals, or have had them added in. Or, take vitamin supplements to meet your needs. Chew on these facts.

Talk to your health provider about the best ways to get your daily nutrients. Also, ask before taking any vitamin supplement.

FORTIFIED OR WHOLE FOODS

FACTS



Unprocessed foods, or those fortified with nutrients



Shop at grocery stores, farmers' markets, or grow your own food

PROS



Your body more easily absorbs vitamins from food over supplements. Keeps costs down if you grow your own or buy locally. Provides the protein, fat and carbohydrates your body needs as well as vitamins and minerals.

CONS



Must eat a well-balanced diet to get all your daily nutrients. Fresh food can lose vitamins quickly. Synthetic nutrients in fortified foods could cause harm for some. Might provide too much of one vitamin.

CONVENTIONAL FOODS

FACTS



Often grown using synthetic pesticides, like Roundup. May use GMOs and be produced on large-scale farms.



Conventionally raised livestock are kept in confined, controlled spaces. Fed corn or wheat, and sometimes antibiotics and medications to prevent disease.

PROS



Produces an abundance of food and crops every season. Keeps prices low and makes more food available.

CONS



Producing food this way could deplete the soil's nutrients. Pesticide and GMO use might be bad for human health. May raise animals in less healthy and humane ways.

HOW IT GROWS

CONVENTIONAL

OR

ORGANIC?

You compare two bushels of apples at the store. Both appear exactly the same, except one is labeled "organic" and is more expensive. What gives? "Organic" and "conventional" represent two ways to produce food. Which is a good choice for your family?

ORGANIC FOODS

FACTS



Must be grown in safe soil. Can't have synthetic pesticides, bioengineered genes (GMOs), or harmful fertilizers.



Organically raised livestock are usually free range and fed on grass or organic, non-GMO food. Cannot be fed antibiotics, growth hormones, or animal-by-products.

PROS



Organic crops have less toxins. Often use more sustainable growing practices and more humane to animals.

CONS



Depending on where it's sold, organic food can be expensive. Food might be smaller with more blemishes. Less availability.

VEGETARIAN

FACTS



Eats no meat, but sometimes fish. Some also eat dairy and eggs, or one or the other.



Often gets more fiber, antioxidants, vitamins C and E, potassium, and magnesium than meat eaters



Often takes in less calories, saturated fats, cholesterol, omega-3 fatty acids, iron, zinc and vitamin B-12 than meat eaters

PROS



Often have lower risks of cancer, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, gall and kidney stones, osteoporosis

CONS

Need to work a bit harder at getting the nutrients commonly found in meat. Vegetarians who also eat dairy need to make sure they don't eat too much. Or, may lose the benefits of a vegetarian diet.



FORGET THE MEAT

VEGETARIAN OR VEGAN?

About 5% of Americans call themselves "vegetarian," and about 2% call themselves "vegan." There are many health benefits connected with these ways of eating. Want to veg out? Check out these facts.

Talk to your health provider before starting any new diet or making changes to your eating habits.

VEGAN

FACTS



Eats no animal products at all. Another type of vegan is a fruitarian; only eats fruit, nuts and seeds.



Often gets more fiber, antioxidants, vitamins C and E, potassium, and magnesium than meat eaters



Often takes in less calories, saturated fats, cholesterol, omega-3 fatty acids, iron, zinc and vitamin B-12 than meat eaters

PROS

Often have lower risks of cancer, heart disease, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, gall and kidney stones, osteoporosis



CONS

Need to work a bit harder at getting the nutrients commonly found in meat. Fruitarians need to be especially careful they get recommended daily nutrients.



ARTIFICIAL SWEETENER

FACTS



Includes acesulfame, aspartame, neotame, saccharin, sucralose (Splenda), neotame



Most artificial sweeteners contain almost no calories. Are hundreds of times sweeter than natural sugar

PROS



Artificial sweeteners usually have no nutrients. With zero calories, they can help manage weight and type 2 diabetes.

CONS



Artificial sweeteners could set off a trigger in your brain to crave sugary foods. This might lead to weight gain in some people. Chemicals may cause headaches and other reactions in some people.

SATISFY YOUR SWEET TOOTH

SWEETENER OR SUGAR?

Most Americans love sugary treats, and there are lots of options for indulging your sweet side. You have your choice of many "natural" sugars. Or, you could go for a zero-calorie artificial sweetener. Which type of "sweet" hits the spot for you?

NATURAL SUGAR

FACTS



Includes cane sugar, high fructose corn syrup, maple syrup, honey, sucrose, fructose and glucose, agave nectar, molasses



1 gram of sugar = about 4 calories

PROS



Some natural sugars, like maple syrup and honey, have some nutrients and calories.

CONS



Natural sugars can raise blood glucose and insulin levels, causing inflammation and free radicals in your body. Too much fructose could damage the liver. Eating more than 6 tsp. of sugar a day can cause tooth decay and weight gain.

FROZEN PRODUCE

FACTS



Food that is harvested or processed, then immediately frozen



During the freezing process, vitamins and minerals are "locked in." Helps frozen produce stay as nutritious as fresh.

PROS



May have more vitamin C, lutein, beta-carotene and antioxidants than fresh produce refrigerated at home longer than 5 days.

CONS



You may not like the taste or texture of frozen food. Lose the health benefits of frozen produce if you buy packages with stuff added to it, like sauces, cheeses or salt.

FRESH PRODUCE

FACTS



Food that almost goes right from farm to produce aisle



Freshly picked vegetables contain the most vitamins and minerals. Start losing vitamins within 24-48 hours after being picked.

PROS



May have a better taste and texture. May have slightly more nutrients than frozen, depending on when you eat it after it's picked.

CONS



Fresh produce usually starts losing vitamin content after 5 days in a kitchen refrigerator. Fresh food is more likely to get contaminated with salmonella. May get bruised or broken on way to the store.

MUNCH ON THIS

FROZEN OR FRESH?

When choosing between fresh food or frozen, 78% of shoppers choose fresh these days. Some believe it's healthier and tastier. But some experts say don't throw out frozen food just yet. What's on your plate?

Fuel up with Breakfast

Don't skip the health benefits of breakfast. Kickstart metabolism, burn more energy, improve concentration, and lower risk for heart disease and obesity.

At Home

Whole-grain cereal with nonfat milk and fruit; yogurt-fruit smoothie and whole-grain toast; or dinner leftovers.



On-The-Go

Granola bar and banana; peanut butter sandwich; or low-fat string cheese and an apple.



Coffee Shop

Beverage made with nonfat milk and no added syrup, and a small whole-grain muffin; or yogurt parfait with fruit or granola.



Fast Food

Oatmeal sprinkled with nuts; or egg sandwich and a small fruit juice.



ON THE ROAD TO Better Nutrition

Take steps to adopt a healthier diet.



1

1 ▶ START A FOOD DIARY

Write down everything you eat throughout the day. This helps you know when and what you're eating. Now you can start to gauge where you need to make some changes.



3

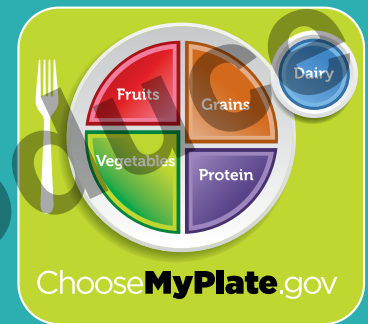
3 ▶ TAKE A COOKING CLASS

If you want to eat better, start with cooking healthy meals at home. Take a local cooking class to learn some basic techniques for preparing food.

2

FOLLOW THE MYPLATE GUIDELINES

Go online to Choosemyplate.gov. Learn about what portions you should eat for each food group and get healthy recipes to try.



4 ▶ PLAN AHEAD

To stay on track, plan your meals a week ahead of time. This forward thinking means you can better conquer cravings when they strike.



4



Why is good nutrition so important?

Eating a diet rich in vegetables, fruits and high-fiber foods may reduce your risks for heart disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and some cancers. Diets high in potassium may lower blood pressure and decrease bone loss. Lean protein helps you build and repair tissue and help manage other bodily functions.



Avoid Food Poisoning When Eating Out

Every year, an estimated 48 million people get sick from eating contaminated food. Stay safe when eating out.

Check Food Safety Records

Review food inspection scores posted online by many state and local health departments.

Look for Cleanliness

Check the tables, floors, utensils, and bathrooms.

Is Food Cooked Thoroughly?

If meat, fish, poultry, and eggs are not cooked thoroughly, you should send your food back.



Refrigerate Leftovers

Place in fridge within 2 hours, or within 1 hour if left in a hot car, or above 90 degrees.



Strive for a healthy weight

FACT:

By the year 2020, it is projected that 43% of men and 42% of women will be obese. Keep this from becoming a reality!

Eat fewer fries

Get **MORE** exercise

Drink water and unsweetened beverages. For every day dessert, have fruit to eat.

WATCH LESS TV

Moving more is key

Nix sugar-sweetened drinks and make high calorie snacks and desserts an occasional treat.





Strive for a healthy weight. Adopt healthy eating behaviors.

3 Steps to Turn this Message into ACTION

1. Manage mindless munching:

- Eat breakfast and other meals at regular times to avoid urges to snack.
- Plan healthy snacks as part of your daily food intake. Choose crunchy fruits or veggies or a handful or two of unsalted nuts.
- Avoid distractions, such as TV, when eating meals and snacks.
- Chew sugar-free gum between meals.
- Brush and/or floss your teeth after you eat to help keep you from eating more. Proper brushing and flossing can also prevent gum disease and other mouth infections, which can raise the risk for pneumonia, heart disease, and diabetes.

2. Slow down your eating:

- Set a timer for 20 minutes and make your meal last that long.
- Use eating utensils for all meals and snacks.
- Chew foods thoroughly. Sip your drinks, don't gulp.
- Put your fork or spoon down between bites.


3. Escape emotional eating:

For anger:	Share your angry feelings with a person you trust. Express your anger out loud or write it down.
For boredom:	Take a walk. Do stretching exercises. Do a good deed.
For loneliness:	Call or text a friend or family member. Take part in a group activity. Volunteer to help others.
For sadness:	Talk to someone who will listen and not judge. Be with someone who lifts your spirits.
For stress:	Avoid or lower your stress triggers. Instead of turning to food, unwind with exercise, deep breathing, or yoga.

CONTROL YOUR WEIGHT



Why do I need to control my weight? Being overweight increases your risk for high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, certain types of cancer, arthritis, and breathing problems.



Taking in more calories than you use up is like using a credit card and not paying off the balance. With excess calories, the “interest” is in the form of body fat! The more it collects, the harder it is to pay off. To tip the scales in your favor:

- Take in fewer calories than you use up.
- Expend more energy in activity.
- Eat less *and* exercise more.

Control Portion Sizes

1/2 cup cooked rice, pasta, vegetable = a computer mouse



1 medium piece of fruit = size of a tennis ball



1 cup dry cereal = baseball or your fist




1 oz. cheese = size of a domino



2-3 oz. meat = deck of cards



Ways to Control Your Weight

- 
- » Talk to your VA health care provider or contact your local **MOVE!**® Team. The VA’s **MOVE!**® Program helps veterans lose weight, keep it off, and improve health.
 - » Follow your eating and physical activity plans as advised by your health care provider.
 - » Keep a daily food and physical activity log.
 - » Choose healthy foods for your calories. These include: whole-grains; fruits; vegetables; nonfat and low-fat dairy foods; and lean meat, fish, and poultry.
 - » Choose water and unsweetened beverages over sweetened ones.
 - » Limit alcohol.
 - » Follow healthy eating behaviors:
 - Eat at regular times.
 - Eat slowly. Take at least 20 minutes to eat.
 - Eat when you are truly hungry, not as a response to emotions.



Strive for a healthy weight. Eating out wisely.

3 Steps to Turn this Message into ACTION

1. At a fast food restaurant, choose smaller serving sizes.

Choose:	Calories	Instead of:	Calories
Whopper Jr®	340	Double Whopper® w/Cheese	900
Smallest French fries	220	Large French fries	580
Smallest chocolate shake	340	Large chocolate shake	960
Total Calories	900	Total Calories	2,530

You saved 1,630 calories from just one meal! This savings could help you lose about a half a pound of body fat. Having 2,530 calories for one meal may be more than you should eat for a whole day. Even 900 calories may be too much for one meal.

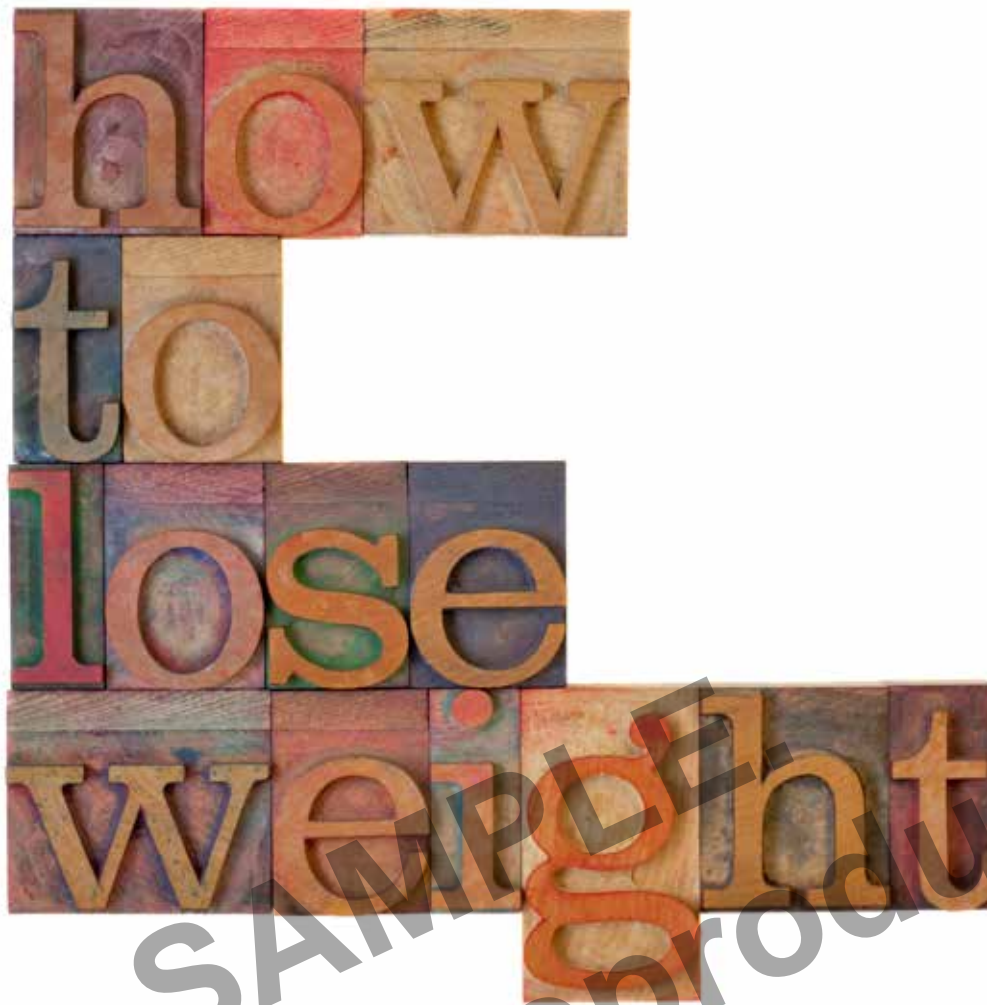
2. Make healthier fast food choices.

Choose:	Calories	Instead of:	Calories
Grilled chicken sandwich with lettuce, tomato, onion	380	Whopper Jr®	340
Garden salad with light Italian dressing	160	Smallest French fries	220
Unsweetened iced tea	0	Smallest chocolate shake	340
Total Calories	540	Total Calories	900

You saved 360 calories! To add more nutrients, have fruit and low-fat yogurt between lunch and dinner.

3. Choose restaurants that offer healthy choices:

- Smaller servings, such as half of a sandwich and a cup of soup or small salad
- Lunch-sized portions at dinner
- Baked, broiled, grilled, and steamed items
- Veggies that are not creamed or smothered in cheese. Choose:
 - Tossed salads
 - Three-bean salad
 - Sandwiches that have lettuce, tomatoes, onions, and other veggies
- Fruits, such as:
 - Fresh fruit
 - Fruit cups and fruit salads
 - Apple slices
 - Fresh fruit and low-fat yogurt parfaits



For most people, slow and steady wins the race going at a turtle's pace.

Aim for a weight loss of 1 to 2 pounds a week. Losing just 7 to 10 % of your current weight has health benefits.

- **Enjoy your food, but eat less.** Cut down on portions, especially high-calorie desserts and snacks. Plan healthy meals and snacks. Eat at regular times.
- **Move more, sit less.** Limit computer and TV time. Or, exercise when you watch TV. Plan for and do regular physical activity.
- **Keep a daily food and physical activity log.** Studies have shown that people who do this are more successful at losing weight and keeping it off.



Lose weight. Gain health. Be well.



Strive for a Healthy Weight

Plan for Success

Sleep enough. Getting seven to nine hours of sleep a night helps regulate hormones that control hunger and help you feel full.

Use more calories by being more active. Sit less. Move more. When you are sitting, exercise your arms, hands, and shoulders.

Control portion sizes.

Choose fruit for your everyday dessert.

Eat meals and snacks at regular times. Have breakfast every day. Eat with your family at the table, not in front of the TV or while you are doing another activity.

Shop for foods after you have eaten. Start in the produce section. Then shop the outer aisles for fresh meats and nonfat and low-fat dairy foods. Avoid aisles with processed foods, cakes, cookies, and munchies high in fat and salt.

Substitute water or unsweetened beverages for sugary ones. Giving up two 12-ounce sodas a day can help you lose 30 pounds a year!



4 “B”s

for Weight Loss Safety



1

BEWARE of products and programs that use these terms:

- “Miraculous breakthrough”
- “Newly found secret”
- “Fat buster”
- Weight loss with no effort or exercise
- Eat all you want

2

BURN more calories than you take in.

- Move more.
- Eat less, but not less than 1,000 calories per day.
- Get a custom eating plan from www.ChooseMyPlate.gov.

3

BUILD a healthy plate. Make half of your plate vegetables and fruits; one quarter whole-grains and starchy vegetables; and one quarter lean meat and protein foods.

4

BEGIN a lifelong program of healthy eating and regular physical activity to control your weight. Avoid fad diets and yo-yo dieting.



Bone Up on

CALCIUM & VITAMIN D



Calcium and Vitamin D are two vital nutrients for bone health. Calcium is needed to support the structure of the teeth and bones. It is also important for the heart, muscles, and nerves to function properly and for the blood to clot. Vitamin D is needed for calcium to be absorbed. Without enough Vitamin D and calcium, the body pulls calcium from the bones. This causes them to soften or become fragile.

Sources for vitamin d:

1. Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet B rays. Ten to 15 minutes of midday sunshine (without sunscreen) may meet daily needs.
2. Fish, such as salmon, tuna, and mackerel
3. Fortified foods, such as milk, cereals, orange juices, yogurts, and margarine

Sources of calcium:

The best sources of calcium are milk, yogurt, and cheese. Nondairy sources include vegetables, such as broccoli, Chinese cabbage, and kale. Some foods are fortified with calcium. These include cereals, many fruit juices, and tofu.

Daily Needs for Calcium*

Ages	Milligrams (mg)
1-3 years	700
4-8 years	1,000
9-18 years	1,300
19-50 years	1,000
51-70 years (males)	1,000
51+ years (females)	1,200
>70 years (males)	1,200
Pregnant and breast-feeding women:	
14-18 years	1,300
19+ years	1,000

* Source: Institute of Medicine (IOM).

* Follow your doctor's advice for calcium.

Daily Needs for Vitamin D*

Ages	International Units (IUs)
1-70 years	600
>70 years	800

* Source: Institute of Medicine (IOM).

* Follow your doctor's advice for vitamin D.

Action Step

Have at least two servings of nonfat or low-fat milk, yogurt or cheese a day. Eat green leafy vegetables and foods fortified with Vitamin D.



1 Stop making excuses. Commit right now to being a better, healthier you.

2 Fuel up with a healthy breakfast every day.

3 Don't skip meals. It'll just make you want to eat more food later.

4 Be snack-attack ready. Keep low-fat, low-sugar snacks on hand, such as fresh fruit, to avoid making mid-morning trips to the candy machine.

Wellthier by the Dozen™

12 Terrific Tips to

MANAGE WEIGHT



5 Read labels to choose foods that control calories, fat, and sodium.

6 Eat a mix of colorful fruits and veggies, daily, to get a balance of healthy nutrients.

7 Fill up with fiber. Choose whole grains, such as bran cereal, oatmeal, brown rice, and whole wheat pasta.

8 Drink six to eight glasses of water a day to help you feel full and move waste through your body.

9 Okay, just one bite, perhaps even two bites of your favorite dessert will be just enough to satisfy your craving for sweets.

10 Step up your physical activity. Walk, dance, skip to my lou, if you like. Make it fun!

11 Take notes. Write down what you eat and minutes and/or steps you exercise to help you stay on track.

12 Express your emotions without eating.



1 **Link** food portions to "L" words – less, limit, and little piece, and "label." Read "Nutrition Facts" on food labels to see how many calories the item has per serving and how many servings are in the package.

2 **Stick** to one serving. A 20-ounce bottle of soda may quench your thirst, but count it as 2.5 servings, not one.

3 **Location:** Location. To better control portions, eat at home and at restaurants that limit portions. Avoid buffets and "all-u-can-eat" places.

4 **Use** measuring cups and spoons to serve proper portions.



Wellthier by **the Dozen**™

12 Terrific Tips to

CONTROL PORTIONS

5 Compare serving sizes to everyday objects. One medium fruit is the size of a baseball; two tablespoons of peanut butter are the size of a ping pong ball.

6 Use the tip of your thumb as a measurement tool. It equals about 1 ounce of cheese.

7 A small fist also works. It equals a 1/2 cup of fruit, vegetables, or starches, like rice and potatoes.

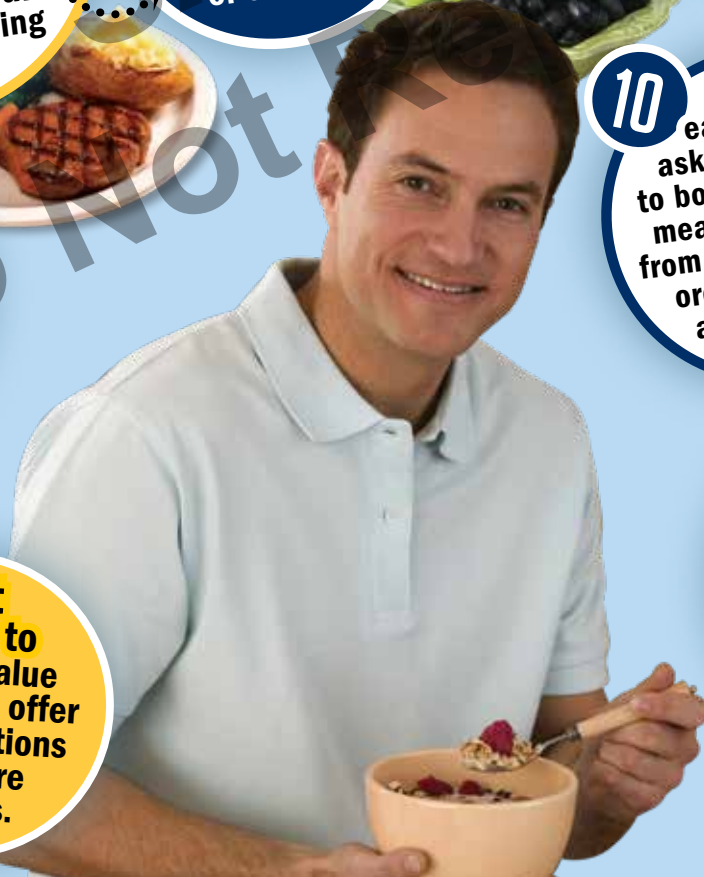
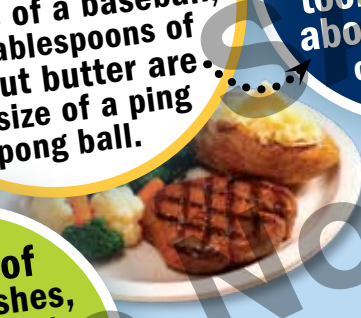
8 One meat serving is 3 ounces or the size of a deck of cards.

9 Eat off of smaller dishes, bowls, and plates to give the illusion that you are eating more.

10 When eating out, ask your server to box up half your meal to keep you from overeating. Or, order one meal and share it.

11 Just say no to special value meals that offer larger portions and more calories.

12 Eat slowly to give your brain the 20 minutes it needs to signal that you are full.



- 1** Let your cup runneth over with fruits and veggies to protect yourself from chronic diseases, such as stroke, type 2 diabetes, and certain cancers.
- 2** Choose fruits and veggies over higher-calorie snacks and desserts to help you lose weight and keep it off.
- 3** Yes, canned, frozen, and dried fruits and veggies count toward your goal. Look for ones without added sugar, syrups, salt, butter, or cream sauces.
- 4** Juice vs. fruit: 100% juices are okay, but they lack fiber and are less filling than fruit. If you have a choice, grab an apple.

Wellthier by the Dozen™

12 Terrific Tips to

COLOR YOUR DIET

WITH FRUITS AND VEGGIES

- 5** To get the most nutritional benefit, buy only what you can eat within a few days.
- 6** Protect your eyes and skin with sweet potatoes, pumpkin, carrots, spinach, turnip greens, mustard greens, kale, red peppers, and cantaloupe.
- 7** Reach for beet greens, white potatoes, cooked greens, and carrot juice to help maintain healthy blood pressure.
- 8** Eat fruits and veggies rich in vitamin C, such as oranges, kiwi, green peppers, and cauliflower, to help heal cuts and keep gums and teeth healthy.

- 9** If you're pregnant, foods rich in folate, such as cantaloupe, cooked spinach, and asparagus may reduce your risk of having a child with a brain or spinal cord defect.
- 10** Spice up regular meals with fruits and veggies. Add blueberries to pancakes, red peppers to soups, and chopped tomatoes to a favorite macaroni dish.

- 11** Lettuce not forget the dark leafy greens, such as kale, spinach, and broccoli, that are high in vitamins and minerals and crammed full of fiber to strengthen the immune system, improve liver function, and improve circulation.
- 12** Add berries and/or banana slices to nonfat yogurt for a refreshing yogurt smoothie.

**GROW
STRONGER**

Drink More Water

Stay hydrated to balance body fluids, keep a normal body temperature, energize muscles, transport nutrients, promote good digestion, and remove toxins.

Drink While Eating

Have a glass of water with most meals and snacks.

Eat More Veggies and Fruit

Many vegetables and fruits are made up of mostly water.



Flavor Your Water

Add lemon, cucumber, or berries. Or, add some natural fruit juice for a flavor boost.



Bring It Along

Have a bottle of water with you during activities that take you away from home.

Most adults can get enough water by drinking about 8 cups per day. When exercising or in humid weather, you should drink more.

Keep Track

Use an app, website, or notebook to help stay on track with your healthy weight loss goals.

Food & Drinks

Record everything you eat and drink, when and where, and who you were with.



Exercise, Too

Track exercise in the same way as food to count steps and calorie-burn.



Weigh In

Check and record your weight once a week. Notice if clothes fit differently.



Review Regularly

Be sure to celebrate successes and identify how you can make healthier choices next time.



FACT:

In the U.S., excessive alcohol use leads to about 88,000 deaths a year.

Risks of binge drinking include alcohol poisoning, vehicle crashes, drowning, and violence to self and others.

Avoid binge drinking – more than 4 drinks on one occasion for men; more than 3 drinks for women.



If you are a woman, limit alcohol to no more than 1 drink per day. If you are pregnant, have no alcohol.



In women, excessive alcohol use increases the risk of infertility, miscarriage, stillbirth, premature delivery, and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) in babies.

Have no more than 2 drinks a day if you are a man.



In men, excessive alcohol use can result in impotence, infertility, and reduction in chest and facial hair.





Limit Alcohol

Plan for Success

Set a good example for your family by not having more than 1 or 2 drinks a day. Stick to your limit. You may decide it is better to not drink at all.

Understand that drinking too much increases the risk for injury in vehicle accidents, fires, and drowning.

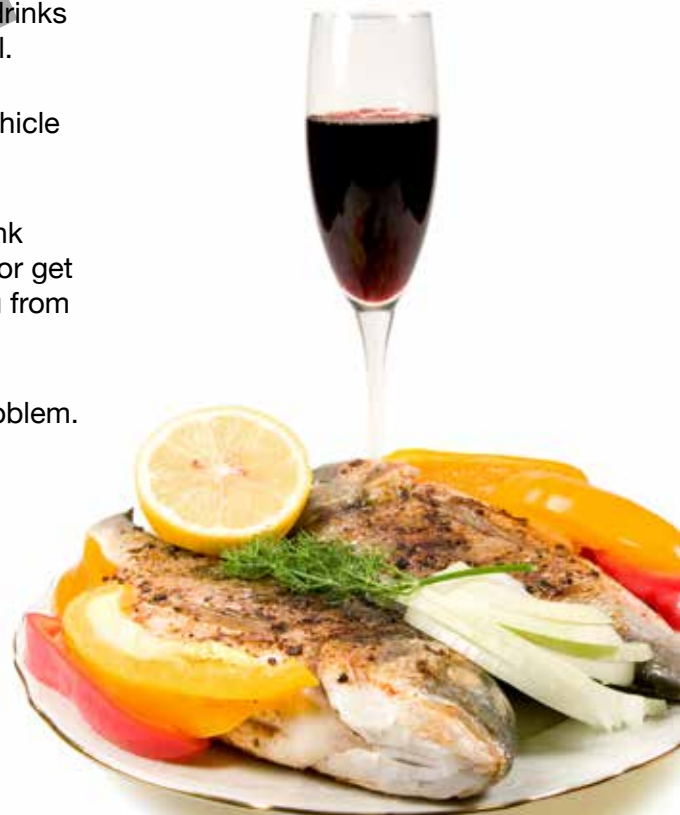
Change your drinking habits by developing new skills. Plan “No thank you” responses for situations when you are offered a drink. Exercise or get involved with a hobby or another healthy activity that will distract you from drinking. Drink water to satisfy your thirst.

Care enough about your health to get help if you have a drinking problem. Contact your VA health care team.

Eat when you drink. Food helps to slow alcohol absorption.

Stock a limited amount of alcohol in your house. You will be less tempted to go over the drinking limit you set for yourself.

Stay away from bars and other places that entice you to drink.





Limit alcohol.

Plan to drink less.

3 Steps to Turn this Message into ACTION

1. Buy less alcohol:

- Replace regular alcoholic drinks with non-alcohol ones:
 - Club soda
 - Mineral water
 - Non-alcohol beer
 - Non-alcohol wine
 - Sparkling juices
- Choose reduced-alcohol drinks, but still drink less. Read labels!
 - Regular beer has about 5% alcohol. “Lite” and reduced alcohol beers have from 2.4% to 4.2% alcohol.
 - Reduced calorie wines have less alcohol and/or less sugar. Alcohol content is 11% to 13% in regular wines; 2% to 9% in reduced-alcohol wines.

2. Plan ways to deal with your drinking triggers:

- First, identify your drinking “triggers.” Examples are certain people, activities, times of day, or feelings. Avoid these triggers as much as you can.
- Plan to handle urges.
 - Have non-alcoholic “decoy” drinks, such as sparkling club soda with lime.
 - Distract yourself with an activity that does not involve drinking.
 - Accept the urge and ride it out. Call 1-855-QUIT-VET (1-855-784-8838) or text the word VET to 47848.
- Practice saying “No thank you.”

3. Limit alcohol to limit calories.

Drink	Calories
12 ounces regular beer	About 150
12 ounces lite beer	75-110
5 ounces wine	100
5 ounces low-alcohol wine	About 60
1½ ounces 80-proof hard liquor	125

If and how much you drink is YOUR choice. If you have trouble limiting alcohol, get help from family, friends, and your health care team.

USE ALCOHOL WISELY



Do you use alcohol to relieve combat stress and PTSD? Alcohol may give short-term relief from distressing thoughts or feelings, but misuse of alcohol can make these problems worse.

Use Alcohol Wisely

» If you drink, do so in moderation. This means no more than 2 drinks a day for males; 1 drink if you are female or are age 65 years and older.

One drink is:

- 12 oz. of regular beer
- 4-5 oz. of wine
- 1-1/2 oz. of 80-proof liquor.

» After you have 1 or 2 drinks with alcohol, have drinks that do not contain alcohol.

» Drink slowly. Eat when you drink. Food helps to slow alcohol absorption.

» Don't drink and drive. Designate a driver who will not be drinking.

» Coffee or fresh air cannot make you sober. To get sober, stop drinking.

» Know your limit and stick to it. You may decide it is better not to drink at all.

How Do I Know if I Have an Alcohol Problem?

Ask your health care provider how much, if any, alcohol you can have with conditions you have and/or medications you take. This includes over-the-counter medicines.

Answer the questions that follow. A key word in each of these 4 questions spells **CAGE**.

- » Have you ever felt you should **C**ut down on your drinking?
- » Have people **A**nnoyed you by criticizing your drinking?
- » Have you ever felt bad or **G**uilty about your drinking?
- » Have you ever had a drink to steady your nerves or to get rid of a hangover (**E**ye opener)?

Even one "Yes" answer means there might be an alcohol problem. Contact your VA health care provider. You may have answered "No" to all four CAGE questions, but there could still be a problem.

DRINK RESPONSIBLY



Enough is enough.

Two drinks per day for men and one drink per day for women and persons age 65 and older is enough to release tension. Drinking too much can slur your speech, decrease your ability to think clearly, and put you at greater risk of having a traffic accident, if driving.

One drink equals 1-1/2 ounces of 80-proof hard liquor, 12 ounces of beer, or 4-5 ounces of wine.

Don't drink alcohol if:

- You are pregnant.
- You are under the legal drinking age.
- You are driving a car, a boat, a plane or operating machines.
- You are alcohol or drug dependent.
- You have hepatitis.

Use alcohol wisely:

- Alcohol and some prescribed drugs don't mix and can sometimes be fatal. Read labels and ask your doctor before combining the two.
- Know your drinking limit and stick to it.
- Drink slowly.
- After you have one to two drinks with alcohol, drink something alcohol-free.
- Don't drink and drive.
- Always designate a driver who will not be drinking.

Action Step

If you order alcohol when you eat out, ask to have it served with, not before, the meal. Alternate sips of alcohol and water. Designate a sober driver. Buzzed driving is drunk driving.



Get Recommended Immunizations

Plan for Success

See that you get your yearly flu vaccine. This is the single best way to help protect you from getting the flu. You can get the vaccine in a shot or a nasal spray.

Understand that you need a flu vaccine every year because flu viruses are always changing and adapting. Each year, scientists make a vaccine based on the viruses most likely to cause the flu that year.

Consider getting the flu vaccine as soon as you can each year. It can take up to two weeks to build up immunity to the flu viruses in the vaccine.

Consult your health care team for other vaccines that are right for you and where to receive them. Vaccines are based on your age, gender, health status, and family health history.

Electronic medical records that the VA uses alert your health care team to discuss which vaccines you should get and how often you should get them according to your age, but you can ask your provider about vaccines at any visit.

Stay up-to-date with your vaccines to protect yourself and people around you. On the My HealthVet website, keep a record of vaccines and sign up for Wellness Reminders for flu and pneumonia vaccines.

Search for information about different vaccines at www.cdc.gov/vaccines.





It's Wise to **IMMUNIZE**

Vaccines protect you, your children, and others from getting many infectious diseases. The disease smallpox no longer exists due to the success of vaccines for it.

Vaccines save lives and money.*

- If vaccines for measles were stopped, about 2.7 million deaths a year could occur around the world.
- Hib meningitis once killed 600 children a year. From 1994-1998, fewer than 10 children a year died from Hib disease.
- Before vaccines for it, rotavirus infection resulted in more than 400,000 doctor visits, 200,000 emergency department visits, up to 70,000 hospitalizations, and 20 to 60 deaths a year. It also cost about a billion dollars a year in time lost from work to care for sick children.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention


The benefits outweigh the risks:

- Like any medicine, there may be minor side effects, such as a slight fever, a rash, or soreness at the site of injection. These can often be controlled by taking acetaminophen before or after getting the vaccine(s).
- Very rarely, people have an allergic reaction after getting a vaccine. Tell your healthcare provider of any health problems and allergies you have.
- Egg protein from chicken eggs is found in vaccines for flu and yellow fever. Usually, persons who are able to eat eggs or egg products can safely receive these vaccines. Also, persons with a severe egg allergy can get an egg-free flu shot.
- Studies continue to show that there is no link between vaccines and autism.
- If you have a concern that a vaccine could harm your child, talk to his or her doctor.

Action Step

Get the most recent schedules of vaccines for children and adults from: www.cdc.gov/vaccines or from 1-800-232-4636. Keep a record of vaccines you and your children get.

GET NEEDED VACCINES



It is better to prevent a disease than to treat it. Vaccines protect you, your children, and entire communities from getting many infectious diseases.

What vaccines do you need?

Get a complete list of recommended vaccines for children, adolescents, and adults from the Centers for Disease and Control & Prevention (CDC) the Web site www.cdc.gov/vaccines. Click on “Immunization Schedules.” Discuss what vaccines you and your children should get with your health care providers.

Some children have not had all the vaccines they need. Many adolescents and adults are under-immunized, too. This makes it possible for outbreaks of flu, measles, pneumonia, hepatitis B, and other infectious diseases.

Keep a record of vaccines given.

Start a shot record when your child gets his or her first vaccine(s). List symptoms or problems that occur with vaccines, too. You can get forms to keep records of vaccines and information about vaccines from www.cdc.gov/vaccines/recs/immuniz-records.htm.

Possible Side Effects of Vaccines

Like any medicine, there may be minor side effects. This is normal and should not be a cause for alarm. Depending on the vaccine, these can include:

- » A slight fever
- » A rash, or soreness at the site of injection
- » Slight discomfort

These side effects can often be controlled by taking acetaminophen before or after getting the vaccine(s).

- » Very rarely, people have an allergic reaction after getting a vaccine. Be sure to tell your health care provider if you have health problems or known allergies to medications or food.
- » Egg protein is found in influenza and yellow fever vaccines. These are prepared using chicken eggs. Usually, persons who are able to eat eggs or egg products can safely receive these vaccines. Also, persons with a severe allergy to eggs can get an egg-free flu shot.
- » Serious reactions to vaccines are extremely rare.
- » Report a health problem that followed vaccination. You or your provider should call the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System (VAERS) at 1-800-822-7967.



Get recommended immunizations. Protect yourself and others.

3 Steps to Turn this Message into ACTION

1. Discuss your vaccine needs with your health care team.

Vaccines you need depend on your age, gender, health status, and if you are allergic to contents in a vaccine.

2. Schedule and get the vaccines you need:

- Get a yearly flu vaccine.
- Make a list of other vaccines you need this year. If you are registered with My HealthVet and have an upgraded account, check your “Wellness Reminders.”
- Keep a record of your vaccines. If you are registered with My HealthVet, keep records of your screenings in “Track Health.”

3. Vaccines are not just for kids.

Vaccines for Adults	How Often
Seasonal Flu	Yearly
Tetanus / Diphtheria / Pertussis (Whooping cough)	Tdap (1 dose) if not had in the past. Td booster every 10 years.
Varicella (Chicken pox)	Discuss, with health care team, if you have not had chicken pox or had only one dose of this vaccine
Hepatitis A	Discuss with your health care team
Hepatitis B	3 doses, if advised
Human Papillomavirus (HPV)	3 doses ages 9-26
Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR)	1 or 2 doses if you were born in 1957 or later
Meningococcal	Discuss with your health care team
Pneumonia	1 dose PCV13 at age 65+ and 1 dose PPSV23* (wait 6-12 months after getting PCV13).
Zoster (Shingles)	Once at age 60 or older

*You may also need PPSV23 before age 65 if you smoke or have certain chronic diseases. Ask your health care team.

If traveling out of the country, discuss needed vaccines with your health care team prior to travel.

Find out about vaccines for adults and children from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov/vaccines and 1-800-232-4636.

spread the word.

Do Not Reproduce.

Vaccines aren't just for kids.

Adults need vaccines, too. Immunity from childhood vaccines can wear off with age. And some vaccines protect against serious conditions that affect adults.

Vaccine	When
Seasonal flu	Every year
Tetanus / Diphtheria / Pertussis (Tdap). This protects newborns and you from whooping cough.	All adults who have not yet had this Td booster (tetanus shot) every 10 years
Zoster (Shingles) Vaccine	Once at age 60 and older
Pneumococcal Vaccine	1 dose PCV13 at age 65+ and 1 dose PPSV23* (wait 6-12 months after getting PCV13).

*You may also need PPSV23 before age 65 if you smoke or have certain chronic diseases. Ask your health care team.

Find out more about these and other adult vaccines at www.cdc.gov/vaccines.



Protect your health. Get vaccines. Be well.

FACT:

Up to 60% of deaths from colorectal cancers could be prevented if everyone age 50 and older were screened as advised.

A screening colonoscopy can detect and remove polyps before they turn into cancer.

The most common reason people avoid screening is fear—of finding colon cancer, of the bowel prep, and of getting a colonoscopy.

You choose—take time to get screened or risk getting the second leading cause of cancer deaths.

Despite this, fewer than half of men and women over age 50 get screened.

Ask your health care provider about different screening tests and bowel prep options. Discuss your fears freely.

Some people do not get screened because they say they do not have time or simply put it off.





Get Recommended Cancer Screenings

Plan for Success

Screening tests for cancer help find possible problems before symptoms occur. Often, cancer is present without any symptoms.

Understand that screening tests for cancer have benefits and risks. Discuss these with your health care team. Ask these questions:

- How do I prepare for the screening?
- How is the screening done?
- Are there any dangers or side effects involved?

Colon cancer is 75-90% curable when found early. Start screenings at age 50. If you have a family history of colon cancer, discuss, with your health care team, at what age to begin getting screened.

Cervical cancer can be prevented with human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine. If you are under age 26, ask about getting this vaccine.

Enter your age, sex, and pregnancy status at www.healthfinder.gov/myhealthfinder to find out what screening tests you need. Discuss this with your health care team.

Schedule screening tests as advised by your health care team.

Stay up-to-date on your screening tests. On the My HealthVet website, keep a record of test dates and results and sign up for “Wellness Reminders” for screening tests.





Get recommended health screenings. Keep your health in check.

3 Steps to Turn this Message into ACTION

1. Discuss your needs with your health care team:

- Health screenings you need depend on your age, gender, family history, and health status. For example:
 - If you have diabetes, you need a blood test called A1C every 3 to 6 months. Every year, you also need a blood cholesterol test, a foot exam, a dilated retinal eye exam, and a urine test to check how your kidneys function.
- Discuss the benefits and harms of screening tests. Let your health care team know which ones you prefer to have.

2. Schedule and get the screening tests you need:

- Make a list of the health screenings you still need this year. If you are registered with My HealthVet and have an upgraded account, check your "Wellness Reminders."
- Write your screening test appointments on your calendar.
- Keep a record of your screenings and results. If you are registered with My HealthVet, keep records of your health screenings in "Track Health."



3. Screening tests are not just for cancer.

Your health care team screens for problems that affect your overall health, too. Be prepared to discuss the following:

- Your use of alcohol and/or drugs
- If you use tobacco and/or are exposed to secondhand smoke
- If you need help to lose weight
- If you are depressed or have had a lot less interest in almost all things you do nearly every day, for at least two weeks
- If you have been exposed to a traumatic event, such as combat or military sexual trauma (MST)
- If you have or are at risk for HIV

FACT:

Chronic or overwhelming stress plays a role in chronic anxiety, depression, high blood pressure, and heart disease.

Try to turn negative thoughts into positive ones.

Do regular exercise to ward off stress and to have fun.

Share your feelings with a family member, friend, or coworker with whom you can confide.

Avoid letting your emotions get "bottled up inside."

To deal with daily stress, give deep breathing a try.

To help relieve stress, it may help to have a good cry.





SAMPLE
Not Reproduce.

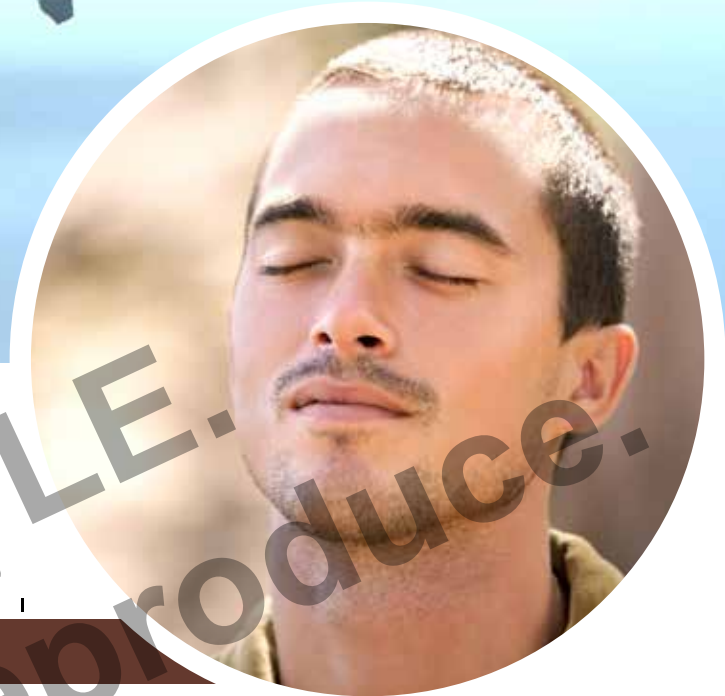
Use simple, free ways to relax at anytime and anywhere.

- **Breathe to relax.** Take a slow deep breath in through your nose. Hold the air in for 3 seconds. Purse your lips and exhale through your mouth making a whooshing sound. Repeat 5 or more times.
- **Visit your happy place in your mind.** Close your eyes and picture being at the place you feel the most relaxed and happy.
- **Count to 10 when you're so upset that you want to scream.** It buys you time so you can reflect on what's bothering you and begin to calm down.



Relax your body. Relax your mind. Be well.

STRESS



Manage stress.

Learn how
to cope.

3 Steps to Turn this Message into ACTION

1. Accept that stress is a part of life and that it can be managed:

- Be as physically active as you can.
- Get enough sleep.
- Eat healthy foods.

Get treatment for conditions that have stress as a symptom. Common ones in Veterans include:

- Adjusting to civilian life
- Coping with an injury or illness
- Mild traumatic brain injury (TBI)
- Military sexual trauma (MST)
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

2. Learn and practice ways to relax:

- Take at least 10 minutes every morning to calm your mind.
 - Sit or lie down.
 - Breathe slowly and deeply.
 - Focus on how the inhaled air feels in your lungs and chest. Focus on the present moment.
- Take part in activities that are fun and/or help you relax.
- Listen to soothing music.
- Meditate.
- Do tai chi or yoga.
- Tense and relax your muscles.

3. Get help if you need it:

- Talk out your troubles with a fellow Veteran, friend, or family member who will listen and offer support.
- Talk to your health care team. VA has many tools to help you manage stress. Ask which ones are good options for you.
- If you are in a crisis, call the Veteran Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255 or access www.veterancriisline.net.

 **Veterans
Crisis Line**
1-800-273-8255 **PRESS 1**



Manage Stress

Plan for Success

Set realistic goals. Don't commit to more than you can do.

Use VA Apps to help manage PTSD and stress. Download these from <https://mobile.va.gov/appstore>.

- Mindfulness Coach
- Moving Forward
- PTSD Coach

Consult your health care team about relaxation or mindfulness training.

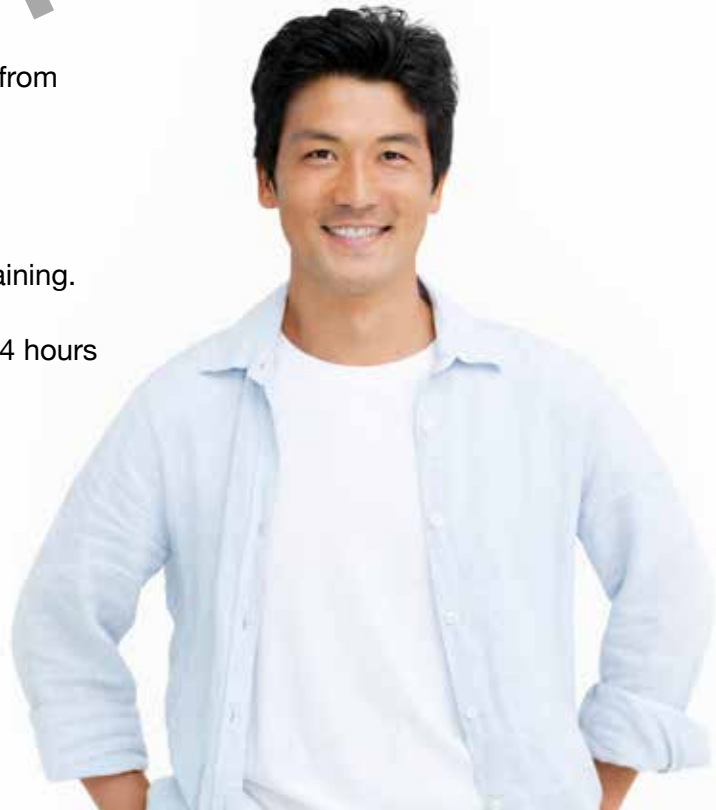
Contact the Veterans Crisis Line to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

- Call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1.
- Chat online at www.veteranscrisisline.net.
- Send a text message to 838255.

Escape to a place (or picture a scene) where you feel calm, relaxed, and secure.

Spend time with people and/or pets that you enjoy.

Set time aside for doing something that is 100% relaxation, such as a vacation.



MANAGE STRESS



What is stress? Stress is the body's response to changes and increased demands. Left unchecked, stress can lead to or worsen health problems.

Emotional Symptoms of Stress

- » Excessive worry, anxiety, or nervousness
- » Crying spells
- » Feeling of hopelessness
- » Sleep problems
- » Withdrawal from friends, coworkers, and relatives
- » Anger outbursts

Physical Symptoms of Stress

- » Breathing and heart rate speed up
- » Muscles tense
- » Sweating occurs
- » Heartburn
- » Back or neck pain
- » Headaches

If you have one or more problems, talk to your health care provider.

Ways to Manage Stress

Do Stress Rehearsals

1. Write or state what you want to happen in the present tense.
2. Take a deep, relaxing breath. Create a picture of the event in detail (what you see, feel, smell, hear, and touch).
3. Picture the results you want to occur.
4. Pair positive emotions like joy or pride with your created, desired image.

- » Maintain good health habits. Eat healthy. Get enough sleep.
- » Do regular exercise. This is good for your physical and emotional health.
- » Share your feelings.
- » Manage your time. Rank order tasks you need to do.
- » Lessen your exposure to things that cause distress.
- » Practice a relaxation technique daily.
- » Spend time helping others.
- » Do activities you enjoy and look forward to. Laugh a lot.
- » Accept the things you cannot change in yourself or others.
- » Forgive yourself for mistakes.
- » Set goals you can achieve.
- » Be satisfied with what you have done. Don't dwell on what you can't do.
- » Be a positive thinker.
- » Be with cheerful people.





SAMPLE
Not Reproduce.



Good medicine is just a chuckle away.

Studies show that hardy laughter improves blood flow, reduces stress, lessens pain, and burns calories.

- **Lol — Laugh out loud.** Doing this helps you lighten up and brighten your outlook.
- **Keep the jokes coming.** Get a joke sent to your email every day, such as through www.ajokeaday.com. Check out other online joke websites and Funny YouTube videos.
- **A smile is a frown turned upside down.** Look for the humor in stressful situations.

Smile more. Laugh often. Be well.

TAKE ACTION TO COPE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS



It takes the courage and strength of a warrior to ask for help. Getting help for problems early might keep them from getting worse in the future.




In a study of soldiers coming home from Iraq, only four in ten with mental health problems said they would get help. Six out of ten:

- Were worried about what others would think
- Thought getting help would be seen as a sign of weakness
- Thought it might hurt their military career

Contact your VA health care provider for a proper evaluation and diagnosis. He or she may have you see a mental health provider or connect you with other services that you may need.

What can I do to cope with mental health problems?

- 
- » Use tools on My HealthVet at www.myhealth.va.gov to help you screen for alcohol use, depression, PTSD, and substance abuse. These screenings can help you decide if you should seek a medical evaluation.
 - » Find out about and follow through with treatment as advised by your healthcare provider. This may include:
 - One-on-one counseling
 - Support groups
 - Medication(s)
 - Group therapy
 - Family therapy
 - » Talk to family, friends, or fellow Veterans for support.
 - » Follow and maintain healthy habits. Do regular exercise. Eat healthy foods. Try to get enough sleep and rest. Get healthy living tips at www.prevention.va.gov.

Stretch

to ease
stress



Stress doesn't only wreak havoc on your mind; it can cause aches and pains in your head, neck, shoulders, and back. Research says that daily stretching can reduce muscle tension, increase blood flow, and improve range of motion and coordination.

Sample stretches:

Upper body stretch: Standing or seated, raise your arms above your head and interlace your fingers. With your palms facing upward, push slightly back and up. Hold for 10 to 30 seconds. Repeat three times.

Sitting hamstring stretch: Sit on the floor. Stretch your left leg out directly in front of you with your toes pointed up. Place your right foot against your left thigh. Slowly reach forward to grasp the tips of your left toes. Bend from the hip. Hold for a count of 10. Repeat three times. Do the same exercise, switching leg positions.

Stretching safety tips:

1. Warm up your muscles. This makes them more flexible. For example, walk for a few minutes while gently swinging your arms.
2. Stretch-hold-release. Hold each stretch for at least 10 to 30 seconds. Repeat each stretch at least three times.
3. Gain without pain. Use slow and steady motions to the point of mild discomfort. If you feel pain, you went too far. Stretching should not pinch, pull, or snap anything. Bend your joints slightly when you stretch.
4. Do not bounce when you stretch. This can tear muscles.

Action Step

Take 15 minutes, daily, to stretch all major muscle groups (neck, shoulders, arms, abs, lower back, butt, and legs).

Deal with BULLIES



Bullying or being bullied is not a rite of passage. It's not just kids being kids or a phase they'll grow out of. For those who bully, it's a way to be in control with the intent to cause harm to others. Being bullied can cause serious and lasting emotional damage, such as poor self-esteem, lack of motivation, alcoholism, and depression. And over and over, news shows have featured suicides due to being bullied.

Forms of bullying:

- Verbal – Name-calling or teasing
- Social – Spreading rumors, leaving people out on purpose, breaking up friendships
- Physical – Hitting, punching, shoving, tripping
- Cyber bullying – Using the Internet, mobile phones, or other technologies to harm others

Take quick action:

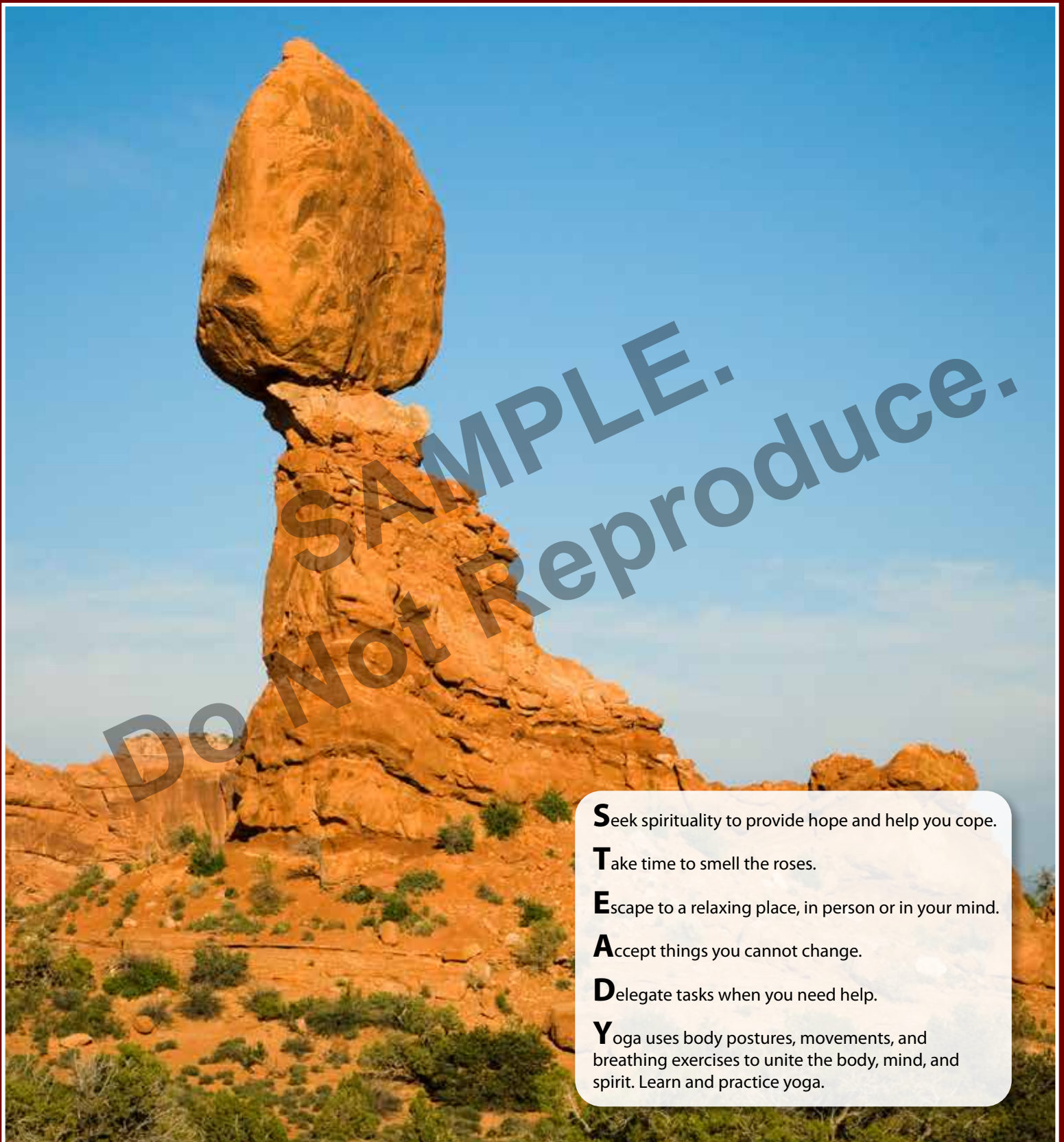
Most bullies and their victims will not come forward on their own. Parents, teachers, and other adults need to intervene. If you suspect your child is bullying or being bullied:

- Talk to them without delay.
- Get to know their friends and social networks. Pay attention to their online activities.
- Talk with their teachers to find out how they interact with others in school.
- Set and enforce rules about how digital technology can and cannot be used.
- If you suspect your child is being bullied, report this through the appropriate steps – teachers, administrators, police, and the State School Department, as needed.
- If your child is repeatedly sick, stressed, not sleeping, or having other problems because of bullying, contact a counselor or other health care professional.

Action Step

Set up a daily time to check in with your kids. Ask questions and listen to their responses without judging them. Tell them they can trust you and that being bullied is not their fault.

Find your balance.



Seek spirituality to provide hope and help you cope.

Take time to smell the roses.

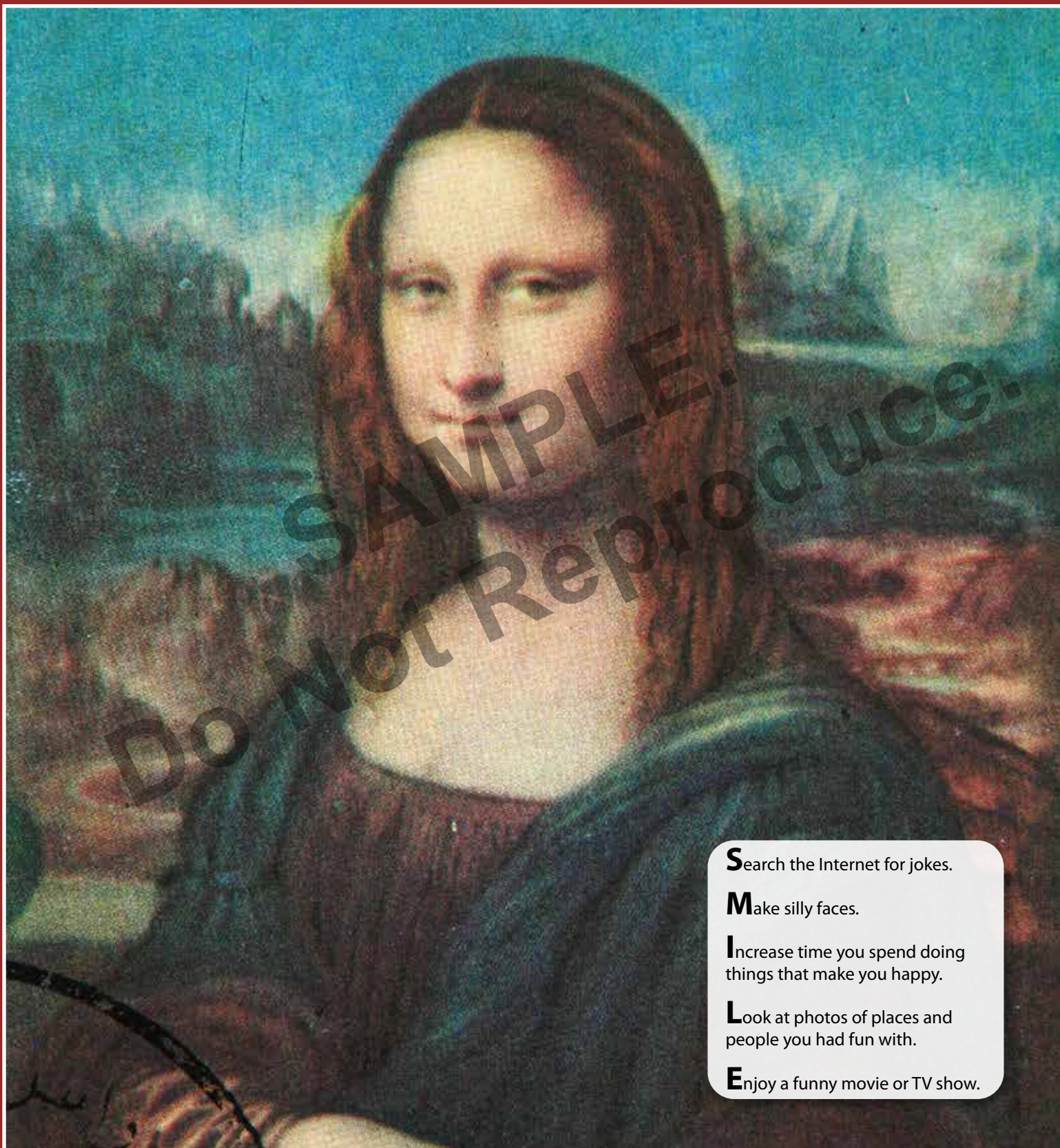
Escape to a relaxing place, in person or in your mind.

Acept things you cannot change.

Delegate tasks when you need help.

Yoga uses body postures, movements, and breathing exercises to unite the body, mind, and spirit. Learn and practice yoga.

Smile. It relieves stress.



Search the Internet for jokes.

Make silly faces.

Increase time you spend doing things that make you happy.

Look at photos of places and people you had fun with.

Enjoy a funny movie or TV show.

Take time to make the most of your time.

Track how you spend your time on a typical day.

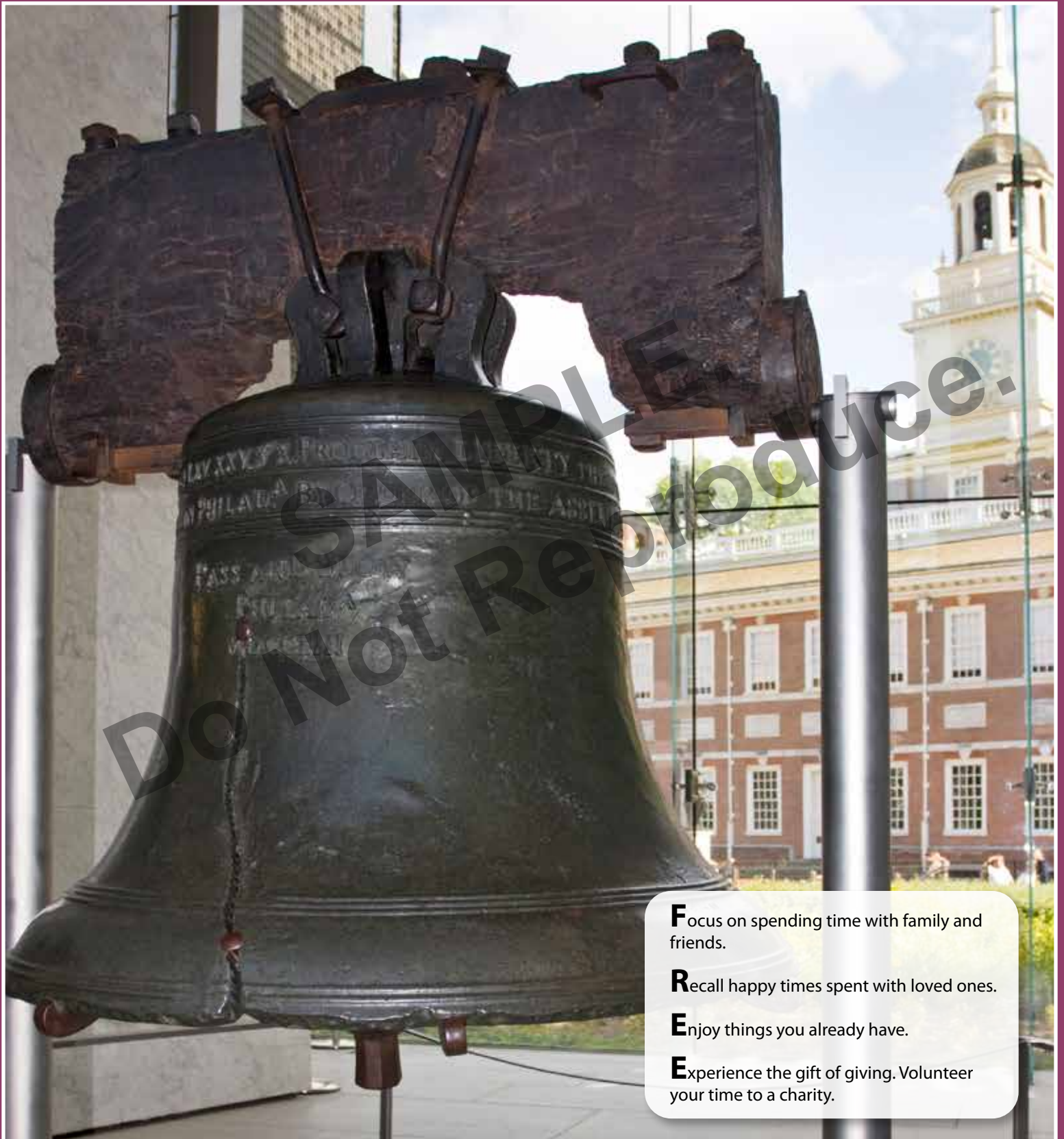
Identify times and moods that promote unhealthy habits.

Make time daily and weekly for physical activities.

Establish a priority list.



The best gifts
in life are free!



Focus on spending time with family and friends.

Recall happy times spent with loved ones.

Entertain yourself with things you already have.

Experience the gift of giving. Volunteer your time to a charity.

1 Know signs of stress, such as tension in the shoulders and neck, fatigue, headache, anxiety and trouble sleeping.



2 Be positive. Your attitude can determine how you react to stress.

3 If you can, walk away from stressful situations.

4 Organize your time, daily, to avoid surprises that cause stress.



Wellthier by **the Dozen**™

12 Terrific Tips to

ZAP STRESS

5 Do a stress rehearsal before stressful events, such as a job interview or a meeting with the boss.

6 Work on resolving conflicts.

7 See the little problems for what they are - little problems.

8 Volunteer. Helping others can make you feel better about your situation.

9 Get moving. Aerobic activity increases endorphin levels - the natural "feel-good" chemicals in the body.

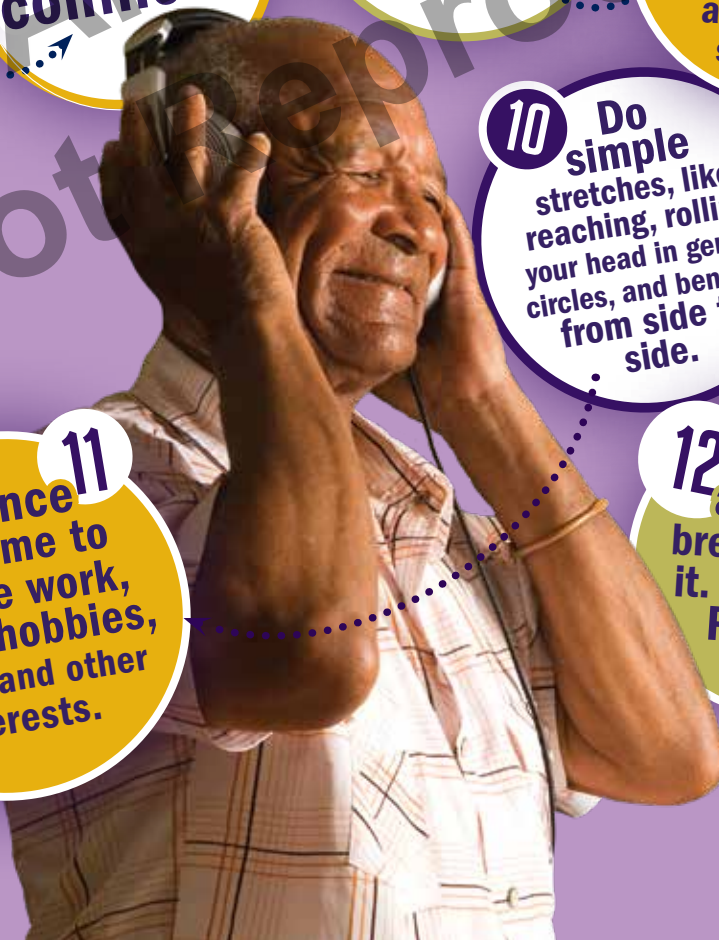


11 Balance your time to include work, family, hobbies, sports, and other interests.



10 Do simple stretches, like reaching, rolling your head in gentle circles, and bending from side to side.

12 Take a deep breath. Hold it. Let it Go. Repeat twice.



MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

FACTS



Focus on an object, like breath. Focus on what you sense, think and feel. Don't judge yourself.

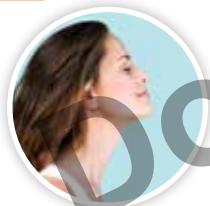


May boost immune system and brain function, control negative feelings, increase self-compassion



May reduce risks for stress, depression, anxiety, PTSD, obesity

PROS



Can be done frequently throughout the day. Don't need a meditative posture.

CONS



Does not replace traditional medical therapies for managing diseases and chronic conditions

BE ZEN

TRANSCENDENTAL
OR
MINDFULNESS?

Meditation can calm the mind, improve balance, manage chronic diseases, and enhance well-being. Mindfulness and transcendental meditation are two popular options with similar benefits. Which one will help you find your Zen?

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION

FACTS



Focus your attention on a single object or idea. Helps keep the mind calm, stable, grounded.

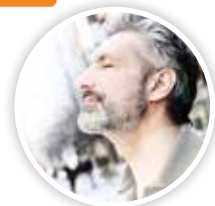


May improve immune system and brain function, suppress negativity, improve creativity



May reduce risks for stress, depression, anxiety, insomnia, PTSD, heart attack, stroke

PROS



May be twice as effective as other meditation practices for reducing stress, anxiety and depression.

CONS



Does not replace traditional medical therapies for managing diseases and chronic conditions

DRUG TREATMENT

FACTS



Patient works with doctor to find a drug that works for them. 100s of drugs on the market now with new drugs added each year.



Includes antidepressants, anti-anxiety, and anti-psychotic medications



Side effects include drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, dry mouth, low blood pressure, nervousness

PROS



Medication can be the best option for some patients. Is less time-consuming and more controlled.

CONS

Medications only work if you take them just as prescribed. May not help manage all symptoms. Negative side effects could rule out a patient using certain drugs.



PSYCHOTHERAPY

FACTS



Patient works with a therapist. Manages their illness through talking and exercises.



Includes cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), interpersonal therapy, therapy pets



Studies show psychotherapy works 75-80% of the time

PROS

Psychotherapy might help manage some mental illnesses. Few to no side effects.



CONS

Some medication use may still be needed. Some therapies could be inappropriate for some patients. May cause more harm than good.



HERE COMES THE SUN

DRUGS OR THERAPY?

A doctor may prescribe a patient a psychiatric drug or psychotherapy. Or, combine the two. There's no "one-size-fits-all" treatment.

ON THE ROAD TO

Better Relationships

Have healthier relationships with family & friends.

2

SPEND TIME SHARING

Spend time listening – focusing on the things that are important to your friend. Openly express what's happening in your life.



2

1

1

REACH OUT

Want to rekindle some of your once closest relationships? Start by reaching out – by phone, email or social media.



3

SET A SCHEDULE

Set up regular times for you to call or meet up with family and friends.



4

4

MAKE IT A TWO-WAY STREET

Follow up with friends and family regularly. When problems arise, share your feelings with humility and compassion.

Why do we need relationships?

Research shows that having strong relationships with people can extend your life, protect you from the effects of stress, and keep your mind sharp as you age.

ON THE ROAD TO

Better Breathing

Take steps to keep lungs clear and healthy.

DON'T USE TOBACCO ◀ 1

Stay away from all tobacco products and avoid anyone who smokes.

Why are lungs so important?

Lungs keep all your organs functioning well by taking the oxygen you breathe and transporting it along your bloodstream to other parts of your body. Then, it disposes of unwanted carbon dioxide.

3 REDUCE ENVIRONMENTAL TOXINS

Buy non-toxic cleaning supplies and all-natural pesticides to reduce exposure to any harmful chemicals that can affect the health of your lungs.

2 BUY HOME TESTS

Buy kits from the hardware store to test for dangerous carcinogens, such as radon and formaldehyde, in your home.

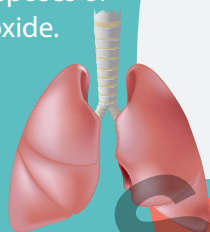


5 GET EXERCISE

Work out at the local gym regularly, doing at least 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise. This helps keep lungs strong and working at full capacity.

4 PURIFY THE AIR

Buy houseplants, such as a Peace Lily and English Ivy, to put in your home. They help to purify the air from some toxins.



ON THE ROAD TO

Better Mental Health

Reduce stress and anxiety in life.

2

DO SOMETHING CREATIVE

For instance, sign up for an art class at a local community center. Creative outlets like this are good ways to channel any negative emotions.



2

1

1 TAKE A TIME OUT

When things get stressful, step away from the situation. Take a brisk walk around the block or sit quietly in a place for a few minutes.



3

3 GET OUTSIDE

Go for nature walks at a nearby park at least once a week. This helps clear your mind and find emotional balance.

4

4

4 PREPARE IN ADVANCE

Before going into a stressful situation, imagine the upcoming scene and consider what you can say or do to keep yourself and others calm.



Why should we stay mentally fit?

Mental health affects how you think, feel and act. It affects how you handle stress and relate to others. It impacts your decision-making, including the day-to-day and long-term choices you make.

Take a Break for Health

No matter how you spend your time, relaxing and recharging helps manage stress and life's challenges. Pausing also makes room for new ideas.



Stand Up

Do something else if you have been sitting for a while.

Move Your Body

Aim to exercise at least 30 minutes on most days.



Practice Mindful Awareness

Bring your attention to the present moment and to your breathing for 2-5 minutes. Focus on how your body feels, on the inside and the outside.



Enjoy Mother Nature

Go for a walk in the park or meditate while sitting under a tree.

FACT:

Each year, about 420,000 people are injured in motor vehicle crashes involving a distracted driver. **DO NOT** text, call, eat, read, or groom when you are driving.

Compared to drivers legally impaired by alcohol, cell phone users can have slower reaction times and slower reaction to vehicles breaking in front of them.

P 

Pull over and stop in a safe area if you need to talk or text.

Would you be a passenger in a car with a drunk driver? If you are a passenger in a car of a person who is driving distracted, speak up.



Encourage family and friends to drive without talking on the phone or texting.

Set a good example yourself by not driving distracted.



Drivers who use cell phones are four times more likely to be involved in a crash.





Be Safe:

Prevent Falls

Plan for Success

See to it that outside walking areas of your house and garage are well-lit. If you can, install motion sensor lights for outdoor entries and walkways.

Use caution when walking in homes with pets and small children to avoid tripping over them and their toys.

Clear clutter from floors and stairs. Arrange furniture so there is a clear path for walking. Test if furniture is sturdy enough to lean on.

Clean up spills on floors right away. Wear nonskid shoes.

Exercise on a regular basis. Do regular weight bearing exercises, such as walking, to help keep bones strong. Improve balance with yoga or tai chi. Strengthen muscles by lifting hand weights or cans of food.

Sit when you put your shoes or slippers on. Use a long handled shoe horn, if needed. Wear shoes and slippers that fit well.

Switch positions safely. If you use a walker or a wheelchair, be careful when you go from standing to sitting and vice versa. Make sure that:

- The wheelchair or rolling walker's brakes are on.
- You are holding on to the device's handles or arms.
- You are close to the chair, bed, toilet, or other place you are transferring to.



safety first

SAMPLE
Not Reproduce.



Take steps to make your home, sweet home a home, safe home.

Most accidents happen in the home. Protect yourself and your loved ones from accidental injuries.

- **Childproof your home.** Room by room, take steps to prevent burns, cuts, electric shock, and poisoning.
- **Prevent falls for all.** Keep walkways clear of clutter and well lit. Use grab bars and safety mats in tubs and showers.
- **Install and maintain smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.** Check, monthly, to see that they are in working order. Replace, as needed.

Be careful. Be safe. Be well.



Be Safe: Protect Yourself from Sexually Transmitted Infections

Plan for Success

Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) may or may not have signs or symptoms. You could have an STI and not know it. When symptoms occur, common ones are:

- Pain, irritation, and/or sores in the genital area
- An unusual discharge from the vagina or penis
- Burning feeling or pain when urinating
- Pain in the abdomen

Use a latex or polyurethane condom every time you have sex (vaginal, anal, or oral) if you or your partner is or might be infected with an STI.

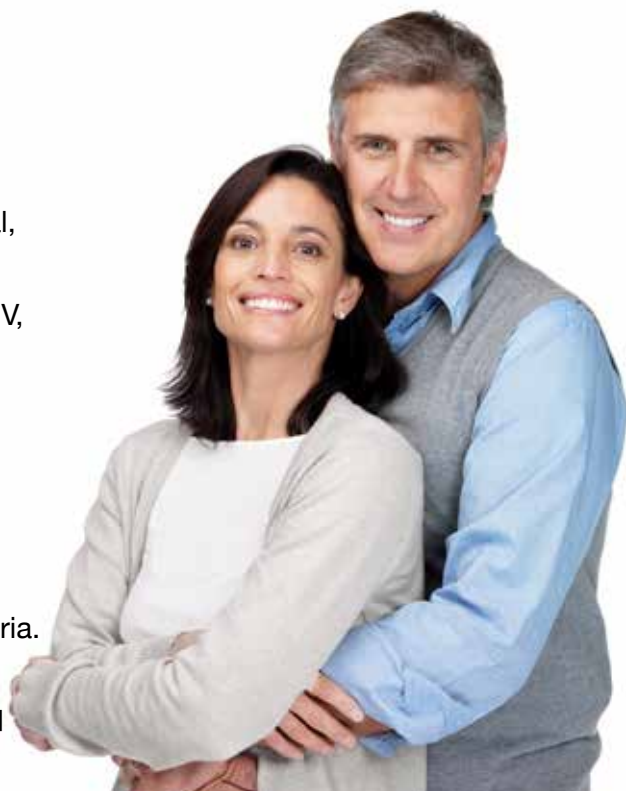
Condoms can reduce the risk of spreading Chlamydia, gonorrhea, HIV, and trichomoniasis when used the right way and for every sex act.

Condoms do not get rid of the risk of STIs entirely. If you use a lubricant, use a water-based one. Oil-based or petroleum ones can damage condoms and encourage infections to grow.

Educate yourself about prevention, diagnosis, and treatment for different STIs at www.cdc.gov/std/HealthComm/fact_sheets.htm.

Some STIs (Chlamydia, gonorrhea, and syphilis) are caused by bacteria. Antibiotics can treat these. Sex partner(s) need to be treated, too.

See your health care team to discuss your risk for all STIs. Get tested and follow treatment measures, as advised.



SEXUAL HEALTH



What is sexual health?

Sexual health is your physical, emotional, and social wellbeing in relation to your sexuality.

Sexual Health Includes:

- » A positive and respectful approach to sex
- » The possibility of having pleasure with sex
- » Sex without violence or force
- » Safe sex practices that help prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

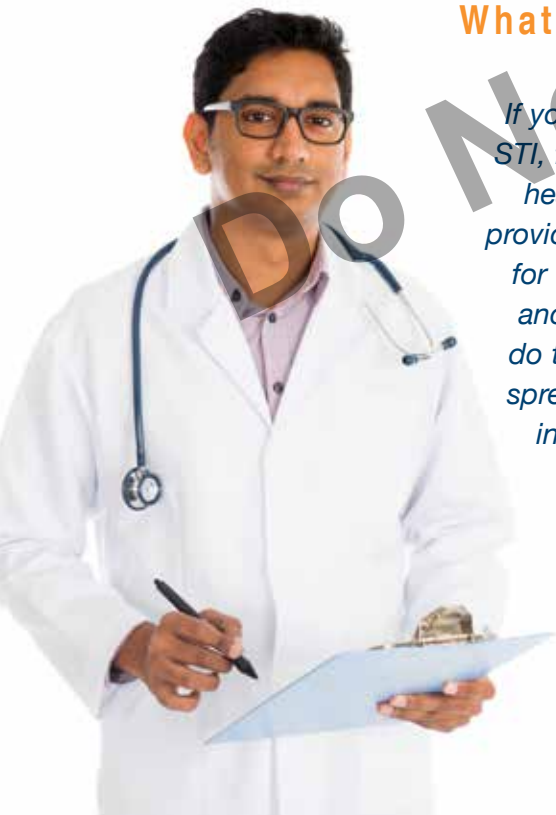
Reasons to Talk to Your VA Health Care Provider

- » You have less desire for sex or other problems during sex.
- » You have experienced sexual trauma. Every VA facility has a Military Sexual Trauma Coordinator (MST) for MST-related issues.
- » You are concerned that you may have a sexually transmitted infection.

What can you do to protect yourself from getting STIs?

If you have an STI, follow your health care provider's advice for treatment and what to do to prevent spreading the infection.

- » If you are female under age 26, ask your health care provider about a vaccine to prevent genital lesions that cause human papillomavirus (HPV).
- » For no or extremely low risk, have sex with only one partner who does not have an STI and has sex with only you.
- » Limit your number of sexual partners. The more partners you have, the higher the risk.
- » Use a latex condom every time you have sex. Doing this does not get rid of the risk entirely, but greatly lowers it. Use polyurethane condoms if you or your partner are allergic to latex. If you use a lubricant, make sure it is a water-based one.
- » Don't use alcohol or drugs before you have sex. You may be less likely to use a condom if you are drunk or high.
- » Discuss "safer sex" with a partner before having sex.
- » Don't have sex with someone who has genital sores.





3 "C"s for Child Safety

1

CHILD-PROOF your house to prevent poisonings and drowning.

- Install child-proof locks on cabinets that store harmful substances.
- Keep vitamins, medicines, matches, lighters, sharp objects and guns out of children's reach and in locked containers.
- Supervise children in tubs and near pools, toilets and large containers with water. A child can drown in as little as one inch of water!

2

COVER items and gate off areas to prevent accidents and fires.

- Put plastic covers in electrical outlets.
- Place child-safety covers on door and stove knobs.
- Put gates on the top and bottom of stairways.
- Cover fireplaces and fire pits with safety screens.

3

CONNECT to the wall – any piece of furniture that can tip over on a child:

- TVs
- Bookcases
- Dressers





4 "D"s for Driving Safety

1

DISCUSS, with your doctor or health care provider, if any medications or supplements you take can make it unsafe for you to drive. Avoid driving at night if you have limited night vision.

2

DRIVE while wearing a seatbelt. Wear a seatbelt when you are a passenger, too.

- Use an approved child-safety seat that is the right type and size for your child.
- Wear a helmet when riding on a motorcycle or a bicycle.

3

DESIGNATE a sober driver when you would be driving impaired.

4

DO NOT text or talk on a cell phone while driving. Do not drive drowsy.



5 "S"s for Sun Safety



1

SELECT a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15, 30 or higher, as needed.

- Apply 1 ounce (amount to fill a shot glass) to exposed skin areas.
- Reapply every 2 hours and after swimming.

2

SLIP on lightweight clothing to cover exposed skin areas. Or, wear clothing with sunscreen protection.

3

SIT under an umbrella or in the shade especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

4

SLIDE on sunglasses that block 99-100% of UVA and UVB rays and wear a wide-brimmed hat.

5

STAY hydrated. Drink plenty of water.





3 “P”s for Travel Safety

1

PLAN ahead:

- Plan for weather, safety and your health needs at locations you plan to go. Find out what your health plan covers and if you need extra insurance.
- If you are travelling abroad, learn about health concerns and if you need any vaccines at 800.CDC.INFO (232.4636) or www.cdc.gov/travel.
- Tell a trusted relative or friend your trip schedule so you can be contacted for emergencies.

2

PACK a first-aid kit and enough medications to cover your entire trip and extra days in case your return home gets delayed.

3

PUT all your prescriptions, jewelry and other valuables in your carry-on luggage.





3

“P”s

for Work Safety

1

PREVENT injuries:

- Know and follow safety guidelines for your workplace and job tasks.
- Prevent slips and falls. Keep walk areas free from clutter, water and other spills.
- Wear protective clothing, eyewear, headgear, footwear and equipment as needed for your job.

2

PROTECT yourself and coworkers. Report injuries, “near misses” of injuries, and threats of harm to your supervisor or to security. Follow your company’s rules for this.

3

PRACTICE good posture and use proper position and support when using a computer and at other workstations.



HOME SAFETY CHECKLIST



Home and recreation-related injuries account for about one-third of all injury-related emergency department visits. Injuries at home and at play can be prevented.

Light the Way!

- » Keep flashlights handy.
- » Have extra batteries, too.
- » Use night lights.
- » Keep stair areas well lit.

Bathroom Safety Tips

- » Supervise young children.
- » Use safety mats or nonskid tape in your tub and shower.
- » Install grab bars in the shower, tub, and next to the toilet.
- » If you use a shower bench, use one with rubber tips on its legs.
- » Before getting in the tub, test the bath water. Make sure it is not too hot.

Home Safety Checklist

Monitor your medication use. Let your doctor know if medication(s) affect your vision, balance, etc. If prescribed sedatives or tranquilizers, be careful when you take them. They can increase the risk of falls.

- » Use a peephole in the front door.
- » If you live alone, arrange for daily contact with a neighbor or relative.
- » Clearly post emergency numbers. Teach children how to call 9-1-1 for help.
- » Stock first-aid supplies. In case of accidental poisoning, call the Poison Control Center (800.222.1222) for advice.
- » Install smoke alarms and a carbon monoxide detector. Check them every 6 months. Keep a fire extinguisher handy.
- » If you use a space heater, make sure it has an emergency shut off.
- » Plan an escape route in case of fire. Practice it with all household members every couple of months.
- » Have snow and icy patches cleared from the sidewalk and steps.
- » Be careful (or stay home) if it is icy or slippery outside.
- » Don't get up too quickly after lying down, resting, or eating a meal. Low blood pressure can cause dizziness.
- » Wear nonslip, snug-fitting shoes and slippers.
- » Use a cane or walker, if you need to.
- » Install handrails on both sides of the stairs. Keep clutter off stairs.
- » Arrange furniture so there is a clear path for walking. Test if furniture is sturdy enough to lean on.
- » Use a step stool with a safety rail.
- » Be alert to spills or wet floors.
- » To pick up things, bend at your knees and keep your back straight.



4 "I"s

for Home Safety



1

INSTALL and maintain:

- Smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors per your state's rules. (See www.usfa.fema.gov).
- Fire extinguishers near the kitchen and outdoor grill and fire pit, in the garage, and at the top of the basement stairwell.
- Generators **outside** the house

2

INVESTIGATE your house for two escape routes in case of a house fire.

- Plan and post the escape routes where everyone can see them.
- Practice your escape routes with all household members every couple of months.

3

INSPECT all windows and exterior doors to make sure they lock properly.

- Install outside lighting with motion sensors around the house and garage.
- Consider having a house alarm system.

4

INSIST that your house and garage be kept tobacco-free!





3 “H”s for Holiday Safety

1

HEED healthy sleep habits. Get 7-9 hours of sleep a night to avoid daytime drowsiness which could lead to accidents.

2

HAVE safety in mind when choosing gifts and hosting get-togethers.

- Avoid giving toys and other items with small parts to children under age 3.
- Supervise children while playing and when they are near candles, fireplaces, holiday trees, lights, and electrical cords and plugs.

3

HANDLE holiday stress.

- Make a holiday schedule and a “to do” list. Rank order all of the things you want to do. Don’t commit to doing too much.
- Include downtime in your plans. Meditate. Take deep breaths.



1 Go with goals that are realistic. Don't bite off more than you can chew.

2 Make time for exercise. Plan ways to be active. Ski, skate, dance, or walk indoors or outdoors.

3 Trim the tree ... and tempting treats. Mind over matter! Your health is more important than any item of food, no matter how tempting it is.

4 Choose fresh fruit as a sweet substitute for candy, cookies, and cakes. Give fruit baskets for gifts.

Wellthier by **the Dozen**™

12 Terrific Tips to

HEALTHY HOLIDAY

5 Do something nice for somebody else. It can change your outlook.

6 Take breaks often to stretch and re-energize.

7 Spread the joy, not the germs. Wash your hands often. Cover coughs and sneezes. Get your yearly flu vaccine.

8 HO! HO! HOLD on to your wallet. Set a holiday budget and stick to it.

9 Limit alcohol and drive sober. Guys, two alcoholic drinks are enough. Gals, one will be just fine.

11 Stay safe. Buckle up! Supervise children. Never leave fireplaces, space heaters, stoves, or candles unattended.

10 Surround yourself with people who are supportive and fun.

12 Watch "It's a Wonderful Life," even if you've seen it a thousand times. It'll warm your heart.

HEALTHY TRAVEL CHECKLIST



Whether you travel for work or for pleasure, plan for your safety.

Walk at night with others and in well-lit, safe areas. Ask hotel staff for advice. Also, do not look like a tourist.

Wear plain clothes and little, if any, jewelry.

Before You Go

- » Find out about health concerns where you are going and if immunizations are needed.
- » Carry all needed prescriptions (in their original containers) and supplies with you. Get a letter from your doctor, for taking a controlled substance, injectable medicines, notice for having a pacemaker, artificial joint, etc.
- » Find out what your health insurance plan covers and if you need extra insurance.
- » Arrange for any special needs.

Tips for Air Travel

- » To reduce the risk for blood clots in the legs, extend your feet and flex your ankles several times while sitting. Get up and walk every hour or so.
- » To avoid ear pain, chew gum, suck on hard candy, or yawn during take-offs and landings.
- » Before and during the flight, drink water, not alcoholic or caffeinated beverages.

For Motion Sickness

*Before you travel,
talk to your doctor.
Find out if you need
to adjust medicine
dosages and activity
schedules.*

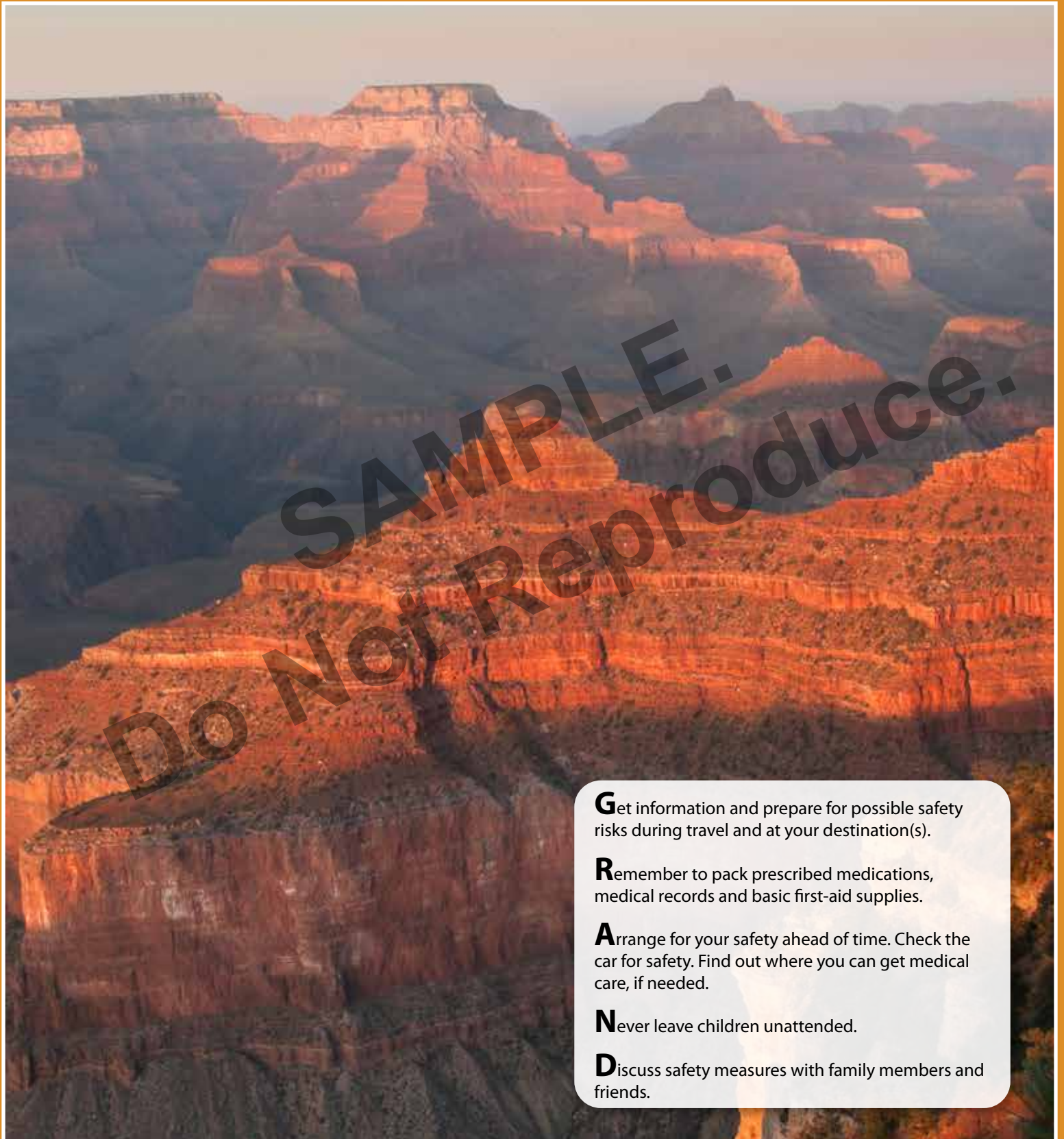
- » Get plenty of rest before the trip.
- » Take an OTC medication, such as Dramamine® 30 minutes before travel begins.
- » If traveling by airplane, request a seat over a wing. Open the overhead vents and direct air at your face.
- » On a cruise ship, get a cabin near the middle and close to the waterline. Spend as much time as you can on deck in the fresh air.
- » When traveling by car or train, gaze straight ahead, not to the side.
- » If you feel sick, breathe slowly and deeply. Avoid smoke and food odors. Eat crackers.

To Help Prevent Jet Lag

- » Three nights before you leave, change your bedtime. If traveling east, go to bed 1 hour earlier for each time zone you cross; if traveling west, go to bed 1 hour later for each time zone.
- » Once on the plane, change your watch and activity to match the time where you are going. If it is daytime there, stay awake; if nighttime, sleep on the plane.



Have a grand time on your vacation, but come home safe!



Get information and prepare for possible safety risks during travel and at your destination(s).

Remember to pack prescribed medications, medical records and basic first-aid supplies.

Arrange for your safety ahead of time. Check the car for safety. Find out where you can get medical care, if needed.

Never leave children unattended.

Discuss safety measures with family members and friends.

ON THE ROAD TO Better Planning

Take steps to plan your dream vacation.



1

2

1 SET YOUR GOALS

Want to plan a dream vacation? Make a list of everything you'll need to do, such as creating a budget, getting a passport, scheduling time off from work, arranging care for pets, and booking airfare.



3 PREPARE FOR THE UNEXPECTED

Purchase travel insurance. If you're going out of the country, buy overseas medical insurance, in case you get ill or injured. Get an international cell phone so you can still stay in touch with family and friends.

3

4

4 STICK TO THE PLAN

Start saving well ahead of time. Put away a set amount of money from each paycheck. Diligently follow the plan until the day your flight leaves.

4



READ UP

Do your research. Read about the places you'll visit. Learn about their customs, climate, and, if necessary, some words in that nation's language.

2

TRAVEL
GUIDE



ON THE ROAD TO

Better Community Service

Take steps toward helping those in need.



ARRANGE YOUR SCHEDULE

Work out what days and times you can serve. Establish boundaries and be clear about what you can and cannot do.



Why is serving others good for you?

Giving support to other people can improve your mental well-being and give you a sense of belonging. It can help reduce stress and extend your life.

Prevent Falls

*Many falls that occur with older adults can be prevented.
Taking simple steps can reduce the risk.*

Take an Exercise Program

Choose one that builds balance, strength, and flexibility, especially in your "trunk" or core muscles.



Request a Risk Assessment

Ask your doctor to determine your risk of falling based on your medical condition and health status.

Check Vision & Hearing

Have an annual eye and hearing check-up, and update glasses and/or hearing aids when needed.



Make Your Home Safe

Add extra lighting, install hand rails on stairs and grab bars in bathrooms, and remove clutter from floors along with small throw rugs unless secured with double-sided tape.

Stay Sun Safe

Too much ultraviolet (UV) light from too much sun increases skin cancer risk.

Made in the Shade

Look for shade, like under a tree, especially during peak sun times between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.



Re-apply Every 2 Hours

Put on more sunscreen after sweating or swimming.



Use Broad Protection Sunscreen

Choose one with a sun protective factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Apply a generous amount to exposed skin, including your ears.



Cover Up

Wear long sleeves and pants, along with a wide-brimmed hat and wrap-around sunglasses.



You can check the ultraviolet (UV) index for your area at www.epa.gov/enviro/uv-index-search.

Digitally-Aware

Parents can't monitor their children's social media behavior 100% of the time, but there are still ways to help protect kids from harmful digital behavior.

Review Phone Location & Privacy Settings

This includes knowing your child's user names and passwords for social media.

Monitor Sites

Check your teen's social media sites, apps, and browsing history if you are concerned about cyberbullying. For a list of popular sites, visit stopbullying.gov.

Follow or "Friend" Your Teen

You, or another trusted adult, can help ensure their digital safety on popular social media sites.



Set Rules

Discuss what's appropriate when it comes to your kids' digital behavior, content, and apps.



Be tobacco free

FACT:

Nearly half a million people in the U.S. die prematurely from tobacco use each year.



The sooner you give up tobacco the more your health and finances will benefit.

Nicotine is highly addictive. It's not easy to quit using tobacco.

Ask your health care team about prescribed medication which may help you be tobacco free.



Use an over-the-counter nicotine replacement product such as a patch, lozenge, or gum.


Get help from www.smokefree.gov/VET and 1.855.QUIT.VET



If at first you do not succeed, try, try again.



FREE FROM TOBACCO



Tobacco use is a top preventable cause of illness and premature death in the U.S. Each year, nearly half a million people in the U.S. die from tobacco-related illnesses.

Reasons to Be Tobacco-Free

Not using tobacco (smoking, chewing, etc.) is one of the best things you can do for your health. Why? Using tobacco products is linked to many serious illnesses. These include:

- » Cancers of the lungs, mouth, throat, bladder, cervix, kidney, and stomach, as well as a certain type of leukemia
- » Heart disease, emphysema, pneumonia, and abdominal aortic aneurysm
- » Cataracts, gum disease, and tooth decay

Ways to Quit Using Tobacco

- » Use an OTC nicotine replacement product, such as a patch, gum, or lozenges. Use as directed.
- » Talk to your health care team about prescribed medicines. Some have nicotine. Others do not have nicotine, but alter brain chemistry to help reduce cravings.
- » Take part in a class or use an online program, such as www.smokefree.gov/VET that can help you quit.



Behavior Change Techniques

- » Throw away all your cigarettes, cigars, etc. Hide all smoking items like matches, lighters, ashtrays, etc.
- » Whenever you have an urge to smoke, dip, or chew, take a deep breath through your mouth. Slowly exhale through pursed lips. Repeat 5 to 10 times.
- » Get rid of familiar tobacco triggers. Change your daily routine. Do things you don't associate with tobacco use.
- » In place of cigarettes, snuff, etc., use other things that will give oral gratification, such as sugarless gum, mints, and toothpicks.
- » Create a "ciggy bank." Put the money you used to spend on cigarettes, cigars, etc. in a jar. Buy yourself a reward.
- » Talk to a nonsmoking friend for support.
- » Make a list of good things you've noticed since you quit.
- » Each day, renew your commitment to not use tobacco products.

Be Tobacco Free

Plan for Success

Set a quit date. Get rid of all of your cigarettes, cigars, matches, and lighters at home, in the car, and at work. Clean car ashtrays and get rid of all ashtrays at home.

Use over-the-counter nicotine patches, gum, or lozenges, as directed.

Consult your health care team about prescribed medications that can help you quit tobacco.

Control tobacco triggers.

- When you get the urge to smoke, dip, or chew, breathe deeply through your mouth. Hold your breath for three seconds. Slowly exhale through pursed lips to make a whisper sound.
- Try sugarless gum, mints, toothpicks, or coffee stirrers to keep your mouth busy. Hold a stress ball or paper clip in your hand.

Enroll in a VA smoking tobacco cessation clinic or use VA tools to help you be tobacco-free. Examples are Quit VET at 1-855-QUIT-VET (1-855-784-8838); Quit Coach App from <https://mobile.va.gov/appstore> and www.smokefree.gov/VET.

Seek support from nonsmoking family members, fellow Veterans, and friends.

Save money that you used to spend on tobacco in a “ciggy” bank.





Be tobacco free! Everyone benefits.

3 Steps to Turn this Message into ACTION

1. Protect others from secondhand smoke:

- If you smoke or use tobacco, do it outdoors.
- Insist on no tobacco usage by anyone in your home.
- Avoid restaurants and other places that are not smoke-free.

2. Protect others from thirdhand smoke:

This is remnants of secondhand smoke – toxic gases that linger in the air, on carpet and furniture, and on a person's clothing, skin, and hair. Thirdhand smoke:

- Hurts lung development in babies before they are born.
- May worsen asthma and respiratory problems in children.

3. Start getting health benefits the same day you have your last cigarette:

- 20 minutes after quitting, blood pressure and heart rate drop.
- 12 hours after quitting, the carbon monoxide level in the blood drops to normal. Blood oxygen level increases to normal.
- 2 weeks to 3 months after quitting, the risk for a heart attack begins to drop. Lung function begins to improve.
- 1 to 9 months after quitting, coughing and shortness of breath decrease.

- 1 year after quitting, the added risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a smoker's.
- 5 years after quitting, the risk for stroke is reduced to that of a nonsmoker's.
- 10 years after quitting, lung cancer death rate is about half that of a smoker's. The risk of cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, bladder, kidney, and pancreas decreases.
- 15 years after quitting, the risk of coronary heart disease is back to that of a nonsmoker's.

Source: Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Tobacco Information and Prevention Source (TIPS)



SAMPLE.
Not Reproduce.

Make a plan to quit tobacco in any form.

The third Thursday of every November is the Great American Smokeout®. This date encourages smokers to quit tobacco for one day or make a plan to quit.

- **Set a quit date.** Mark the date in places to remind you—on your calendar, in your smartphone, at work, and on the refrigerator and mirrors in your house.
- **Tell others.** Ask for their support.
- **Get help to carry out your plan.** Talk to your doctor and pharmacist about prescribed and over-the-counter medications that are right for you. Get help from 800.QUIT.NOW (784.8669) or www.smokefree.gov/VET.



Make a plan. Quit tobacco. Be well.



AVOID

Secondhand Smoke

All that smoke that gets in your eyes is also getting in your airways and lungs and can cause heart disease and cancer. It is also blamed for increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome, ear infections, colds, pneumonia, bronchitis, and makes asthma worse.

What is secondhand smoke?

Secondhand smoke is the smoke given off a burning tobacco product and the smoke exhaled by a smoker. People can be exposed to secondhand smoke in homes, cars, the workplace, and public places, such as bars, restaurants, and leisure settings. It contains at least 250 harmful chemicals including hydrogen cyanide, carbon monoxide, and ammonia.

Laws ban smoking in most public places, such as schools, hospitals, airports, workplaces, and restaurants.

Health risks of secondhand smoke:

- Breast cancer
- Cancers of the nose, throat, and sinus cavity
- Leukemia
- Lymphoma
- Brain tumors in children
- Sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Ear infections
- Colds
- Pneumonia
- Bronchitis
- Severe Asthma
- Coughing and wheezing

Avoid Thirdhand Smoke: This is the residue left from tobacco smoke that lingers on a person's clothing, skin, hair, and on carpet, drapes, walls, and furniture. And it does this long after the tobacco use has stopped. Thirdhand smoke has the same harmful chemicals as secondhand smoke.

Action Step

Don't let anyone, including your mate, smoke in your home. Don't travel in a car with others who are smoking.

NICOTINE REPLACEMENT THERAPY (NRT)

FACTS



Gradually decrease nicotine doses. Helps manage symptoms as you quit smoking



Examples include nicotine patches, gums and lozenges, inhalers and sprays

PROS



Delivers smaller and smaller doses of nicotine until you're no longer addicted. With such low doses, you won't likely get addicted or stay addicted to nicotine.

CONS



You may need additional tools or strategies to quit smoking. Like any treatment, these might not work for you. They may cause bad reactions. Some medications cannot be used by people under 18. Not using nicotine replacement therapy may make withdrawal symptoms harder to handle.

OTHER "QUIT SMOKING" MEDICATIONS

FACTS



Prescription drugs that don't contain nicotine, but still helps you handle withdrawal symptoms



Examples include medications like bupropion hydrochloride (Zyban®) or varenicline (Chantix®)

PROS



More likely to lose the addiction faster than with an NRT. Most are safe for pregnant women. Good options if you take other medications or have serious medical conditions.

CONS



You may need additional tools or strategies to quit smoking. Like any treatment, these might not work for you. They may cause bad reactions. Some medications cannot be used by people under 18.

LIVE SMOKE FREE

NIC OR NO?

If you want to quit smoking, there are lots of proven tools out there! Some therapies use small doses of nicotine. Others don't. Which type will help you quit the nic?

Consult your health provider before trying any smoking cessation therapy.

SAMPLE. Do Not Reproduce

Quit Tobacco

Your lungs, along with the rest of your body, will thank you when you stop using tobacco - today, tomorrow, and years from now.

12 Hours

After Quitting

Blood carbon monoxide levels drop to normal.

2 Weeks to 3 Months

After Quitting

Circulation and lung function improves.

1 to 9 Months

After Quitting

Coughing and shortness of breath decreases.

1 Year

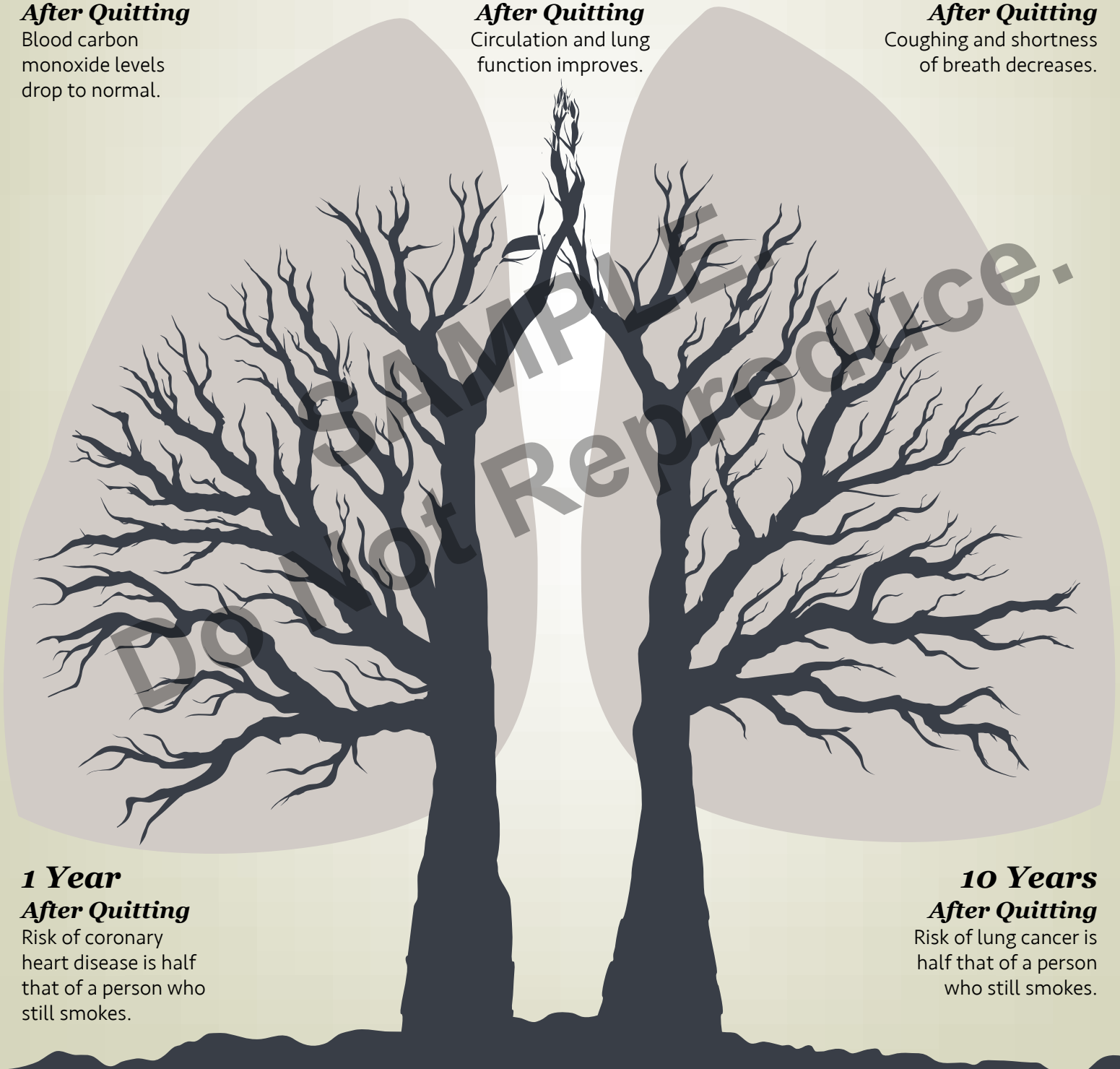
After Quitting

Risk of coronary heart disease is half that of a person who still smokes.

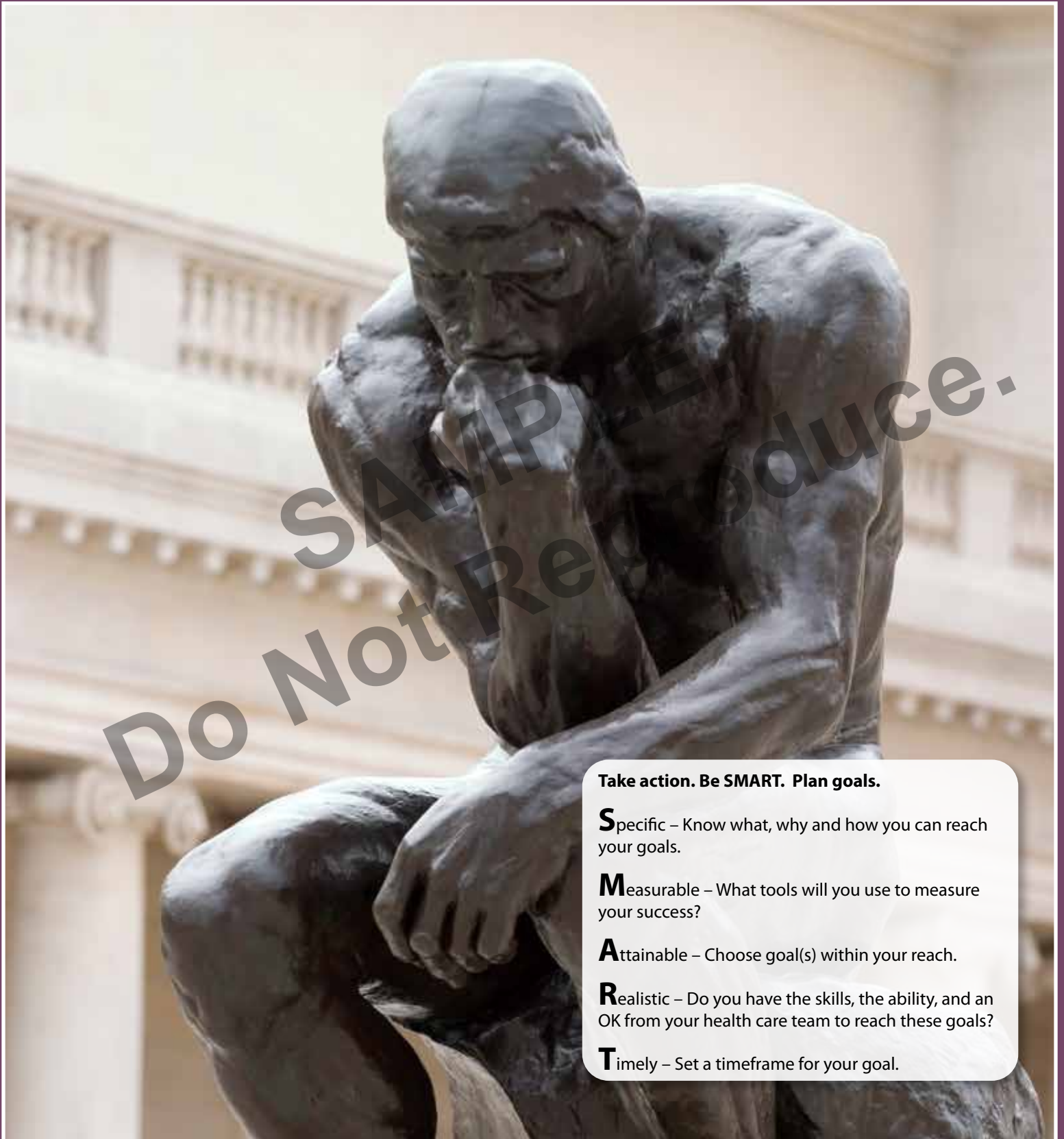
10 Years

After Quitting

Risk of lung cancer is half that of a person who still smokes.



Thinking about ways to improve your health isn't enough.



Do Not Reproduce.

Take action. Be SMART. Plan goals.

Specific – Know what, why and how you can reach your goals.

Measurable – What tools will you use to measure your success?

Attainable – Choose goal(s) within your reach.

Realistic – Do you have the skills, the ability, and an OK from your health care team to reach these goals?

Timely – Set a timeframe for your goal.

ASPIRIN FOR PREVENTION



Should I take aspirin to help prevent a heart attack or stroke?

Ask your health care provider if taking aspirin is right for you.

How does aspirin help prevent a heart attack or stroke?

A heart attack occurs when blood flow to the heart is stopped. A stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain is stopped. Plaque build-up and a blood clot in an artery cause the flow of blood to stop. Aspirin helps to keep blood clots from forming.

Who should take aspirin to help prevent a heart attack or stroke?

Medical studies show that:

- » In men ages 45-79, aspirin is useful in preventing heart attacks.
- » In women ages 55-79, aspirin is useful in preventing strokes due to blood clots.

Ask your health care provider about your benefits and risks of taking aspirin.

What else can I do to lower my risk of a heart attack or stroke?



If you take aspirin, ask your health care provider what side effects to look for and which ones to let him or her know about.

- » If you use tobacco, quit!
- » Get to and stay at a healthy weight.
- » Do regular physical activity.
- » Get your blood pressure checked as advised by your health care provider. If you have high blood pressure, follow your treatment plan to control your blood pressure.
- » If you have diabetes, follow your treatment plan to keep your blood sugar under control.
- » Get checked for atrial fibrillation. This is a type of irregular heart beat. If you have this problem, take medication and follow your provider's advice to reduce your risk for a stroke.

BE BREAST CANCER AWARE

Yearly about 220,000 women in the U.S find out they have breast cancer. About 40,000 die from it.

Women Veterans

Ask your VA health care provider about your risk for breast cancer. Ask when and how often to be screened for it. You can also call 1-800-4-CANCER or access www.cancer.gov/bcrisktool for the Breast Cancer Risk Assessment Tool.

Men Get Breast Cancer, Too.

Yearly, about 2,000 men in the U.S. get breast cancer. About 400 die from it. Men should look for and report a breast lump or other change to their doctors. Alcohol use and obesity can increase the risk in men.

If you are at a high risk for breast cancer, ask your VA healthcare provider about prescribed medicine to lower the risk.

Ways to Lower Your Risk

- » Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables and whole-grain breads and cereals.
- » Lose weight if you are overweight. Follow your VA healthcare provider's advice for tips from VA's **MOVE!**[®] weight management program.
- » Do 30 or more minutes of moderate activity, daily, or most days of the week.
- » Avoid X-rays that are not needed. Wear a lead apron when you get dental and other X-rays not of the chest.
- » Breast-feed your babies.
- » Limit alcohol. The more used, the greater the risk.
- » Discuss the pros and cons of hormone therapy with your health care provider.

BE COLON CANCER AWARE



Colon cancer is the number three cause of death from cancer in both men and women. Colon and rectal cancers may be curable if found and treated in early stages.

Know the Warning Signs

- A change in bowel habits. You may be constipated, have stools more often and/or have loose stools.
- Your stools can be more narrow than usual. It can feel like your bowel does not empty all the way.
- Blood in or on the stool

Screening Tests Can Save Your Life

Discuss your risk for colon cancer with your VA health care provider. Follow his or her advice for screening tests, which include:

- Home stool blood test
- Sigmoidoscopy
- Colonoscopy

If polyps are found, they can be removed so they do not turn into cancer.



Ways to Help Prevent Colon Cancer

- » Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables and whole-grain breads and cereals. Limit high-fat foods and red meats.
- » Get enough calcium and vitamin D from food sources, such as nonfat and low-fat milks and yogurts. Discuss taking vitamin and mineral supplements with your health care provider.
- » Do at least 30 minutes of physical activity a day.
- » Lose weight if you are overweight.
- » Limit alcohol to no more than one drink a day for women; two drinks a day for men.
- » If you are at a high risk for colon cancer, ask your health care provider what else you should do.

BE SKIN CANCER AWARE

Skin cancer is caused by too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays, mostly from the sun. Your military uniform protected most of your body, but not your face.

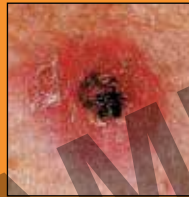
Signs for Basal & Squamous Cell Skin Cancers



Small, smooth, shiny, pale, or waxy lump



Firm red lump



A lump that bleeds or develops a crust



A flat, red spot that is rough, dry, or scaly



Signs of Melanoma. Look for any of these signs in an existing mole.



A. **Asymmetry**. The shape of one half does not match the other.



B. **Border** - The edges are ragged, notched, or blurred.



C. **Color** - The color is uneven.



D. **Diameter** - The size changes and is often bigger than a pencil eraser.

E. **Evolving lesion** - This is one that changes size, shape, shades of color or symptoms, or has surface bleeding.

Ways to Help Prevent Skin Cancer

The American Cancer Society suggests you do four things:

1. **Slip** on a shirt. Cover exposed skin areas.
 2. **Slop** on sunscreen. Use one with a broad-spectrum sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Follow the label's directions.
 3. **Slap** on a hat. Wear one with a two to three inch brim.
 4. **Wrap** on sunglasses that block UV rays to protect your eyes and sensitive skin around them.
- » Avoid sun lamps, tanning beds, and exposure to the sun's UV rays between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. standard time.
 - » Check your skin monthly for signs of skin cancer. If you find any, let your VA health care provider or a dermatologist know.



take steps
to prevent

Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S. Recurrent exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun is the main cause.

Best protection

1. Slip on a shirt. Cover exposed skin areas.
2. Slop on sunscreen. Use one with a broad-spectrum sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Follow directions on the label.
3. Put on a hat. Wear one that has a 2-3 inch brim all the way around.
4. Wrap on sunglasses that block UV rays to protect your eyes and sensitive skin around them.

Source: American Cancer Society's website at www.cancer.org.

Sun safety tips:

- Limit time you are in the sun.
- Try to avoid exposure midday sun (10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. standard time; 11:00-5:00 p.m. daylight saving time).
- Wear long sleeves and slacks made of lightweight material.
- Wear sun-protective clothing and swimwear.
- Sit in the shade or under a beach umbrella.

Action Step

Avoid sun lamps and tanning salons. These artificial sources of UV radiation can also cause skin cancer.

CONTROL HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE



What is high blood pressure? High blood pressure means blood moves through your blood vessels at a higher force than it should. When this stays high over time, it is called hypertension (Hi-pur-TEN-shun”).

Uncontrolled, high blood pressure can cause:

- » A heart attack
- » A stroke
- » Kidney problems
- » Heart failure
- » Eye problems

Most people with high blood pressure do not have symptoms. The only way to know if you have it is to get it checked.

What do your blood pressure numbers mean?

High	Systolic (first or top number) 140 or higher OR Diastolic (second or bottom number) 90 or higher
Pre-high	Systolic (first or top number) 120-139 OR Diastolic (second or bottom number) between 80 and 89
Normal	Systolic (first or top number) less than 120 AND Diastolic (second or bottom number) less than 80

Is your blood pressure pre-high or high? Have it rechecked to find out if you have hypertension. Ask your provider when you should get your blood pressure checked again and if you need treatment for high blood pressure.

What Can You Do to Prevent or Control High Blood Pressure?

Follow your treatment plan. Take medications, as prescribed. Do not stop your medications or take a lower dose unless your provider tells you to.

- » If you smoke or chew tobacco, quit! Ask your health care provider for help with quitting.
- » Get to and stay at a healthy weight. If you are overweight, ask your provider about the **MOVE!**[®] Program.
- » Be physically active. Follow your provider’s advice.
- » Reduce salt (sodium). Read food labels. Choose and prepare foods that are low in sodium or are sodium-free. Keep your sodium intake to less than 2,300 mg. per day.
- » Ask to see a registered dietitian if you need help with a plan.
- » Limit alcohol. Men should have no more than 2 drinks per day. Women and persons age 65 years and older should have no more than 1 drink per day.





keep YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE IN CHECK

You can have high blood pressure (HBP) and not know it. There are usually no signs or symptoms. The only way to know if your blood pressure is high is to get it measured. Get it checked at every office visit, at least every two years, or as often as your doctor advises. Untreated high blood pressure plays a major role in stroke, heart disease, kidney disease, dementia, and vision loss.

Take control

- Take medications as prescribed. When your blood pressure numbers are what they should be, it means your medications are working.
- Aim for a healthy weight. Losing even 10 pounds can lower blood pressure.
- Limit salt and sodium.

Know Your Numbers		
Blood Pressure Levels (ages 18+)		
	Systolic (mm Hg)*	Diastolic (mm Hg)*
Normal	Less than 120	and less than 80
High-normal	120-139	and 85-89
High blood pressure	140 or higher	90 or higher

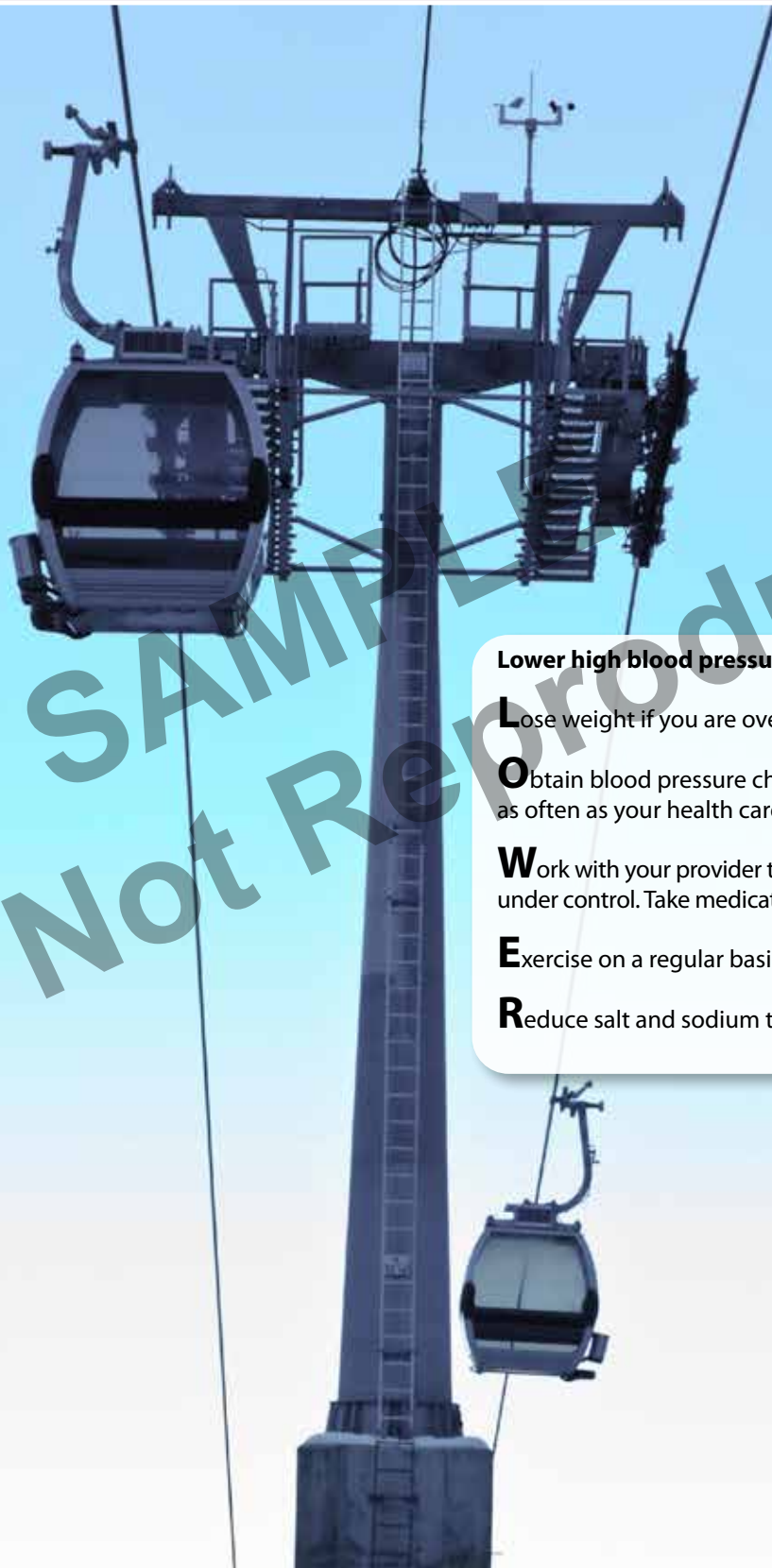
* mm Hg = millimeters of mercury

Note: These are general guidelines. If you are diagnosed with high blood pressure, ask your health care provider what your target blood pressure is, such as 140/90 mm Hg.

Action Step

Check your blood pressure at home as advised by your health care provider. Discuss harmful medication interactions. Find out which over-the-counter medications are safe for you to use.

What goes up must come down.



Lower high blood pressure.

Lose weight if you are overweight.

Obtain blood pressure checks at every office visit or as often as your health care provider advises.

Work with your provider to keep your blood pressure under control. Take medications, as prescribed.

Exercise on a regular basis.

Reduce salt and sodium to 2,300 mg or less per day.

1 Know your numbers. Get your blood pressure (BP) checked at every office visit or as often as advised. Normal BP is around 120/80 mm Hg. **What's your BP?**

2 Take prescription medications as directed, even if you feel okay.

3 Find out what over-the-counter medicines are okay for you to take. Ask if you need to avoid grapefruit juice or other foods to prevent drug and food interaction problems.

4 If you are overweight, get help to shed the extra pounds.

Wellthier by the Dozen™

12 Terrific Tips to

CONTROL BLOOD PRESSURE

5 Whittle your middle. Carrying too much weight around your waistline puts you at greater risk of high blood pressure.

6 If you smoke, quit.

7 Do moderate exercise for at least 30 minutes a day. Examples are gardening, brisk walking, and swimming.

8 DASH it down. The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension eating plan lowers blood pressure and the risk of heart disease and stroke. Go to www.nhlbi.nih.gov and search for DASH Eating Plan.

9 Choose foods low in salt and sodium. Buy fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables with no salt.

10 Alcohol can raise blood pressure. If you drink, have no more than two drinks a day (men); one drink a day (women and persons ages 65+).

11 Reduce stress. Take breaks for deep-breathing exercises. Get a massage or practice yoga.

12 If advised by your doctor, keep track of your blood pressure using a home testing device.



CONTROL YOUR BLOOD SUGAR



Can diabetes be cured? Diabetes has no cure, but can be controlled. If it is not controlled, it can lead to heart disease, stroke, kidney damage, and blindness. Diagnosis and treatment for diabetes can help prevent these serious problems. About 24% of people with diabetes do not know they have it.

How do you know if you have diabetes?

Follow your health care provider's advice for diabetes screening tests. One test to diagnose diabetes is a fasting blood glucose test.

Fasting Blood Glucose Test Results (mg/dL)	
99 and below	Normal
100 to 125	Pre-diabetes* (impaired fasting glucose)
126 and above	Diabetes. This is confirmed by repeating a fasting blood test on 2 different days.

*Many people with pre-diabetes develop type 2 diabetes within 10 years. Some persons can prevent diabetes by: Losing weight; exercising for 30 minutes, 5 days a week; and eating a low-fat, reduced calorie diet.

Signs & Symptoms of Diabetes

- » Passing urine often
- » Excessive thirst
- » Extreme hunger
- » Increased fatigue
- » Being irritable
- » Unusual weight loss or gain
- » Blurry vision

If you have any of these problems, let your health care provider know.

Ways to Help Keep Your Blood Sugar Controlled

Target Blood Glucose Levels for Adults*		
Before Meals	2 Hours After Meals	A1c
70-130 mg/dL	< 180 mg/dL	< 7

* Follow the target goals as advised by your health care provider.

- » Take medications, as prescribed.
- » Lose weight if you are overweight. Maintain a healthy weight.
- » Do regular exercise. When you exercise, carry a carbohydrate source, such as 4 oz. of fruit juice, 6 hard candies, or 3-4 Glucose tablets.
- » Eat meals and snacks at regular times. Follow your meal plan, as advised by your health care provider.
- » Read food labels to guide your choices.
- » Strictly limit saturated fats. Eliminate *trans* fats.
- » Limit alcohol, as advised by your health care provider.
- » Follow sick-day plans worked out ahead of time with your health care provider for testing your blood sugar and how to adjust meals and medications.



CONTROL YOUR CHOLESTEROL



Why do I need to know about cholesterol? Unhealthy blood cholesterol levels are a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. The only way to know if your levels are unhealthy is to have your cholesterol checked.

What should cholesterol numbers be?

Target Goals in mg/dL*	
Total cholesterol	< 200
LDL (bad) cholesterol (Helps deposit cholesterol in artery walls)	< 130 or < 100 if advised
HDL (good) cholesterol (Helps remove cholesterol from the blood)	> 40 for men > 50 for women
Triglycerides	< 150

*Ask your health care provider what your target levels are. Target levels are based on all of your heart disease risk factors.

Too much cholesterol in the blood can collect with calcium and other substances to form plaque. This can clog the walls of the arteries and slow down or block blood flow to the heart or brain. Controlling your blood cholesterol can lower your chance for having a heart attack and stroke. It may also slow down, reduce, or even stop plaque from building up.



Ways to Control Cholesterol

- » Take medications, if prescribed.
- » Be physically active. Get to and stay at a healthy weight.
- » Read food labels. Limit foods high in saturated fat. Strictly limit *trans* fat.
- » Use salad dressings and margarines made with plant sterols and stanols, such as Benecol and Take Control brands.
- » Choose lean meats and poultry. Limit serving sizes.
- » Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables (5-7+ servings/day) and whole-grain products (6+ servings/day).
- » Get 30-38 grams of dietary fiber a day (men); 21-25 grams a day (women).
- » Eat fish 2-3 times a week (especially ones that are high in omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon).
- » Use nonfat and low-fat dairy products.
- » If you drink alcohol, do so in moderation.

1 Cholesterol counts. Know your numbers.

- a. Total cholesterol: (Goal = less than 200 mg/dL)
- b. LDL-cholesterol: (Goal = less than 130 mg/dL)
- c. HDL-cholesterol: (Goal = more than 40 mg/dL for men; more than 50 mg/dL for women)
- d. Triglycerides: (Goal = less than 150 mg/dL)

2 Mind your medicines. Take them as prescribed.

3 No ifs, ands, or butts about it - quit smoking.

4 Shed extra pounds.

Wellthier by the Dozen™

12 Terrific Tips to CONTROL CHOLESTEROL

5 Be physically active for at least 30 minutes daily.

6 Go for the good oils (olive, canola, safflower, and corn oil) instead of saturated fats and trans fats (hydrogenated oils in foods, such as stick margarine and snack foods).

7 Use margarine spreads and salad dressings made with plant sterols and stanols.

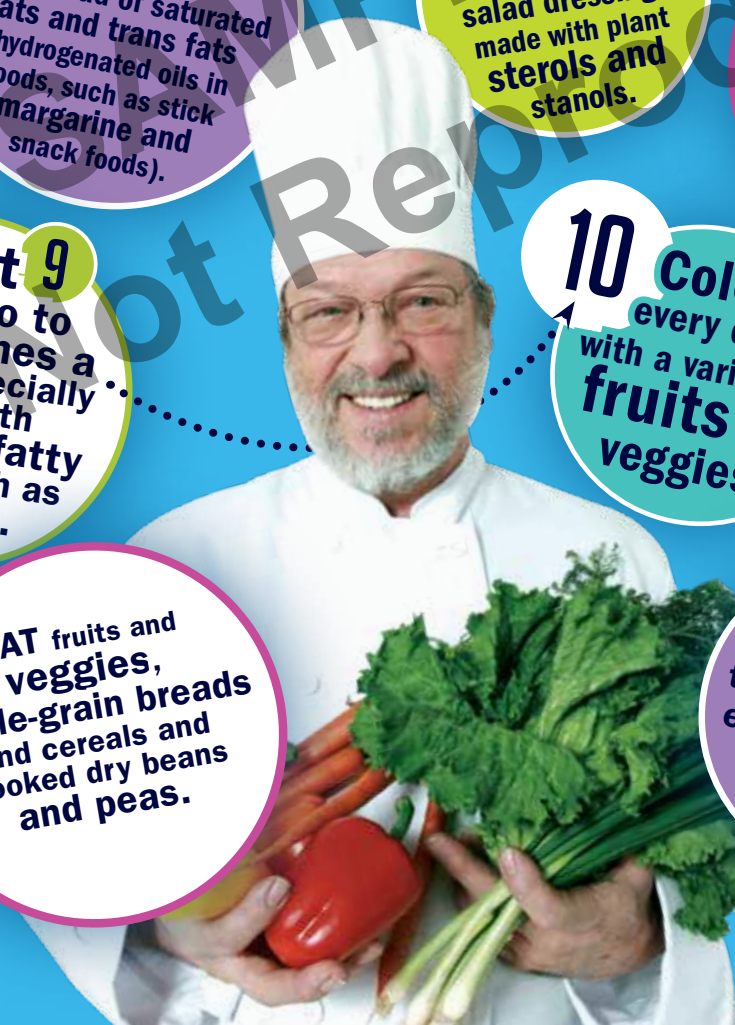
8 Lean on lean cuts of meat and poultry and trim fat before and after cooking.

9 Eat fish two to three times a week, especially ones with omega-3 fatty acids, such as salmon.

10 Color every day with a variety of fruits and veggies.

11 EAT fruits and veggies, whole-grain breads and cereals and cooked dry beans and peas.

12 Manage stress. It can trigger unhealthy eating and raise blood cholesterol.



FACT:

In the U.S., 9.3% of people (29.1 million) have diabetes; 27.8% (8.1 million) are not diagnosed.

Being overweight increases the risk for type 2 diabetes.



Exercising 30 minutes a day and losing just 7% of body weight has been shown to delay or avoid developing diabetes by 58%.

Eat meals at regular times. Control portions. Limit total sugar, salt, fat, and alcohol.



Eat wisely to control your blood sugar.

Follow your diabetes action plan to keep your blood sugar controlled.



Blood glucose control reduces the risk of developing eye, nerve, and kidney complications of diabetes.



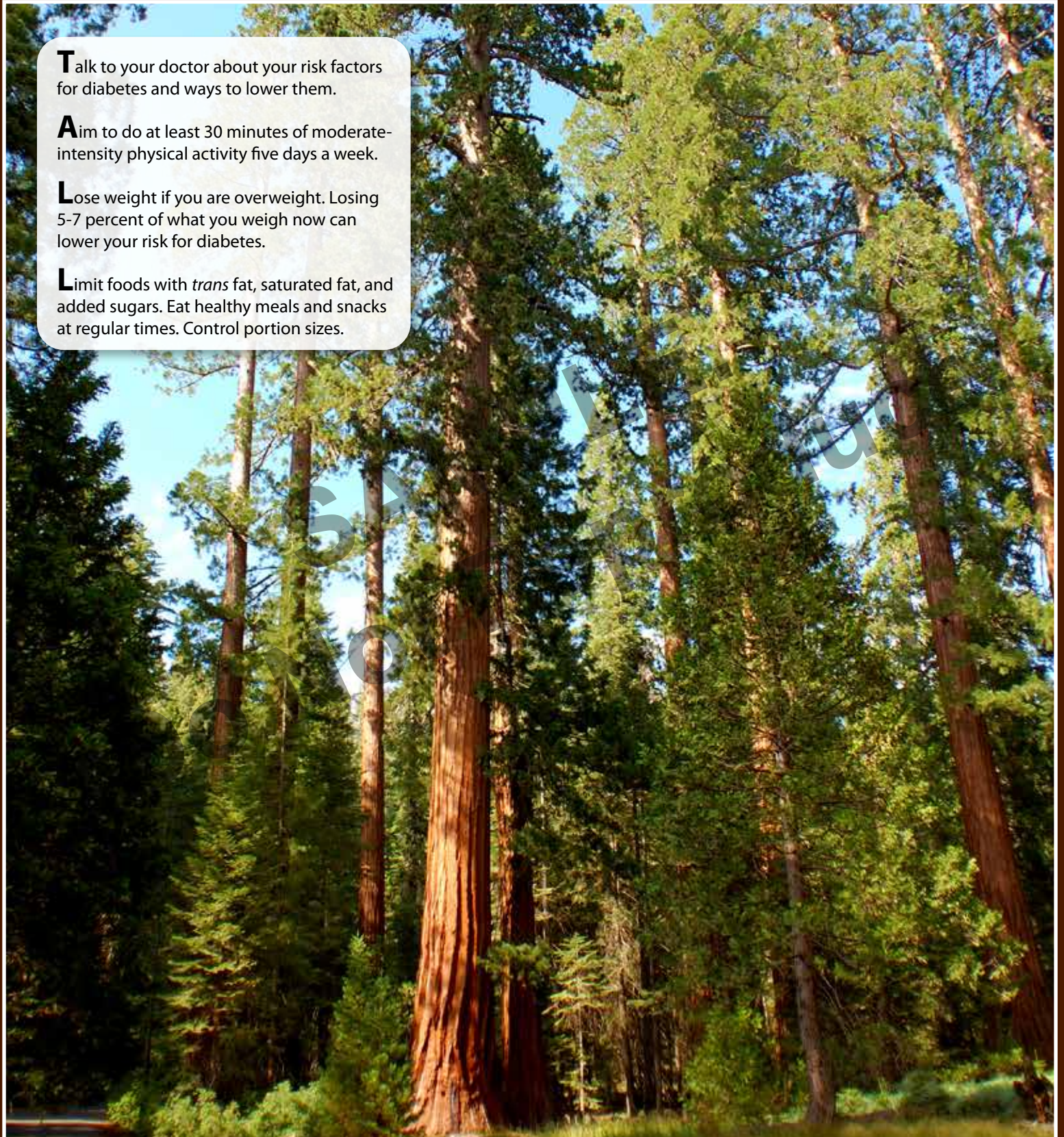
Preventing diabetes is a tall order, but can be reached.

Talk to your doctor about your risk factors for diabetes and ways to lower them.

Aim to do at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity five days a week.

Lose weight if you are overweight. Losing 5-7 percent of what you weigh now can lower your risk for diabetes.

Limit foods with *trans* fat, saturated fat, and added sugars. Eat healthy meals and snacks at regular times. Control portion sizes.



1 Lose weight if you are overweight. Many cases of pre-diabetes and type 2 diabetes can be controlled by not being overweight.

2 If you have a family history of type 2 diabetes, tell your doctor. Find out other risk factors you have and ways to control them.

3 Get a diabetes screening test, as advised. See your doctor if: You urinate often; have extreme thirst and/or hunger; or have unusual weight loss, blurry vision, or crankiness.

4 Do not smoke. If you smoke, quit! Don't quit on being a quitter. Get help from www.smokefree.gov/VET.

Wellthier by the Dozen™

12 Terrific Tips to TOPPLE TYPE 2 DIABETES

5 Get physical. Step up your level of activity to at least 30 minutes a day most days of the week.

6 Eat your meals at regularly scheduled times.

7 Choose water and unsweetened beverages over sodas and other drinks with sugar.

8 Choose foods with fiber every day. Examples include bran, whole-grain breads and cereals, beans and peas, and seeds.

9 Strictly limit saturated fats. To do this, choose nonfat dairy products, very lean meats (and in small amounts). Have no trans fat - "hydrogenated" fats.



10 Pass on special "dietetic" or "diabetic" foods that often cost more but generally aren't any healthier than simply following a healthy eating plan.



11 Write down one to three realistic goals for diet and exercise per week and post them where you will see them daily.

12 Be patient. Changing to a healthier diet and adding exercise to an otherwise inactive lifestyle won't change overnight.



DEAL WITH SLEEP PROBLEMS



Are sleep problems common in Veterans? About 70% of Veterans being treated for PTSD have sleep problems, such as insomnia and nightmares. More than 50% of persons with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) have insomnia.

Find out if you have a sleep problem.

My HealthVet can help you and your health care provider find out if you have a sleep problem. Go to www.myhealth.va.gov. Click on My HealthVet and search for “Self-Assessment – Healthy Sleep.”

- » Click on the “Insomnia Severity Index.” Print a copy. Answer the 7 questions.
- » Click on “Daily Sleep Diary.” Print 2 copies. Each diary has spaces to write down your sleep and wake patterns for 7 days. Follow the instructions to fill in the spaces.
- » Show both sleep diaries and your answers to the “Insomnia Severity Index” to your health care provider.



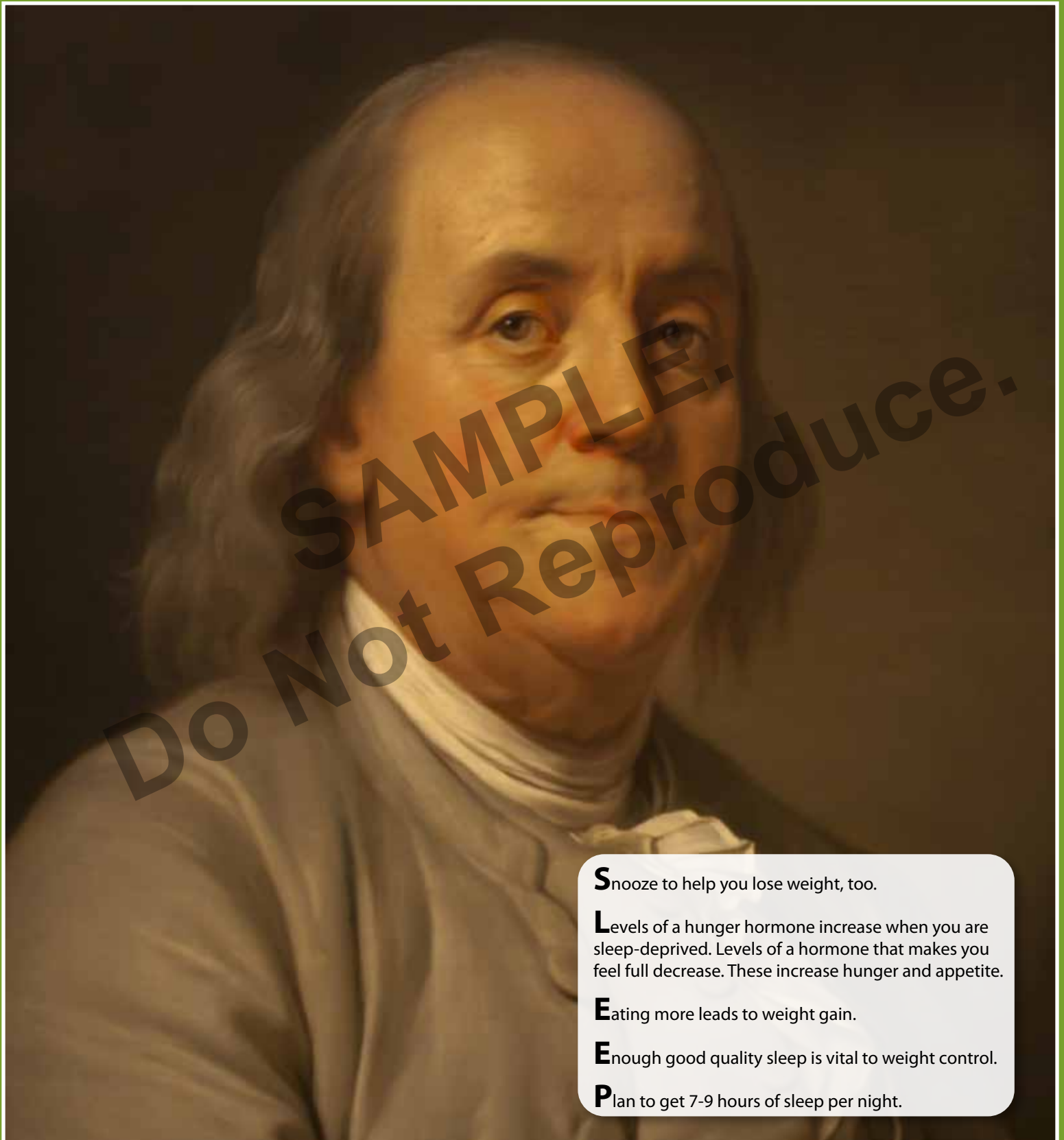
Check with your health care provider before you take over-the-counter medicines or supplements that promote sleep. If insomnia lasts for three weeks or longer, see your provider.

Tips to Help Get a Good Night's Sleep

- » Try to get a regular wake/sleep schedule. Set your alarm to get up at the same time each day.
- » As soon as you wake up, get exposure to bright light.
- » Do regular exercise, but not within a few hours of bedtime.
- » Limit caffeine. Have none for 8 hours before bed.
- » Don't smoke or use other tobacco products. Avoid alcohol and drugs. Ask your provider if you can have any alcohol with medications you take.
- » Dim the lights in the house 1-2 hours before you go to bed.
- » Do relaxation exercises, such as yoga and deep breathing.
- » Follow a bedtime routine. Use your bed for sleep and sexual activity. Do not watch TV, read, or eat in bed.
- » Keep your bedroom quiet, dark, and comfortable. Keep it as free from distractions as you can.
- » If you can't fall asleep or wake up and can't get back to sleep, after 30 minutes, get out of bed. Read a relaxing book or sit quietly in the dark. After 20 minutes go back to bed. Do this as many times as needed.

“Early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise.”

- Benjamin Franklin



Snooze to help you lose weight, too.

Levels of a hunger hormone increase when you are sleep-deprived. Levels of a hormone that makes you feel full decrease. These increase hunger and appetite.

Eating more leads to weight gain.

Enough good quality sleep is vital to weight control.

Plan to get 7-9 hours of sleep per night.

DENTAL HEALTH



Dental problems affect more than your teeth and mouth. Gum (periodontal) disease and other mouth infections may increase the risk for pneumonia, heart disease, and diabetes.

Protect Teeth from Damage and Injury

- » Don't chew on ice, pens, pencils, etc. Don't use your teeth to pry things open.
- » If you grind your teeth at night, ask your dentist if you should be fitted or a bite plate.
- » Discuss the need of using a mouthguard or other device to protect your teeth with your dentist.
- » Always wear a seat belt when riding in a car.
- » Don't suck on lemons or chew aspirin or vitamin C tablets. Acids in these wear away tooth enamel.

Take Care of Your Teeth and Gums


- » Brush your teeth at least twice a day. Floss your teeth at least once a day.
- » Brush your teeth with a soft-bristled toothbrush that fits your mouth. Brush with a gentle touch.
- » Brush in small circles across all of the surfaces of the upper and lower teeth. Brush the outer, inner, and chewing surfaces. Brush the surfaces between the teeth.
- » Floss or use an interdental cleaner at least once a day to remove food particles and plaque from areas that your toothbrush cannot reach.
- » After flossing, rinse your mouth with water, mouthwash, or an anti-microbial mouthrinse.

Get Regular Dental Checkups

- » Clean your teeth and remove plaque and tartar that buildup even after you brush and floss every day. Removing plaque and tartar helps prevent cavities, gum disease, and other problems.
- » Check for cavities, gum disease, oral cancers, tooth grinding, bite problems, and other problems. When these are detected early, they are easier to treat.
- » Address any areas of concern.
- » Find out how to take care of your teeth and what dental care products you should use.

Diet & Dental Health Tips

- » If your local water supply has fluoride, drink 6 to 10 cups of tap water every day. If not, make sure to use a fluoride toothpaste.
- » Avoid sugar-sweetened gum and beverages. Chew a sugar-free gum instead, especially one with the artificial sweetener xylitol.
- » Don't eat sweets, fruit, or starchy foods just before bedtime. Your mouth makes less saliva during the night. This allows cavity-causing bacteria to feed on food particles.



See your dentist every 6 months, at least every year, or as often as your dentist advises.

1 Start with an American Dental Association approved soft-bristled toothbrush that fits your mouth.



2 Brush your teeth at least twice a day. Use toothpaste with fluoride.

3 Don't rush when you brush. Guide your toothbrush in small circles across the surfaces of both the upper and lower teeth and all the places in between.

4 Brush your gums gently in small circles.



Well/Thier by the Dozen™

12 Terrific Tips to

CHERISH YOUR CHOPPERS

5 Brush your tongue to remove trapped germs.

6 Replace your toothbrush every three to four months, sooner if the bristles are bent or frayed (or if someone in the house used it to brush the dog's teeth).

7 Floss or use an interdental cleaner once a day to remove food particles and plaque from between your teeth and above and below the gum line.

8 Rinse with water, mouthwash, or an antibacterial mouth rinse.

9 Chew on this – sugar-free gum with the artificial sweetener xylitol. It'll help stimulate saliva flow.



11 Finish meals with food that help buffer acid formation. Examples include cheese, meat, fish, nuts, and dill pickles.

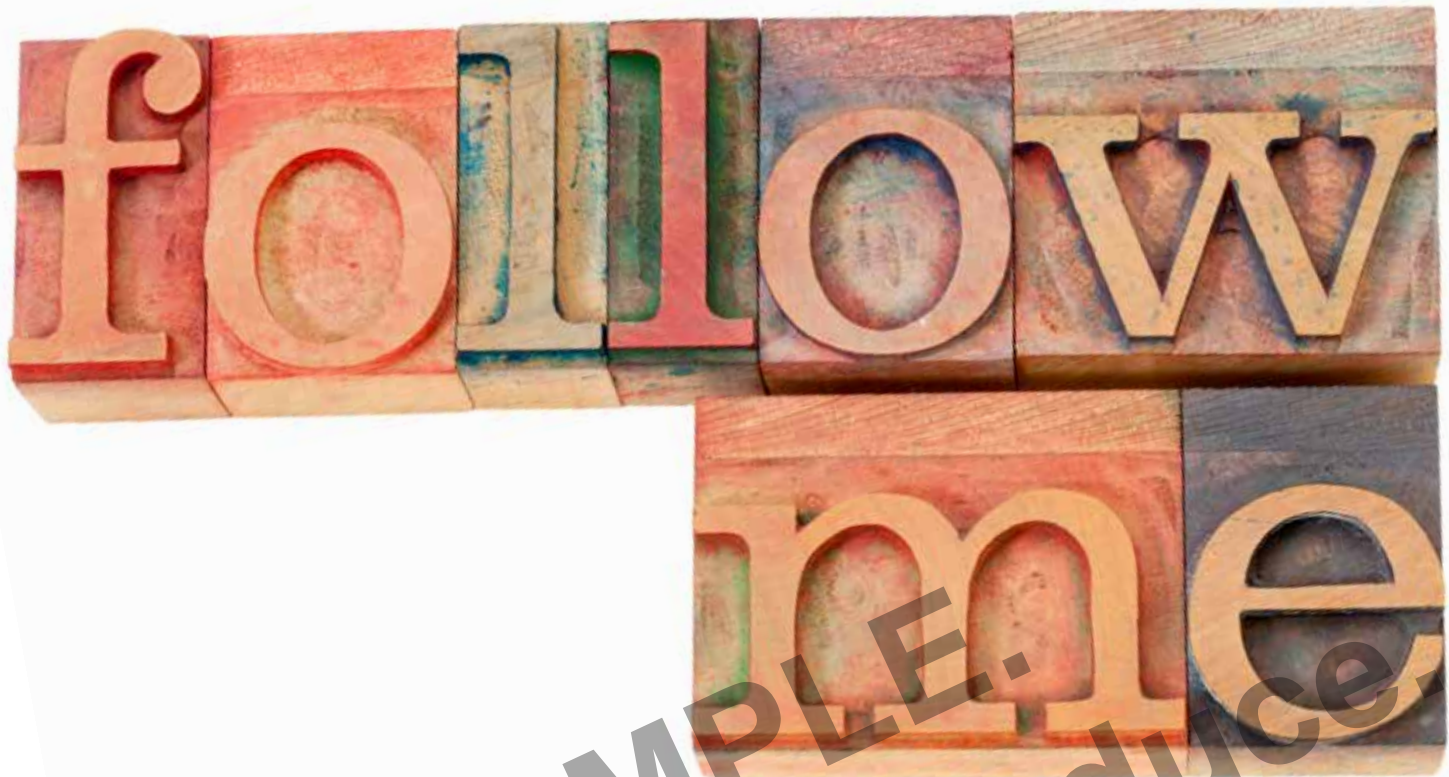


10 Check the inside of your mouth regularly for sores that don't heal and for irritated gums or other changes.



12 See your dentist every 6 months for teeth cleanings and oral exams to detect other possible health problems, such as diabetes, heart disease, and lack of vitamins.





Be a healthy role model for your family.

Actions speak louder than words. If you want your children to follow healthy habits, practice them yourself.

- **Make health and wellness a priority in your life.** Eat healthy foods, control your weight, do regular physical activity, and get enough sleep. Have regular health screenings and exams. Wash your hands often.
- **Be responsible.** Limit alcohol. Don't use tobacco. Use your seatbelt. Wear a bicycle helmet. Manage your finances.
- **Treat others with kindness and respect.** Be a good listener. Communicate your wants and needs in an assertive way. Help others. Deal with hardships and change in positive ways.



Be a role model. Live a healthy life. Be well.

LIVING WITH A MILD TBI



See your VA health care provider for traumatic brain injury (TBI) screening and diagnosis. Follow his or her advice for medical treatment and care at home.

Deal with sleep problems.

Sleep disorders are three times more common in people who have a TBI than in the general population. Follow healthy sleep habits:

- Get sunlight everyday, especially in the afternoon.
- Exercise daily, but not within a few hours of bedtime.
- Try to wake up and go to bed at the same times every day. Follow a bedtime routine before you go to sleep.
- Avoid tobacco products. Limit caffeine to 300 mgs. a day.
- Follow your health care provider's advice for prescribed and over-the-counter products that promote sleep.



Learn ways to stay focused.

- » Follow daily and weekly routines.
- » Do one thing at a time. Break large tasks into smaller steps.
- » Do activities at the times of day when you have the most energy.
- » Clear clutter. Minimize noise and distractions.
- » Take breaks when you get fatigued.
- » Use notes for reminders.
- » Discuss, with your health care provider, all the medicines you take that could impair your ability to concentrate.
- » Keep your provider informed of your progress and other problems that you have, such as depression and anxiety.

LOWER YOUR RISK OF DIABETES COMPLICATIONS



Diabetes is a very serious disease. Keeping your blood sugar, blood pressure, and blood cholesterol controlled can lower the risk for complications.

Diabetes Complications

- Heart disease and stroke. The risk for these is more than twice that of people without diabetes.
- Kidney problems
- Nerve damage
- Vision problems, even blindness

Discuss your target blood sugar goals and how to achieve these with your healthcare provider.

Blood Sugar	mg / dL	My Goals
Before a meal	70-130	
Two hours after a meal	< 180	<
A1C Goal	As advised, such as < 7%	<

Ask Questions.

Discuss your target blood cholesterol goals and ways to achieve these with your health care provider.

Blood Lipids	mg / dL	My Goals
Total Cholesterol	< 200	<
LDL (bad) Cholesterol	< 130 or < 100 if advised	<
HDL (good) Cholesterol	> 40 (men) > 50 (women)	>
Triglycerides	< 150	<



LOWER YOUR RISK FOR A HEART ATTACK



A heart attack happens when the heart does not get enough blood supply for a period of time. Plaque build-up and a blood clot in one or more heart arteries is often the cause.

Heart disease can be more common in Veterans who:

- Were exposed to Agent Orange in Vietnam
- Have posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Smoke
- Have diabetes and/or high blood pressure
- Are overweight and/or not very active

Follow your health care provider's advice for lifestyle measures and medicines that help control:

- Blood pressure
- Blood clots from forming
- Cholesterol and triglycerides
- Diabetes
- Heart failure, heart rhythm, and other heart problems



What steps can I take everyday to lower my heart attack risk?

- » Avoid secondhand smoke. If you use tobacco, commit to quit. Ask your VA healthcare provider for help.
- » Be as active as you can. Replace a half-hour of watching TV with walking or other physical activity.
- » Use tips from VA's **MOVE!**[®] weight management program handouts at www.move.va.gov. Losing just 5-10 percent of your body weight can lower the risk for a heart attack.
- » Do not use cocaine. Do not use amphetamines.
- » Talk to your health care provider if you have signs of sleep apnea – loud snoring or snorting during sleep, repeated periods when breathing stops 10 or more seconds during sleep, and extreme daytime sleepiness.



MANAGE CHRONIC HEALTH PROBLEMS



VA offers services with modern technology to help you manage chronic health problems.

My HealthVet Tracking Tools and Journals

Access these from: www.myhealth.va.gov.

- Track your blood pressure, blood sugar, heart rate, pulse oximetry, number of breaths taken in one minute, weight, pain, and body temperature.
- Keep food and activity journals.

Home Telehealth

- Use in-home video and messaging devices, daily, to send and receive health data, questions, and answers to and from your Care Coordinator.
- Your responses show how you feel, how well you are able to do daily tasks, and how you are coping with your health concerns.
- Your Care Coordinator uses this information to provide care that meets your special needs.

Rural Health

VA brings these health services closer to rural Veterans:

- » Telephone Lifestyle Coaching
- » Community-Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs)
- » Mobile Telehealth Care Vans
- » Home Based Primary Care. A VA nurse practitioner visits you in your home. He or she works with an outreach clinic to provide health care services you need.
- » Clinical Video Telehealth (CVT) – Telehealth technologies are used to make diagnoses, manage care, perform check-ups, and provide care. Examples are:
 - TeleDermatology
 - TeleMental Health
 - TeleMOVE!
 - TelePrimary Care



OSTEOPOROSIS



What is osteoporosis? Osteoporosis is a loss of bone mass and bone strength. It makes your bones weak and easier to break.

How do I know if I have osteoporosis?

You don't see or feel any changes taking place inside your bones.

Often, the first sign is a fracture of a hip, wrist, or the spine. When signs occur they include:

- » Gradual loss of height
- » Rounding of the shoulders
- » Stooped posture
- » Sudden back pain

Risk Factors

These factors raise your risk for osteoporosis:

- » You are female. You are 4 times more likely to develop osteoporosis than a man.
- » Osteoporosis or broken bones in adulthood runs in your family.
- » You do not get enough exercise, especially the type that bears weight, such as walking.
- » You have been on bed rest a long time.
- » Your body does not get enough calcium and vitamin D.
- » You smoke.
- » You drink too much alcohol.
- » You have taken some kinds of medicine for a long time. Examples are corticosteroid pills and antacids with aluminum.



Get tested for osteoporosis as advised by your health care provider.

How can I help prevent osteoporosis?

- » Eat a balanced diet that includes good sources of calcium and vitamin D.
- » Take calcium and vitamin D supplements, as advised by your provider. It is best to limit calcium to 500 mgs. at one time. You can get vitamin D from sun exposure (without sunscreen) on your skin. Fifteen minutes of midday sunshine may meet the daily need.
- » Do weight-bearing exercise at least 3-4 times a week. Walk, dance, do step aerobics. (Follow exercise guidelines from your health care provider.)
- » Don't smoke. Limit alcohol.
- » Take medications, as prescribed.

SAFEGUARD YOUR HEARING



Hearing loss and tinnitus are the most common disabilities reported in Veterans. (Tinnitus is a ringing or other sound in the ears when no external sound occurs). Noise exposure is the main reason for hearing problems.

Hearing problems can be from service-related and non-service-related problems due to:

- A one-time exposure to an extreme noise, such as an explosion or blast
- Repeated exposure to loud noise(s), such as gunfire, motorcycles, and loud music
- Trauma and injury
- Age-related hearing loss (presbycusis)
- Medications, such as too much aspirin

Ways to Help Safeguard Your Hearing

- Limit exposure to loud noises, such as loud music and motorcycles.
- Wear ear protection when you are exposed to loud noises.
- Ask if medicines you take could cause hearing problems.
- Do not stick objects into your ear. This includes cotton-tipped swabs.

Decibels (dB) of Sound

Type of Sound	dB
Whisper	30
Normal talking	60-70
Busy street	80

Repeated exposures \geq 85 dB can lead to hearing loss.

Hair dryer or lawnmower	90
Motorcycle riding at 35 mph	90
Motorcycle riding over 35 mph	100-116
Rock concert	110-120+

Ear pain begins at 125 dBs

Jet take off	135
--------------	-----

One time exposure $>$ 140 dB can lead to permanent hearing loss.

Firearms	140-170
Loudest tone the ear can hear	197

For hearing problems, see your VA health care provider.

DEPRESSION IS A TREATABLE ILLNESS



Depression affects your mental and physical health.
The good news – depression can be treated with success!

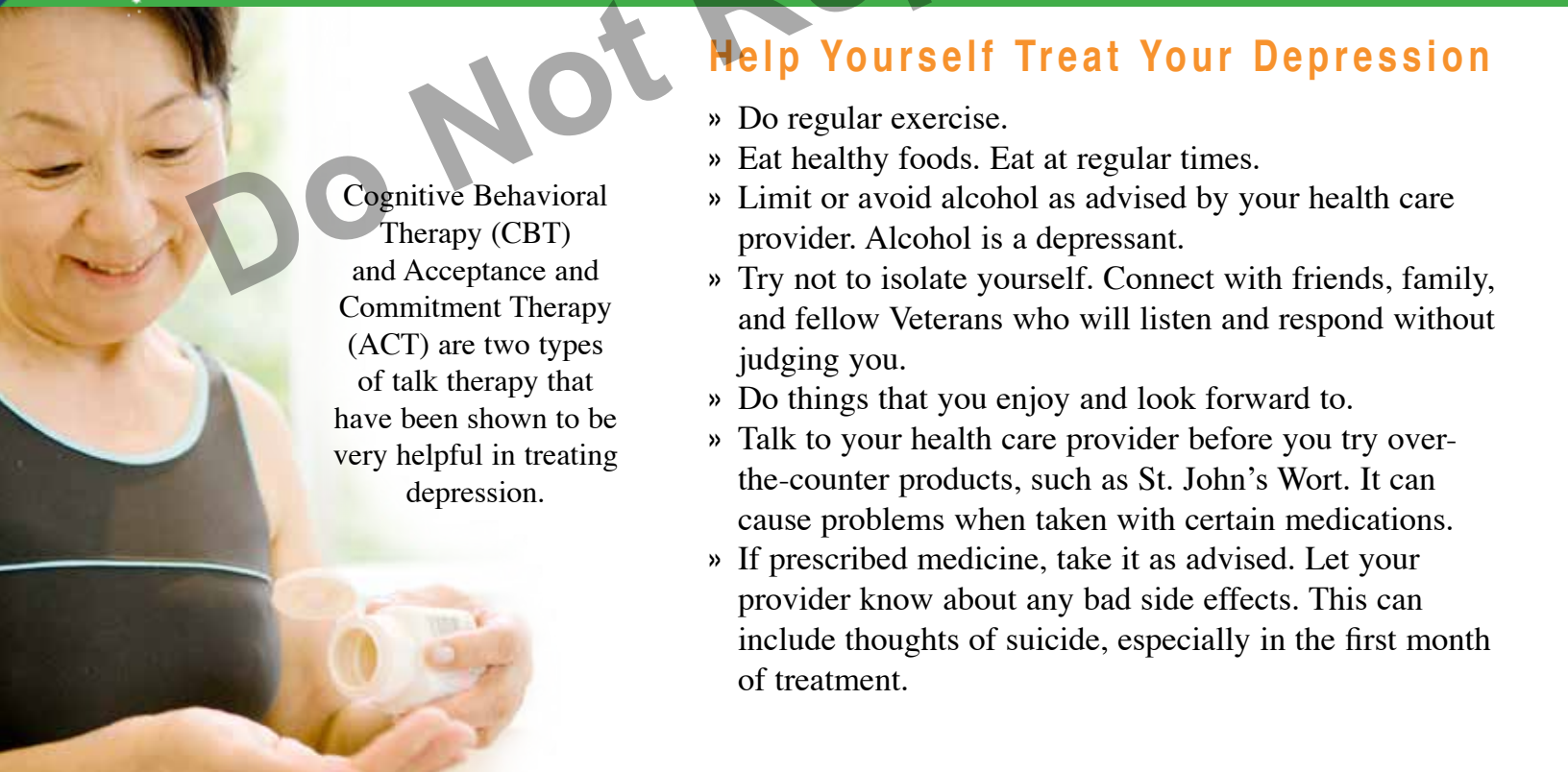
Use VA Screening Tools

- Take the anonymous screening for depression at www.myhealth.va.gov. Search for “Depression Screening.”
- Only you will see the results.
- You can choose to print a copy of the results to give to your VA health care provider.

Talk to Your VA Health Care Provider

He or she can diagnose depression and other problems that it occurs with. Examples are:

- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Substance abuse
- Diabetes
- Heart disease



Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) are two types of talk therapy that have been shown to be very helpful in treating depression.

Help Yourself Treat Your Depression

- » Do regular exercise.
- » Eat healthy foods. Eat at regular times.
- » Limit or avoid alcohol as advised by your health care provider. Alcohol is a depressant.
- » Try not to isolate yourself. Connect with friends, family, and fellow Veterans who will listen and respond without judging you.
- » Do things that you enjoy and look forward to.
- » Talk to your health care provider before you try over-the-counter products, such as St. John’s Wort. It can cause problems when taken with certain medications.
- » If prescribed medicine, take it as advised. Let your provider know about any bad side effects. This can include thoughts of suicide, especially in the first month of treatment.

FACT:

About 3 million people in the U.S. have Hepatitis C. Most are unaware of their infection.

Hepatitis C is a contagious liver disease from infection with the Hepatitis C virus (HCV). It spreads from the blood of an infected person.

Do not share needles or other equipment to inject cosmetic substances, drugs, or steroids.

Blood on personal items can spread Hepatitis C.

Do not share razors, nail clippers, toothbrushes, or glucose monitors that may have come in contact with an infected person's blood.

If you were born between 1947 and 1962, talk to your health care provider about getting tested for Hepatitis C.

Baby boomers are 5 times more likely to have Hepatitis C. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention advises all baby boomers be screened for this virus.





1 **Get** ... regular eye exams by an ophthalmologist or optometrist. A dilated exam can detect vision problems in their early stages.

2 **Know** your family's health history to find out if you are at higher risk for developing an eye disease or condition.

3 **If** you see spots and there isn't a Dalmation nearby, get to an eye doctor right away. Also go if you become sensitive to light, feel eye pressure, or have blurred or cloudy vision.

4 **Year-round,** wear sunglasses that block 99 to 100% of both UV-A and UV-B ultraviolet rays.



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12 Terrific Tips to

SEE THINGS CLEARLY

5 **Be** physically active for at least 30 minutes daily.



6 **Go** for the good oils (olive, canola, safflower, and corn oil) instead of saturated fats and trans fats (hydrogenated oils in foods, such as stick margarine and snack foods).

7 **Eat** SEE-food fruits and veggies — ones rich in vitamins C and E, beta carotene, and lutein. Examples are citrus fruits, deep yellow and orange fruits and veggies, and dark green leafy greens, such as spinach, kale, and collard greens.

8 **Choose** SEA-foods with omega-3 fatty acids and selenium, such as salmon, tuna and halibut.

9 **Discuss** vitamin and mineral supplements for eye health with your doctor.



10 **If** you are overweight, lose the extra pounds to avoid risk of diabetes and other conditions that lead to vision loss.



11 **If** you smoke, get help to quit. **Smoking** increases your risk of age-related conditions that can lead to blindness.



12 **Rest** your eyes 20/20. If you are working at a computer or doing close-up work, look away every 20 minutes for at least 20 seconds.

ON THE ROAD TO Better Sleep

Learn what to do to improve sleep.



1

1

MAKE SLEEP A PRIORITY

Do you like to stay up late with friends, but then struggle to fall asleep at night? Value sleep above having fun and decide to get more shut-eye.



2

SET A BEDTIME & WAKE-UP TIME

Decide to stick to a strict sleep schedule. For example, go to bed at 10 p.m. every night and wake up at 6 a.m., even on the weekends.



2



3

CREATE A SLEEP ENVIRONMENT

About an hour before bed, turn off the TV and put away your smartphone. Dim the lights, turn on relaxing music, make a cup of warm tea, and read a book to get sleepy.

3

Why is sleep so good?

Getting enough rest helps your immune system function, and improves your metabolism, memory, learning, and other vital functions.

4

TELL FAMILY & FRIENDS

Tell your family and friends about your goal to get better sleep and ask for their support and consideration when planning events.

4



ON THE ROAD TO Better Aging

Make healthy decisions to enjoy retirement.

SEE THE DOCTOR

Get regular check-ups and talk with your doctor about what screenings and vaccinations you need. Talk about what exercises you should do to stay fit.

1

STAY PROTECTED

Cover up arms, face and legs when out in the sun to reduce skin aging. Remove tripping hazards in the home. Wear sun glasses with 100% UVA/UVB protection outside every day, even in the winter.

2

2

TAKE MEDICATIONS

Take medication at the same time, in the same place, every day so you won't forget. Keep it in a place that's safe from kids and pets.

3

3

EAT RIGHT

Eat a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, lean meats and fiber-rich foods. Avoid eating too much sodium, saturated fat, and foods high in cholesterol.

5

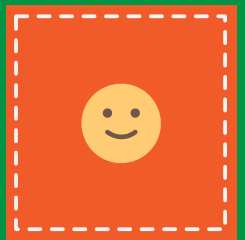
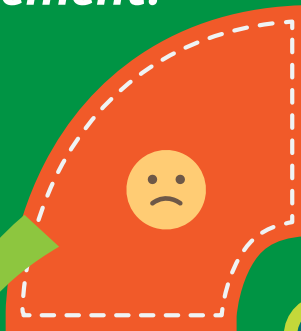
5

MOVE

Meet up with friends to walk for 30 minutes. Wear the right walking shoes and follow good road safety to avoid any accidents.

4

4



Why is good nutrition important as we age?

Studies show a healthy diet can help you avoid those diseases that often affect older people, such as heart disease, high blood pressure, cancer and cataracts.

ON THE ROAD TO

Better Disease Prevention

Protect yourself from disease & infection.



1



EAT WELL

Eat a healthy diet full of foods with the vitamins and minerals that can protect you from many diseases.

3

GET SCREENINGS AND VACCINATIONS

Talk to your doctor about what health screenings and vaccinations you might need. Make sure to get a flu shot every fall.

1

PRACTICE SAFE SEX

Talk to your partner about any sexual concerns you may have and take precautions to stay safe.

2

3

4

4

MOVE MORE

Make sure to get up a lot from your desk throughout the day to take short walks and to stretch. Take a brisk 30-minute walk every day after work.



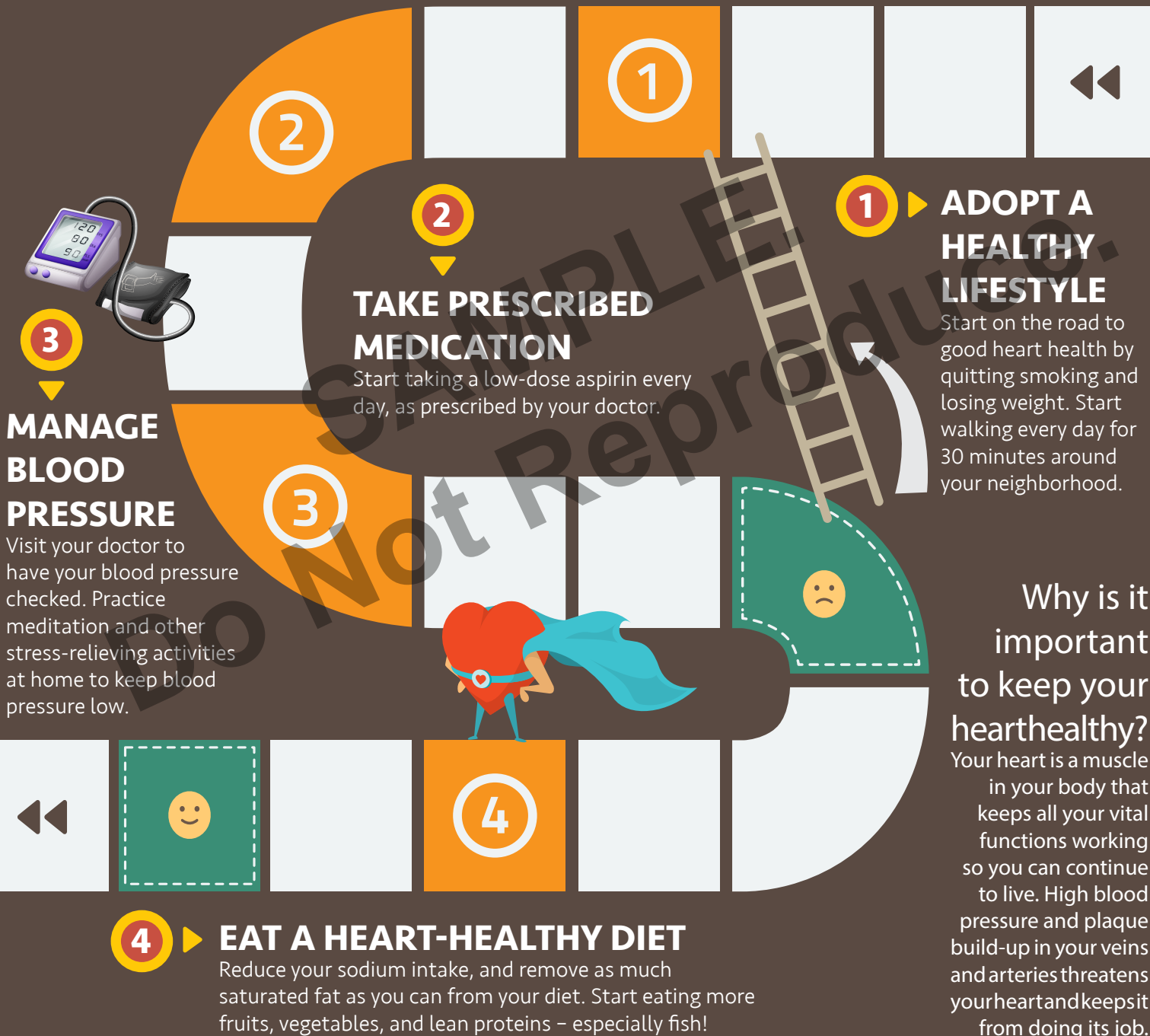
Why should we practice disease prevention?

You could avoid many common diseases by taking the right preventive actions. The World Health Organization says 80% of chronic diseases are preventable, if people follow a healthy lifestyle and get regular vaccinations and screenings.

ON THE ROAD TO

Better Heart Health

Take steps to reduce the risk for heart disease.



Reduce Risk for *Type 2 Diabetes*

You can help prevent or delay type 2 diabetes by making some lifestyle changes.

Drop Some Weight

Lose just 5-7% of your weight if you are overweight. That's just 10-14 pounds for a 200-pound person.

Increase Physical Activity

Aim for 150 minutes of exercise per week, or more. Include different kinds of exercises and avoid sitting for long periods.

Eat Healthier and Reduce Calories

Include more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and lean proteins. Avoid or limit saturated fats and added sugars.



National Diabetes Prevention Program

This is a proven lifestyle change program. To find a class or online program, visit www.cdc.gov/diabetes/prevention.

CONTROL THE SPREAD OF MRSA



What is MRSA? MRSA (mer' suh) is short for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. It is a type of bacteria that is hard to treat, because it resists treatment with common antibiotics.

How does MRSA spread?

- » You may carry the MRSA germ on your skin or in your nose. Many healthy people do. It does not always make you sick, but some persons who get the germ can get a very serious infection that could threaten life.
- » The MRSA germ can live on people, surfaces, or objects for many weeks. Like the common cold, you can pick up the germ by touching someone or something that has MRSA on it and then touching your eyes, nose, or skin. It can also enter your skin through cuts and scrapes.
- » The main way MRSA spreads is from patient to patient through human hands, especially health care workers' hands.
- » MRSA can also infect people in the community. This is usually a mild skin infection with pimples or boils that can be swollen, painful, and drain pus.


Ways to Stop the Spread of MRSA

- » Wash your hands often. This helps you not pick up MRSA bacteria and many other germs. It also helps you not spread germs. You can be a carrier of MRSA without having symptoms or feeling ill.
- » It is okay to remind your health care providers to wash or sanitize their hands when they give you care. Ask about other safety measures, such as wearing sterile gloves and gowns when you get an IV or other procedures.
- » When you are in a VA hospital or community living center, consider having a MRSA test. A nurse gently inserts a cotton swab into your nose. Results tell if you are a carrier. If you are, safety measures can help protect you from getting an infection with MRSA and passing the germ on to others.

Wash your Hands Well

- » Lather your hands with soap and water.
- » Rub your palms, the backs of your hands, and in between your fingers. Take at least 15-20 seconds to do this.
- » Rinse your hands. Dry them well.

THE FLU AND YOU



What do I need to know about the flu? Flu is short for influenza. There are many kinds of flu. All are caused by viruses that affect your nose, throat, windpipe, and lungs.

Types of Flu


- » **Seasonal flu.** This is the common flu that comes yearly, during fall and winter months.
- » **H1N1 flu.** In 2009, this was a new virus. It was called swine flu at first, but was found to be different than the viruses that normally occur in pigs.
- » **Avian flu.** This is also called bird flu, because it normally infects birds. The viruses that cause it may be able to change to a form that could pass from one person to another.
- » **Pandemic flu.** This is a term for a flu that causes a global outbreak of a serious illness that can spread easily from person to person.

Flu Signs & Symptoms

- » A high fever
- » Headache
- » Extreme tiredness. (You feel like staying in bed.)
- » Body aches
- » Sore throat
- » Dry cough
- » Runny or stuffy nose

What do I do if I get the flu?

- » Rest and drink plenty of fluids.
- » Take an OTC medicine for fever and muscle aches. Follow your health care provider's advice for what to take.
- » Gargle every few hours with warm salt water. Make this by mixing $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of salt in 1 cup of warm water.
- » You may be able to infect others 1 day before you get symptoms and up to 5-7 days after getting sick. Wash your hands with soap and water often. Do this for 15-20 seconds each time.
- » Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Put used tissues in the waste basket. Then, wash your hands.
- » Get flu updates from www.myhealth.va.gov.



Antibiotics do not treat the flu. Contact your health care provider within 48 hours of the start of flu symptoms. He or she may prescribe an antiviral medicine to make flu symptoms milder and help you get better sooner.

KNOW WHAT TO DO FOR COLDS & FLU



Is it a Cold or the Flu? Symptoms for both can include a stuffy or runny nose, sneezing, a sore throat, and a cough.

How can you tell the difference?

Cold symptoms come on slowly and mostly affect you above the neck. You can usually do daily tasks.

Flu Symptoms come on quickly and affect the body all over. Severe body aches, fatigue, a high fever, and a headache make you want to stay in bed.

Help Prevent Antibiotic Resistance

Antibiotics treat infections from bacteria. Taking antibiotics for cold and flu viruses is the main cause of antibiotic resistance. With this, bacteria that were once fought off by antibiotics have become stronger than the medicine. An example is MRSA – Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. This can cause pneumonia or an infection that affects the skin.

What can I do to treat colds and the flu?

- » For flu symptoms, call your VA health care provider. An antiviral medicine may be prescribed. This can make flu symptoms milder and help you get better sooner if begun within 48 hours of the start of symptoms.
- » Take an over-the-counter medicine to lower fever and relieve pain, as advised.
- » Rest. Stay home until a fever is gone for 24 hours.
- » Drink plenty of fluids. Eat chicken soup.
- » Use over-the-counter saline nasal drops or spray.
- » Gargle with warm salt water. Mix ¼ teaspoon of salt in one cup of warm water.
- » Limit spreading germs. Cover your coughs and sneezes. Wash your hands often. Clean and disinfect door handles, phones, railings, light switches, and remote controls.





3 "G"s

for Flu Protection Safety

1

GET a seasonal flu vaccine if you have not yet had one.

- The flu shot and nasal spray **do not** cause flu.
- A flu shot is available for persons that have a severe allergy to eggs.
- Get the flu vaccine at your local VA facility. Find out other places where you can get a flu vaccine at www.cdc.gov/flu.

2

GUARD against picking up infections.

- Wash your hands often.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Or, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow, not your hands.
- Disinfect commonly touched items, such as door handles, light switches, smartphones, and TV remotes.

3

GO to work and to public places when you are healthy. Stay home if you are sick!



Get a flu vaccine

FACT:

Flu vaccine is the single best way to prevent getting seasonal flu.

Persons age 6 months and older are advised to get a yearly flu vaccine.

Find out where to get a flu vaccine from the Flu Vaccine Finder link on www.flu.gov.

Flu shots are for anyone 6 months and older. The nasal spray is for healthy people from 2-49, except pregnant women.

Flu vaccine comes in two forms – a shot and a nasal spray.

Get your flu vaccine as soon as it is available in your area, but it is not too late to get it in December, January, or beyond.

Flu season usually peaks in January or February, but it can occur as late as May.





Is it a

COLD

or the

FLU

Colds and flu are respiratory illnesses. Both are caused by viruses. But there are differences. While colds and flu are treated mostly with self-care, the flu can lead to more serious problems, such as bronchitis and pneumonia in people with asthma, diabetes, or a weakened immune system.

Symptoms	Cold	Flu
Fever	Mild, if any	Yes. Can be high.
Chills	No	Yes
Headache	Maybe	Yes
Body aches	Mild, if any	Yes
Itchy/watery eyes	Yes	No
Stuffy nose	Yes	Runny nose
Sore throat	Scratchy throat	Yes
Cough	Cough with mucus	Dry, hacking cough

What to do

- Drink lots of liquids. Eat chicken soup.
- To soothe a sore throat, have warm drinks, such as tea with lemon and/or honey. Note: Do not give honey to a child under 1 year old.
- Use a cool-mist vaporizer to add moisture to the air.
- For nasal congestion, use a saline nasal spray or drops.
- Gargle every few hours with warm salt water. (Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of salt with 1 cup of warm water.)
- Suck on a piece of hard candy or medicated lozenge. Note: Do not give these to children under 5 years old.

A cold comes on gradually. The flu comes on quickly. Cold symptoms affect you mostly above the neck. The flu affects your body all over. With a cold, you still have energy to do most things. With the flu, you may not be able to get out of bed.

Action Step

Contact your doctor if symptoms worsen or do not improve.

1 Know the difference. Colds symptoms affect you above the neck with a stuffy nose, sneezing, and a cough. Flu comes on suddenly and affects the body all over with fever, chills, and body aches.

2 Every fall or winter, get a flu vaccine, the single best way to protect against that year's flu.

3 Wash your hands often with soap and warm, running water. Do this for **15-20 seconds** at a time.

4 Keep your immune system strong with a balanced diet, exercise, and plenty of rest.



Wellthier by the Dozen™

12 Terrific Tips to

COLD & FLU DEFENSE

5 Try to avoid close contact with sick people. Keep your fingers away from your nose, eyes, and mouth.

6 To help prevent the spread of infection, use a virus-killing disinfectant on handrails, doorknobs, and other surfaces that people touch often.

7 If you have a fever, cough, sore throat, chills, and fatigue, stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone.

8 Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it.

9 Drink plenty of fluids, such as water and soup broth, to loosen mucus and keep you hydrated.



10 Avoid caffeinated drinks, such as coffee, tea, and colas, and alcohol, as they can dehydrate you.



11 Both colds and flu typically have to run their courses. Over-the-counter medications may relieve symptoms, but will not cure or shorten the duration.

12 If your symptoms worsen after a week, see a doctor. More serious problems, such as bronchitis, sinus infections, or pneumonia can result.

