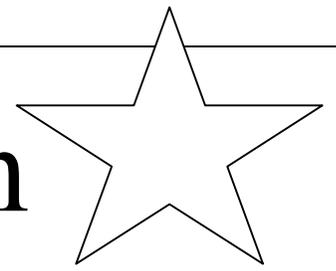


# To Your Health



VA Palo Alto Health Care System ★ Patient Education Newsletter ★ Summer 2001

*"Promoting good health through information."*

## **Pain Management**

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### **Pain as 5<sup>th</sup> Vital Sign:**

You will be asked at most of your clinic visits whether you have pain, and if so, how bad is it on a scale of 0-10. Zero is no pain, 10 is the worst pain you can imagine. No score is higher than 10. If you have pain, more questions will be asked about your pain to help clinicians best treat you.

### **Pain Treatment:**

Medicines: Antidepressants, antiseizure medicines, NSAIDS, narcotics, and other medicines are sometimes used to treat pain. Not all types of medicine are right for every pain problem. For example, narcotics are useful for cancer pain, pain after surgery, and for some acute pains, but they may or may not be helpful for chronic pain.

Other treatments: Physical therapy, occupational therapy, injections, surgery, and working with psychology are some therapies that can be useful for some pains.

### **Pain Prevention:**

There are things we suggest so you don't get pain to start with.

- Don't drink alcohol
- Don't smoke
- Don't use street drugs
- Maintain a regular exercise program
- Sleep well
- Manage your weight, stress, and anger

### **Talk with your Primary Care Provider about:**

- When did your pain start and what started it?
- How bad is your pain on the 0-10 scale?
- How would you describe your pain?
- What makes your pain better and worse?
- What have you tried for your pain? Did it work?

## **★ Recipe for Health ★**

### ***Summertime Soup***

*Serves 7*

- 1 small ripe cantaloupe, peeled, seeded, and cubed
- 2 large ripe mangoes, peeled, pitted, and cubed
- 2 medium peaches, peeled, pitted, and cubed
- 3 cups fresh or frozen unsweetened strawberries
- ½ cup plain nonfat or low-fat yogurt
- ½ cup frozen orange juice concentrate

1/3 cup port

2 tablespoons orange liqueur

1 tablespoon fresh lime juice

1 ½ teaspoons raspberry vinegar

½ cup plain nonfat or low-fat yogurt, well chilled

1. Place all ingredients except ½ cup yogurt in a food processor. Process until thick and creamy.
2. Pour into a serving bowl and freeze for about 20 minutes.
3. Spoon into individual bowls and top each service with a heaping teaspoon of yogurt. Serve immediately.

#### Nutrient Analysis per Serving

Calories 174	Protein 4G	Sodium 38mg
Carbohydrate 37G	Cholesterol 1mg	
Total Fat 1G	Saturated Fat 0G	

## **No Pain, Much Gain**

By Hank Winkenwerder, MPT

As the weather warms up, many people begin increasing their physical activity by hiking, camping, and participating in sports and other outdoor activities. Some will end up with injuries because they try new activities too quickly or hard. "No pain - no gain" makes no sense for the average person. With the right type and intensity of exercise, you can get a lot of enjoyment without pain this summer. *(Continued on back page...)*

## **No Pain, Much Gain (continued...)**

First, let's look at the benefits of regular physical activity (exercises done 3-5 times per week).

- With good exercise training, the heart pumps oxygen rich blood to the body with less effort and blood pressure is lowered.
- Long term exercise also contributes to healthy weight loss and natural muscle buildup, which makes daily work and general activity easier.
- Exercise can also lower blood sugar levels and improve your mood, chasing away the "blues."

Before starting an exercise program (especially if you are over 40) check with your doctor to see if there are any special recommendations or precautions. Aerobic exercises like running and biking work the heart and lungs as well as the muscles. This type of exercise should be done at moderate intensity (60 to 80% of your maximal heart rate) for 20 to 45 minutes at a time. Your maximal heart rate is found by subtracting your age from 220. Start gradually (say 10 minutes of fast walking) and slowly build up. A balanced exercise program includes stretching (to prevent tight muscles and tendons that are more prone to injury) and strengthening exercises. These do not require any fancy equipment and may be as easy as a simple wall slide modified pushup and standing calf stretch.

Usually if your muscles are slightly sore the day after a new activity and you slept well the night after exercise, you are working at the right intensity. If it takes two days or more to recover from your exercise, you are working too hard.

If you do hurt yourself, use the **RICE** treatment.

- Rest the area.
- Ice the area (15-20 minutes at least several times per day) the first 24 to 72 hours.
- Compress using a loose ace wrap or bandage to decrease swelling.
- Elevate the area above your heart. Put that hand or foot on the couch, weekend warrior, until better.

## **Helpful Hints**

*For a Healthy Summer*

- Use a good sunscreen (SPF 15 or better). Sunburn can be quite painful and lead to long term skin problems. Just a few hours in the sun can cause a burn without protection. A good hat is also helpful.
- When swimming, always swim with a buddy. Be careful of currents and undertows and never dive into shallow water.
- Remember to drink lots of water (not soda and alcohol). Heat injury from dehydration is a common and very preventable complaint. You should be able to urinate light colored fluid every two hours.
- If hiking, remember to tell someone where you are going and when you will be coming back. No one plans on getting lost!
- When in the woods, wear clothing to protect yourself from ticks, mosquitoes and other bugs. Carry medication if you are prone to allergic reactions from bites and avoid the poison oak.
- Wear protective gear in sports. It's better for your knee and shoulder pads to get scraped than your skin! A bicycle helmet can be a literal lifesaver. If on the water, wear a

An over-the-counter anti-inflammatory medication like ibuprofen will help with pain and swelling. If you have other medical conditions, ulcer disease or are taking other medications, check with your doctor first about which over the counter drugs may be used or need to be avoided. If the swelling or pain is severe or does not resolve in 36 hours seek medical help. You can call the telephone advice nurse and if needed go to urgent care or see your doctor as soon as possible. ★

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

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