WINTER • 2008

# Veterans' Health

THE WELLNESS MAGAZINE FOR OHIO VETERANS

Get a shot of shingles prevention

Domestic abuse: Don't be a victim

Health care services for women

VA Healthcare System of Ohio

## To our readers

Keeping you living well and staying healthy is an important part of our focus, so we include plenty of helpful information in each issue of *Veterans' Health*.

Women veterans have a wealth of health care services specifically for them. To learn what's available and how you can access care and services, see pages 4 and 5.

Helping you stay healthy means providing you with ways to avoid illness. Read page 6 to learn about shingles and who's eligible to receive the vaccine that prevents it.

Sometimes, though, being healthy is as much psychological as physical. You're only a phone call away from help if you're thinking of harming yourself or if you're the victim of domestic abuse. Pages 3 and 7 offer suggestions and phone numbers so you can obtain the support you need.

We're here when you need us!

—**Jack Hetrick, Network Director**

## Patient satisfaction survey is changing!

To upgrade the way the Veterans Administration evaluates patient satisfaction, the Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients will be changing to utilizee questions from the Hospital Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (HCAHPS). HCAHPS is a standardized method for measuring the way patients think about their care nationally.

Past surveys used a zero-to-five scale (from poor to excellent); new surveys will use a zero-to-10 scale (from worst to best).

The new Veterans Health Administration patient satisfaction survey tool will first be tested in early 2008 and is expected to be implemented in October.

### About our mailing list

We make every effort to ensure our mailing lists are accurate. If you have questions or would like to be added to or deleted from the list, let us know. Please include your entire address. To make a change, you *must* mail the mailing panel to:

*Veterans' Health*
VA Healthcare System of Ohio Network Office
11500 Northlake Drive, Suite 200
Cincinnati, OH 45249

*Veterans' Health* is online at **www.visn10.va.gov.** Visit this site to view back issues or subscribe.

### Hand washing 101

Wet your hands with warm running water and apply liquid or clean bar soap. Lather well and rub your hands together vigorously for at least 10 to 15 seconds. Scrub your wrists, the backs of your hands, between your fingers and under your fingernails. Rinse well and dry with a clean or disposable towel. When you're in a public washroom, use a paper towel if available to turn the faucet off and open the door.

### Suicide prevention hotline

VA has a national suicide prevention hotline for veterans. The toll-free number is **1-800-273-TALK (8255).**

*Veterans' Health* is published quarterly as a patient education service by VA Healthcare System of Ohio, one of the 21 integrated networks of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The publication is intended to provide information to help you stay well, manage your healthcare and learn about the many health services available through VA. This publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, which should be obtained from your doctor. All articles may be reproduced for educational purposes.

**The Mission of VA Healthcare System of Ohio is:**

- To provide veterans a continuum of care that is accessible, value-added and cost-effective, and of the highest quality, within an environment of outstanding education and research.
- To promote a culture that supports and develops a caring, compassionate, competent and quality-oriented workforce.

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SUICIDE PREVENTION

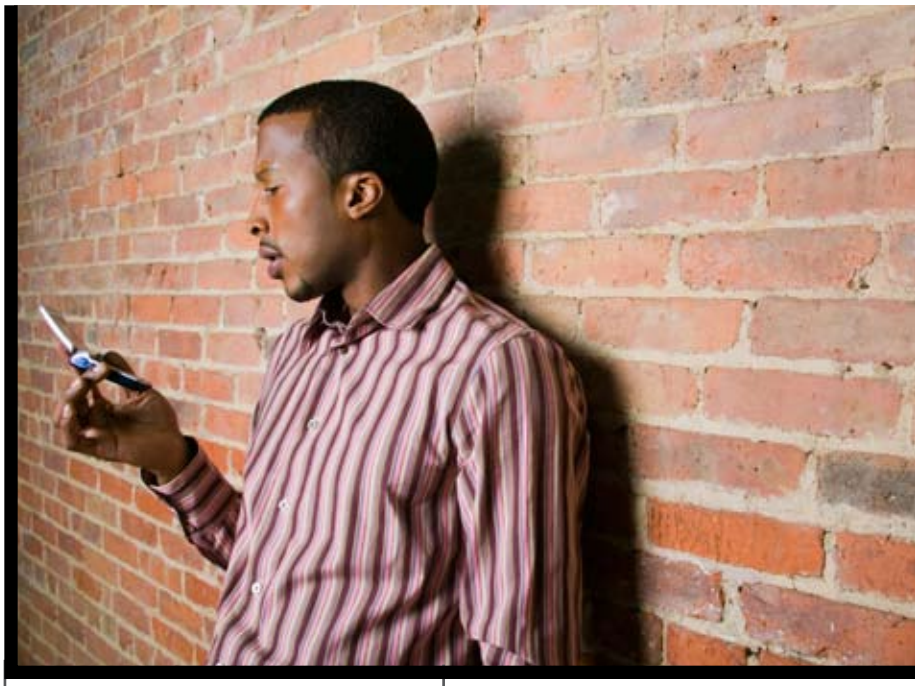
# We're here when you need us

Every year in the United States, more than 31,000 people take their own lives. That's one every 16 minutes. Fortunately, far more people survive the attempt than die. Nonetheless, nearly 425,000 who try to hurt or kill themselves end up in emergency rooms each year. Add to that the impact on family members when someone they care for tries to or does manage to take his or her life.

Sometimes, you may see warning signs in a friend or a loved one, who may talk or write about wanting to hurt or kill him or herself. Some people in crisis turn to alcohol or drugs, show rage or uncontrolled anger or act in a way that's reckless or risky.

Behind those feelings of deep sadness may be periods of depression or a family history of depression or other mental illness. Veterans returning from Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom are often diagnosed with depression as well as post-traumatic stress disorder.

If you or someone you love is at risk for suicide, it's important to get help. A national suicide prevention hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You'll also get special counseling and outpatient mental health services through a VA medical center or Vet Center. VH



## Help is a phone call away

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline has a new feature for veterans. If you, or someone you love, is at risk for suicide, call **1-800-273-TALK (8255)**, and **press 1**. Identifying yourself as a veteran will get you connected immediately to a VA suicide prevention and mental health professional. Your call is free and confidential.

## Danger!

If you—or someone you love—experiences four or more of these symptoms nearly every day for two or more weeks, it may be time to get help:

- feeling sad, hopeless or "empty"
- feeling unloved, worthless or guilty
- eating more or less than usual
- feeling very tired or run down or sleeping more or less than usual
- feeling restless or irritable
- being unable to concentrate, remember or make decisions
- thinking about hurting yourself or taking your own life

## Suicide Prevention Coordinators

**CHILLICOTHE**
Belinda (Jill) Carver
**740-773-1141**, ext. **6704**

**CINCINNATI**
Carol Jackson
**513-861-3100**, ext. **6900**

**CLEVELAND**
Donna Laughlin
**440-526-3030**, ext. **7815**

**COLUMBUS**
Bernard Williams
**614-257-5425**

**DAYTON**
Sandy Coleman
**937-268-6511**, ext. **5596**

## Call us

**Women Veterans Program Managers to assist you:**

**VAMC CINCINNATI**
Audricia Brooks, MSN, APRN, BC
**514-475-6570**

**VAMC CLEVELAND**
Katherine A. Cooper, PA-C
**216-791-3800, ext. 3724**

**VAOPC COLUMBUS**
Clary Garabis, RN, MSN, CDE
**614-257-5562**

**VAMC DAYTON**
Maritha J. Trass, PA-C
**937-268-6511, ext. 1907**

**VAMC CHILLICOTHE**
Contact here
**Phone #####**

**Military Sexual Trauma Counselors to assist you:**

**VAMC CLEVELAND**
Beverly Donovan, PhD
**440-526-3030, ext. 7847**

**VAMC CINCINNATI**
Holly Harris, PhD
**513-773-1141, ext. 7470**

**VAOPC COLUMBUS**
Louise Weller, PhD
**614-257-5331**

**VAMC DAYTON**
Charlotte Lynch, CNS
**937-268-6511, ext. 1818**

**VAMC CHILLICOTHE**
Robert Taylor, PhD
**740-773-1141, ext. 7470**

AN ARRAY OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES:

# For women only

## Treating military sexual trauma

Many veterans don't discuss experiencing military sexual trauma (MST), which includes acts such as sexual harassment, sexual assault, rape or other violent acts. Veterans who have experienced MST often don't seek counseling. Feelings of fear, anxiety, shame, anger and embarrassment can stop them from getting the help they need.

Additional problems that can occur after experiencing MST are:

- avoiding things that remind you of the incident
- isolating yourself
- depression or substance abuse
- nightmares about the incident
- relationship problems
- suicidal thoughts

Contacting a counselor and getting support are the first steps to getting past that traumatic experience and beginning the healing process. If you've experienced MST, call your nearest VA facility-designated Military Sexual Trauma Counselor. (See *Call Us.*)

Vet Centers are also available for support and counseling. To locate the center nearest you, call **1-800-827-1000**.

The significant role and contribution of women in our nation's defense can't be overstated. Seventeen percent of active duty deployed forces are female; by the year 2010, females are expected to represent more than 14 percent of the total veteran population.

Each VA facility has a women veterans program manager (WVPM) to help maintain VA's high standards and improve care. WVPMs also help guide veterans through the eligibility and services process and make sure eligible women veterans have access to health care.

## Highest quality services

VA strives to provide the highest quality services, improve patient satisfaction and care and increase the number of women veterans using screening services as women veterans' needs change. For example, Mobile Screening Mammography was started in 2003 at the Columbus VA Outpatient Clinic (VAOPC). It gives patients a convenient option and increases the number of women getting screened, since this service has been implemented at the Cleveland and Cincinnati VAMC, according to Clary Garabis, Lead Women Veterans Program Manager.

## What we can do for you

VA provides a wide range of health services to women veterans, including:

- breast exams and breast cancer screening
- cervical cancer screening (Pap smears)
- estrogen replacement therapy and menopause management
- reproductive health care, including fertility evaluation
- maternity care
- osteoporosis screening
- sexual trauma screening and counseling

In addition to these more gender-specific services, VA also offers primary care, patient education, counseling and treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder, mental health services and other health screening services.

This is just a small sampling of what VA offers to help you stay healthy. For more information, contact your local women veterans program manager. (See *Call Us.*) VH

## 7 helpful Web sites

1 **WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH STRATEGIC HEALTH CARE GROUP**
**www1.va.gov/wvhp**
Includes information about benefits, women's VA programs, tips on staying healthy and much more for women veterans nationwide.

2 **CENTER FOR WOMEN VETERANS**
**www1.va.gov/womenvet**
Features outreach to women veterans and comprehensive VA health information.

3 **MY HEALTHeVET**
**www.myhealth.va.gov**
Gateway to veterans' health benefits and services providing access to health information, links to federal and VA benefits and resources, and online VA prescription refills.

4 **SEAMLESS TRANSITION HOME**
**www.seamlesstransition.va.gov**
Benefits and services information for returning Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom veterans.

5 **DISABILITY RESOURCES, INC.**
**www.disabilityresources.org**
Operated by a nonprofit organization and established to promote awareness and improve availability of information for people with disabilities. The Women with Disabilities page (**www.disabilityresources.org/women.html**) offers additional Web-based resources.

6 **NATIONAL WOMEN'S HEALTH INFORMATION CENTER**
**www.4woman.gov**
Produced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, this site offers the most current information on women's health.

7 **MILITARY ONE SOURCE**
**www.militaryonesource.com**
Free information and referral service available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A virtual extension of existing community support resources for active duty, Guard and Reserve members and their immediate families.

# Inoculate— Don't wait until it's too late

If you've ever had chickenpox, a new surprise may await you later in life: shingles. Varicella zoster (VZV), the virus that causes chickenpox, remains inactive in your nerve roots. For most people, it stays that way. For others, however, it may activate and cause shingles when disease, stress or aging weakens your immune system. It doesn't appear again as chickenpox, but as VZV, or shingles.

As anyone who's had it will tell you, shingles is very painful. It occurs in stages, beginning with headache, fever, chills or sensitivity to light. It may feel like the flu. Later, you may feel itching, tingling or pain in a small area, followed days later by a rash, usually on one side of the face or body. This rash turns into clusters of blisters that can take two to four weeks to heal. Sometimes the blisters leave permanent scars. About one in every five people has pain that lasts long after the rash has gone. Shingles can lead to blindness, deafness, brain swelling, even death. Infections from shingles are rare.

You are at greater risk of developing shingles if you're over age 50, especially if you have a weakened immune system.

## An ounce of prevention

The good news is that there's a vaccine to help prevent shingles, and it's available to veterans who are patients at VA medical facilities. In fact, VA patients and researchers from across the country participated in studies that led to the vaccine gaining U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval in May 2006.

A single dose of the vaccine protects people from the shingles virus. However, the vaccine isn't suitable for everyone. It's typically given to people who are ages 60 and older and who have healthy immune systems. If you're being treated with certain kinds of steroids or radiation or chemotherapy for cancer, you shouldn't have the vaccine. That also applies if you have active, untreated tuberculosis or HIV/AIDS.

The most common side effects of the vaccine include pain, tenderness and swelling at the injection site, and they're usually mild and passing. VH

### Learn more!

For more information about the new shingles vaccine, contact your health care provider, VA medical center or call _____.

# Breaking the chains of domestic abuse

Anyone can be a victim of domestic violence by a family member or an intimate partner. It affects people of all ages and from all racial, ethnic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.

## Types of abuse

Physical abuse can be actual violence or just the threat of it and includes:

- hitting, shoving, punching, kicking or choking
- throwing or destroying things
- blocking you from leaving the room or house
- subjecting you to reckless driving
- threatening or hurting you with a weapon

Emotional abuse can involve actions or words, including:

- insulting, blaming or criticizing you
- name-calling or humiliating you in public
- accusing you of having affairs
- controlling all the money and making you account for every penny
- telling you what to do, where to go and whom you can see
- threatening or hurting your children

Sexual abuse can include acts, demands or insults, such as:

- unwanted touching or sexual comments
- calling you names like "slut" or "frigid"
- forcing you to have sex
- attacking your private body parts or hurting you during sex

## Deciding to leave

When you make the decision to leave, plan ahead and know:

- how and when can you most safely leave and where you'll go
- whom you can trust to tell that you're leaving
- how you'll travel safely to and from work or school or to pick up your children
- the phone number of the local shelter
- what custody and visitation provisions will keep you and your children safe
- if you need a restraining order or an order of protection
- if you're safe at work; tell your employer your situation, give Security a photo of your abuser and arrange an escort to your car, bus or train VH

## Call for help

If you're being abused, get help. Visit the National Domestic Violence Hotline at **www.ndvh.org,** the Family Violence Prevention Fund at **www.endabuse.org/resources/gethelp** or call **1-800-799-SAFE (7233)** or **1-800-787-3224 (TTY).** If you're in immediate danger, call **9-1-1.**

# Reaching us is easy

**Keep this information handy—when you need us, we'll be there.**

## Chillicothe VAMC
17273 State Route 104
Chillicothe, OH 45601
740-773-1141

### Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

**Athens**
510 West Union Street
Athens, OH 45701
740-593-7314

**Cambridge**
2145 Southgate
Cambridge, OH 43725
740-432-1963

**Lancaster**
1550 Sheridan Drive,
Suite 100
Colonnade Medical
Building
Lancaster, OH 43130
740-653-6145

**Marietta**
418 Colegate Drive
Marietta, OH 45750
740-568-0412

**Portsmouth**
621 Broadway Street
Portsmouth, OH 45662
740-353-3236

## Cincinnati VAMC
3200 Vine Street
Cincinnati, OH 45220
513-861-3100

### Ft. Thomas VA Campus
1000 So. Ft. Thomas Avenue
Ft. Thomas, KY 41075
859-572-6202

### Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

**Bellevue**
103 Landmark Drive
Bellevue, KY 41073
859-392-3840

**Clermont County**
Eastgate Professional
Office Park
4355 Ferguson Drive, Suite 270
Cincinnati, OH 45245
513-943-3680

**Hamilton**
1755 South Erie Highway
Hamilton, OH 45011
513-870-9444

**Dearborn County**
1600 Flossie Drive
Greendale IN 47025
812-539-2313

**Florence, KY**
7711 Ewing Boulevard
Florence, KY 41042
859-282-4480

## Louis Stokes Wade Park VAMC
10701 East Boulevard
Cleveland, OH 44106
216-791-3800

### Brecksville VA Medical Center
10000 Brecksville Road
Brecksville, OH 44141
440-526-3030

### Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

**Akron**
55 West Waterloo
Akron, OH 44319
330-724-7715

**Canton**
733 Market Avenue South
Canton, OH 44702
330-489-4600

**East Liverpool**
Ogilvie Square
15655 State Route 170
Calcutta, OH 43920
330-386-4303

**Lorain**
205 West 20th Street
Lorain, OH 44052
440-244-3833

**Mansfield**
1456 Park Avenue West
Mansfield, OH 44906
419-529-4602

**McCafferty**
4242 Lorain Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44113
216-939-0699

**New Philadelphia**
1260 Monroe Avenue, #15H
New Philadelphia, OH 44663
330-602-5339

**Painesville**
7 West Jackson Street
Painesville, OH 44077
440-357-6740

**Ravenna**
6751 North Chestnut Street
Ravenna, OH 44266
330-296-3641

**Sandusky**
3416 Columbus Avenue
Sandusky, OH 44870
419-625-7350

**Warren**
1977 Niles Road SE
Warren, OH 44485
330-392-0311

**Youngstown**
2031 Belmont Avenue
Youngstown, OH 44505
330-740-9200

## Chalmers P. Wylie Outpatient Clinic
543 Taylor Avenue
Columbus, OH 43203
614-257-5200

### Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

**Grove City**
1953 Ohio Avenue
Grove City, OH 43123
614-257-5800

**Marion**
1203 Delaware Avenue
Marion, OH 43302
740-223-8089

**Newark**
1912 Tamarack Road
Newark, OH 43055
740-788-8329

**Zanesville**
840 Bethesda Drive
Building 3A
Zanesville, OH 43701
740-453-7725

## Dayton VAMC
4100 West Third Street
Dayton, OH 45428
937-268-6511

### Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

**Lima**
1303 Bellefontaine Avenue
Lima, OH 45804
419-222-5788

**Middletown**
675 North University Boulevard
Middletown, OH 45042
513-423-8387

**Richmond**
4351 South A Street
Richmond, IN 47374
765-973-6915

**Springfield**
512 South Burnett Road
Springfield, OH 45505
937-328-3385

**Call Tele-Nurse at 1-888-838-6446. • Visit us online at www.visn10.va.gov.**

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