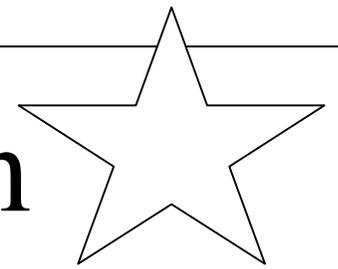


To Your Health



VA Palo Alto Health Care System ★ Patient Education Newsletter ★ Winter 2000

"Promoting good health through information."

HOW TO TALK TO YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER

(To get the most from your visit)

Laura Peters, Ph.D.
Rosemary Gill, R.N.P.

Do Your Homework:

If it is a first appointment, bring your medical records from your last provider. Bring x-rays and lab reports if you can. Know your diagnosis and medications. If you don't know, be sure to ask. You may want to ask the provider to write down this information.

Make a List:

Before your visit, write down your concerns and symptoms. List any questions you want answered in the order of their importance to you. Have there been any major changes in your life or lifestyle?

You're the Expert:

Be clear with your provider what you expect from the visit. If you don't spell out your concerns, your provider has no way of knowing.

Ask About New Medications:

See the article about medications in this issue!

Speak Up:

Don't hesitate to ask for more information or a better explanation if you don't understand what the provider is saying. You may want to ask the provider to write down what steps you should be following through on prior to your next visit.

Before You Leave:

Make sure you know what signs and symptoms to look for. Know what you should do if your symptoms get worse. Do you know about the Telephone Care Program? (1-800-455-0057) ★

★ RECIPE FOR HEALTH ★

Minestrone Soup 16 (1 cup) servings

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| 1/4 C olive oil | 1 clove garlic minced |
| 1 1/3 C chopped onion | 1 1/2 C chopped celery |
| 1 can (6 oz) tomato paste | 1 1/2 C frozen peas |
| 4 3/4 C shredded cabbage | 1 C sliced carrots |
| 1 1/2 C fresh green beans | 11 C water |
| 1 can (1 lb) cut tomatoes | dash hot sauce |
| 1 C canned red kidney beans, drained and rinsed | |
| ----- | |
| 2 C uncooked, broken spaghetti | |

1. Heat oil in a 4-quart saucepan.
2. Add garlic, onion, and celery. Saute 5 minutes.
3. Add all remaining ingredients except spaghetti, and stir until ingredients are well mixed.
4. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover, and simmer about 45 minutes or until vegetables are tender.
5. Add uncooked spaghetti and simmer 2-3 minutes only.

Calories 153	Cholesterol 0mg	Total Fat 4G
Sodium 191mg	Saturated Fats Less than 1G	

Prevention Points

What is your High Blood Pressure Prevention I.Q.?

	T	F
1. There is nothing you can do to prevent high blood pressure.		
2. If your mother or father has high blood pressure, you'll get it.		
3. High blood pressure has no symptoms.		
4. Stress causes high blood pressure.		
5. High blood pressure is not life-threatening.		
6. High blood pressure has no cure.		

Four Steps to Medication Safety

Noelle Hasson, Pharm.D.

1. Know your medications. For every medication you take, ask yourself the following questions:

- ✓ What is the name of the medication?
- ✓ Why am I taking it?
- ✓ How am I supposed to take it?
- ✓ What are the major side effects to look for?
- ✓ Should I avoid any foods, alcohol, or other medications while I am taking it?

If you are unsure about any of the answers, ask your pharmacist or provider.

2. Use compliance aids. These devices can help you organize your medications as well as help your provider keep up to date on your regimen.

- ✓ Medication Calendar: This list is available free of charge. Ask any pharmacist to print one out for you. Carry this calendar with you and show it to any new provider.
- ✓ Pill Box: These handy containers are available for a very low cost in the canteen.

3. Ask questions. The following people are available to answer questions.

- ✓ Primary Care Provider. Write your questions down and bring them to clinic.
- ✓ Pharmacist. Stop by to speak with a pharmacist, or call 800-311-2511.
- ✓ Telephone advice nurse. Call 800-455-0057.

4. Count your medications. As the number of medications increases, so does your chance of having a drug-drug interaction or side effect.

- ✓ Make sure you know why you are taking each of your medications. If you don't know why, ask your provider - perhaps it is no longer necessary.
- ✓ Ask your provider if you are a candidate for the polypharmacy clinic. The providers in this clinic are available to review complicated regimens and make sure patients are able to take their medications properly. ★

To Your Health is published quarterly for VAPAHCS veterans and their families.

Editorial Board:

Noelle Hasson, Pharm.D.

Rosemary Gill, RN, M.S.

Laura Peters, Ph.D.

Prevention Points

High Blood Pressure I.Q.

1. **F.** High blood pressure can be prevented with four steps: keep a healthy weight; become physically active; limit your salt and sodium use; and, if you drink alcoholic beverages, do so in moderation.
2. **F.** You are more likely to get high blood pressure if it runs in your family, but that doesn't mean you must get it.
3. **T.** High blood pressure, or "hypertension," usually has no symptoms. In fact, it is often called the "silent killer." You can have high blood pressure and feel fine. That's why it's important to have your blood pressure checked - it's a simple test.
4. **F.** Stress does make blood pressure go up, but only temporarily. Ups and downs in blood pressure are normal. Blood pressure becomes dangerous when it's always high.
5. **F.** High blood pressure is the main cause of stroke and a factor in the development of heart disease and kidney failure.
6. **T.** But high blood pressure can be treated and controlled. Treatment usually includes the lifestyle changes mentioned above and, if needed, medication.

★ Healthy Hints ★

A recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association showed that **men can increase the chances of living 6 to 10 years longer by doing these three things:**

- ✓ Keep cholesterol levels below 200
- ✓ Maintain a blood pressure below 120/80
- ✓ Abstain from smoking



Telephone Advice Nurse: 800-455-0057 ★ Medication Refill Line: 800-311-2511