

Women Warriors Newsletter

Women Veterans Program
Providence VA Medical
Center



INFLUENZA

(flu) is a respiratory illness caused by flu viruses such as seasonal or H1N1 flu. Flu occurs each year and spreads easily from one person to another. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), on average, 226,000 people are hospitalized and 36,000 people die from seasonal flu complications annually in the United States. Getting a flu shot is the first and most important step in protecting against flu. This year, one shot protects against seasonal and H1N1 flu.



Who Should Get a Flu Shot?

While flu vaccination is recommended for everyone six months or older, flu shots are especially important for people at high risk, including pregnant women, young children, people with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes, or heart and lung disease, and people 65 years and older. This year, a high-dose flu vaccine is available for the 65+ age group.

Pregnant women, in particular, should get the flu shot in the interest of their own health and the health of their unborn child. Pregnant women are more likely to be hospitalized and become severely ill from influenza when compared to women who are not pregnant. In addition, studies have shown that babies who are born to mothers who had a flu shot in pregnancy get sick with the flu less often in the first six months than babies whose mothers do not get a flu shot while pregnant. While the flu shot is safe for pregnant women in any trimester, the nasal spray vaccination is NOT safe for pregnant women. Postpartum women can receive either flu vaccine, even if breastfeeding.

Vaccination is also important for health care workers, as well as those who live with or care for those who are at high risk.

The Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group wants to remind women that taking the time to *get your own flu shot is as important as taking the time to get flu shots for your children and family!!* (Cont. Page 3)



Winter 2011



Women's Health Care Team

Dr. Dawna Blake, Women's Health Care Director

Pilar Capili, RN, Clinic Coordinator

Beth Grady, LCSW, Women Veterans Program Manager

Dr Jon Bas, Provider

Karen Chase, NP, Provider

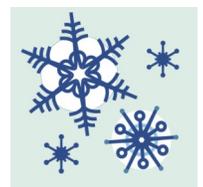
Dr. Joan Karl, Provider

Dr. Neha Pathak, Provider

Joyce Simon, NP, Provider

Dr. Natalie Mariano, Hyannis CBOC, Provider

Dr. Terri Tamase, Middletown CBOC, Provider



VA Publishes Final Regulation to Aid Veterans Exposed to Agent Orange

WASHINGTON – Veterans exposed to herbicides while serving in Vietnam and other areas will have an easier path to access quality health care and qualify for disability compensation under a final regulation that will be published on August 31, 2010 in the *Federal Register* by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The new rule expands the list of health problems VA will presume to be related to Agent Orange and other herbicide exposures to add two new conditions and expand one existing category of conditions.

“Last October, based on the requirements of the Agent Orange Act of 1991 and the Institute of Medicine’s 2008 Update on Agent Orange, I determined that the evidence provided was sufficient to award presumptions of service connection for these three additional diseases,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. “It was the right decision, and the President and I are proud to finally provide this group of Veterans the care and benefits they have long deserved.”

The final regulation follows Shinseki’s determination to expand the list of conditions for which service connection for Vietnam Veterans is presumed. VA is adding Parkinson’s disease and ischemic heart disease and expanding chronic lymphocytic leukemia to include all chronic B cell leukemias, such as hairy cell leukemia.

In practical terms, Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war and who have a “presumed” illness don’t have to prove an association between their medical problems and their military service. By helping Veterans overcome evidentiary requirements that might otherwise present significant challenges, this “presumption” simplifies and speeds up the application process and ensure that Veterans receive the benefits they deserve.

The Secretary’s decision to add these presumptive illnesses is based on the latest evidence provided in a 2008 independent study by the Institute of Medicine concerning health problems caused by herbicides like Agent Orange.

Veterans who served in Vietnam anytime during the period beginning January 9, 1962, and ending on May 7, 1975, are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides.

More than 150,000 Veterans are expected to submit Agent Orange claims in the next 12 to 18 months, many of whom are potentially eligible for retroactive disability payments based on past claims. Additionally, VA will review approximately 90,000 previously denied claims by Vietnam Veterans for service connection for these conditions. All those awarded service-connection who are not currently eligible for enrollment into the VA healthcare system will become eligible.

This historic regulation is subject to provisions of the Congressional Review Act that require a 60-day Congressional review period before implementation. After the review period, VA can begin paying benefits for new claims and may award benefits retroactively for earlier periods. For new claims, VA may pay benefits retroactive to the effective date of the regulation or to one year before the date VA receives the application, whichever is later. For pending claims and claims that were previously denied, VA may pay benefits retroactive to the date it received the claim.

VA encourages Vietnam Veterans with these three diseases to submit their applications for access to VA health care and compensation now so the agency can begin development of their claims.

Individuals can go to a website at <http://www.vba.va.gov/bln/21/AO/claimherbicide.htm> to get an understanding of how to file a claim for presumptive conditions related to herbicide exposure, as well as what evidence is needed by VA to make a decision about disability compensation or survivors benefits.

Additional information about Agent Orange and VA’s services for Veterans exposed to the chemical is available at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange.

The regulation is available on the Office of the Federal Register website at <http://www.ofr.gov/>.

FUTURE HAPPENINGS



“Tents to Tea” is an opportunity for you to mingle and meet other women Veterans while in a **Bistro** atmosphere. Our first two, held in July and January, were a great success! Future dates include **April 8, 2011**. Our gathering is held at the Providence VAMC classroom 3, 5th floor, from 0900-11:30 a.m. Call Beth at 401-273-7100, ext 6191, to sign up.



WARRIOR DRUMMING

The Veteran Resource and Recovery Center is starting up a **DRUMMING** circle for women Veterans. Learn how to make your own drum and feel the power of the beat! Call Denise Fragoza at 401-273-7100, ext 3413, for more info.

THE WOMEN VETERAN COPING STUDY

Women Veterans face a unique set of physical and mental health challenges during and after military service. The Coping Study is an IRB approved study. The goal of this study is to gather information on the unique needs and experiences of women Veterans so that treatment approaches can be improved and tailored specifically to women’s needs. If you’d like more information on the study, contact Suzannah Creech at 401-273-7100, ext. 6245, or suzannah.creech@va.gov.

FLU (Continued) Tips for Prevention



- Wash hands frequently with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Remember, the flu virus can live on surfaces for 24 to 48 hours.
- Avoid touching nose, mouth, or eyes; wash hands before touching your face.
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or into your sleeve if no tissue is available. The Vampire Cough is an alternate way to cover coughs and sneezes .

Reference:
<http://www.flu.gov>



Numbers to Know; Numbers to Grow

Eligibility & Enrollments
401-457-3300

OEF/OIF Program Manager:
401-273-7100, ext. 6137

Mental Health hotline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Telephone Assistant Program
(TAP) Line
401-457-3336
1-866-590-2976

Homeless Resources
401-273-7100, ext. 3553

Hotline for Homeless Veterans
1-877-424-3838

State of Rhode Island
Department of Human
Services Division of Veterans
Affairs
401-254-8460

Veterans Benefits
Administration, Women
Veterans Coordinator
401-223-3651

Human services and helping
agencies
2-1-1

VET CENTERS:
Warwick: 401-739-0167
New Bedford: 508-999-6920
Hyannis: 508-778-0124



Minerva Thomas, EEO Program Manager, demonstrates!

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER!

Providence VA Medical Center
830 Chalkstone Avenue
Providence, Rhode Island

Hyannis CBOC
VA Primary Care Center
233 Stevens Street
Hyannis, MA 02601-3766
Phone: (508) 771-3190

Middletown CBOC
One Corporate Place
(West Main Road at Northgate Road)
Middletown, RI 02842
Phone: (401) 847-6239

New Bedford CBOC
175 Elm Street
New Bedford, Mass 02740



About one out of every six Americans has high blood cholesterol, according to the U.S. Centers for Dis-

ease Control and Prevention. This increases the risk of heart disease, which is the number-one killer of women in the United States.

Cholesterol is a waxy, fat-like substance that your body needs. However, elevated amounts in the blood can lead to a buildup on artery walls, resulting in a heart attack or stroke. There are two types of cholesterol. HDL (good) cholesterol tends to be higher in women because it is associated with the female sex hormone estrogen. LDL (bad) cholesterol can increase with age and weight and is found in foods with saturated and trans fats.

The first step in managing your cholesterol is to know your cholesterol level. Your health care provider can do a simple blood test that will show the amount of cholesterol in milligrams (mg) per deciliter (dL) of blood. Engaging in physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight, and eating plenty of fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy foods, and whole grains can help lower cholesterol levels. If your level is especially high, you might be prescribed medication to help lower it. You can keep track of your cholesterol levels with MyHealthVet, a free, online program to educate Veterans about health care topics.

References:

www.cdc.gov/cholesterol/

www.americanheart.org

www.prevention.va.gov/Resources_Cholesterol_Veterans_and_Public.asp

www.myhealth.va.gov

The Providence VA Medical Center is committed to meeting the unique needs of women Veterans by delivering the highest quality health care to each woman, while offering her the privacy, dignity, and sensitivity to gender-specific needs that she deserves. Our full time Women Veterans Program Manager is ready to assist you in getting timely access to the health care you need.

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

*You served, you deserve
★ the best care anywhere.*



Beth Grady, LCSW, Women Veteran Program Manager, (401) 273-7100, ext. 6191