Know Your VA
New Patient Orientation

Battle Creek VA Medical Center
5500 Armstrong Road
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(269) 966-5600
www.battlecreek.va.gov

Healthy Living

We are committed to providing you the highest quality health care. We also want to help you take care of yourself. There has been a lot of research in recent years on the best ways to maintain health and well-being. The behaviors listed below are the ones that have the most impact on your health. We encourage you to make these behaviors part of your daily life.

For more information about these healthy living behaviors, check out the recommended websites, talk to your VA provider, and review the directory of VA health education programs and services in the next section. We'll be happy to help you.

Eat Healthy Foods

We all should eat a wide variety of foods to get the daily nutrients we need. The 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend these amounts each day:

- Up to 4 servings of fruits
- Up to 5 servings of vegetables
- Up to 3 cups of low-fat dairy products
- Up to 6 ounces of protein foods such as lean meats, poultry, and fish, or 1 cup of cooked beans
- Up to 6 servings of whole grain breads and cold cereals, or 3 cups of cooked rice, pasta, or cereal
- Up to 3 tablespoons of oils, salad dressing, or margarine.

For more information about healthy eating, go to these websites:

2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans
http://www.health.gov/DietaryGuidelines/

My Health**e**Vet Healthy Living Centers http://www.myhealth.va.gov.

Maintain Healthy Weight

To find the weight range that is right for you, check your Body Mass Index (BMI). It measures body fat based on your height and weight. Go to the BMI calculator from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/.

To stay at a healthy weight, balance calories from what you eat and drink with calories you burn off by your activities. To prevent gradual weight gain over time, make small decreases in food and beverage calories and increase physical activity.

For more information about weight management, go to:

VA ***MOVE!*** program website http://www.move.va.gov/

My Health***e***Vet website http://www.myhealth.va.gov

Be Physically Active

Pick an activity that's easy to fit into your life. Do at least 10 minutes of physical activity at a time. Choose **aerobic** activities that work for you. These make your heart beat faster and can make your heart, lungs, and blood vessels stronger and more fit. Also do **strengthening** activities which make your muscles do more work than usual.

It is up to you, but it is better to spread your activity throughout the week. And remember, some physical activity is better than none!

Slowly build up the amount of time you spend doing physical activities. The more time you spend, the more health benefits you gain. If you are not physically active now, start small and work up to 30 minutes of moderate physical activity at least 5 days a week. Walking briskly, mowing the lawn, dancing, swimming, and bicycling are just a few examples of moderate aerobic activities.

Do muscle strengthening activities at least 2 days a week. Include all the major muscle groups—legs, hips, back, chest, stomach, shoulders, and arms.

For more information, go to the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans at http://www.health.gov/PAGuidelines/

Don't Use Tobacco Products

Smoking and other tobacco products can increase your risk of cancer, heart disease, and other health problems. All adults should avoid tobacco products. If you smoke, talk to your doctor about quitting. If you are pregnant and smoke, quitting now will help you and your baby. Your doctor or nurse can help you, and you can also help yourself.

For tips on how to quit, go to: You Can Quit Smoking Now. http://www.smokefree.gov.

To talk to someone about how to quit, call the National Quitline: 1-800-QUITNOW.

For more quit-smoking resources, go to: http://www.healthfinder.gov/, and search for "smoking."

If you would like information about VA programs to help you quit smoking, please contact

TTS Tobacco Treatment Services
Battle Creek VA Medical Center

269-223-5357

Drink Alcohol in Moderation

Adults should drink alcohol moderately, if at all. For men, this means no more than 2 drinks a day. For women, this means no more than 1 drink a day. A standard drink is one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits. If you are pregnant, do not drink any alcohol.

Get Recommended Preventive Services

Talk to your provider about the preventive services you should have. The recommendations are based on your age and health status. They include immunizations and screening tests for potential health problems.

You can find a list of the recommended services for men and women at these websites:

Men: Stay Healthy at Any Age http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthymen.html

Women: Stay Healthy at Any Age http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthywom.html.

Build a Support Network of Family and Friends

People who have strong ties to family and friends have higher levels of well-being than those without such support. These networks give you many benefits:

- a feeling of connection to other people
- the knowledge that other people consider you a friend
- the security of knowing you can help others and they will help you.

There are many resources to help you build a support network for yourself. Try this website: http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/social-support/.

Learn to Manage Stress

Most people have some stress in their lives. It's important to learn how to manage the stress in your life because stress contributes to your risk for health problems. You may not be able to remove stress from your life, but you can learn what stresses you and how to take care of yourself during periods of stress.

VA also has excellent programs to help you manage post-traumatic stress disorder. Talk to your provider about your concerns, and learn about the many ways VA can help you manage stress in your life.

Call the PTSD Program at the
(269) 966-5600 ext. 31173

Many VA facilities have health education programs and services to help you make healthy behaviors part of your daily life. Check out the directory of VA health education programs and services in the next section to see what's available for you.