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STEAM

VA Strategies to Educate and Address Menopause

Newsletter



MyHealthVet to Enable And Negotiate for Shared Decision Making

Miami VA
Healthcare System
★★★★★

July 2015

Stressed OUT!

Your Stress Symptom Checklist

Emotions

- Moody
- Irritable
- Fidgety
- Depressed
- Feeling lonely
- Feeling overwhelmed

Mind

- Memory problems
- Inability to concentrate
- Poor judgment
- Pessimism
- Anxiety
- Constant worrying

Body

- Body aches and pains
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Nausea or dizziness
- Chest pain, racing heart
- Loss of sex drive
- Frequent colds
- Muscle tension
- Lack of energy
- Headache

Behavioral Signs

- Over or under eating
- Over or under sleeping
- Neglecting responsibilities
- Misuse of alcohol or drugs
- Nervous nail biting, teeth grinding or pacing
- Avoid socializing
- Withdrawing from family and friends

There are 1.3 million women who reach menopausal in the United States every year. Menopause may be difficult for some, but others may not feel any symptoms. Adding stress at home or at work into this mix can make even those who don't have symptoms feel overwhelmed.

So what is stress?

Stress is a feeling you get when you are faced with an obstacle you think you cannot overcome, or a problem you don't have the time to work on. You could have too many tasks to finish at work, or to care for a sick parent while working full-time. Stress is not necessarily bad. It can be good for you in small doses because it makes you more alert and gives you bursts of energy. However, feeling stressed for long periods of time can affect you physically and mentally and make you more likely to develop long term health problems.

Can stress affect my health?

Our bodies deal with stress by releasing stress hormones which can lead to high blood pressure, fast heart rate, and high blood sugar levels. Long-term stress can lead to:

- Depression and anxiety

- Obesity
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- Abnormal heart beats
- Menstrual problems
- Acne and other skin problems

Common causes of stress

- Death of a spouse
- Death of a close family member
- Divorce
- Losing your job
- Major personal illness or injury
- Marital separation
- Marriage
- Pregnancy
- Retirement
- Spending time in jail
- Money problems

Natural ways to cope with stress

- Exercise and eat healthy
- Meditation and mindfulness exercises
- A hobby where you can focus your mind and de-stress.
- A strong support system; people you feel comfortable speaking honestly and openly about what is on your mind.
- If you cannot handle your stress on your own please talk to your PACT team about a therapist referral.

All information from this issue can be found at:

www.womenshealth.gov

For more information on menopause and women's issues please visit our websites at:

steam.varesearchfoundation.com

OR

www.miami.va.gov/menopause

Tips to Lower Your Stress

There are ways to help you channel stress in a positive way. Here are tips to keep it in check:

- **Make a list of all your stressors.** Decide which can be solved soon and which will take longer. Start solving the smallest problems on the list now. For the harder ones, look at them calmly and think of ways to resolve them. Pick the best solutions and put the ideas into action. Solving small problems one by one will make you more confident about solving the big ones.
- **Give in sometimes.** It is not always worth the stress to fight. Meeting people halfway or allowing them to do things their way at times may ease stress for everyone.
- **To-Do Lists.** Having a to-do list is a great way to alleviate stress. Being able to scratch off an item on the list gives a great deal of satisfaction. List more important tasks on top and remember, not everything needs to get done that day.
- **Set limits.** You can't do everything for everyone. Decide where to draw the line with work, family, and social life. Don't be afraid to say no if it takes time away from family or yourself.
- When you start to feel stressed, stop and **take deep breaths**. Just doing this one quick exercise makes you breathe slower and helps your muscles relax.
- **Stretching** helps relax your muscles. **Massaging** the muscles in your upper back and neck relieves muscle tension.
- **Enjoy life!** We all have things we want to do yet never get around to. Do them!
- Getting enough **sleep** every day helps you recover from stress, improves memory, and keeps you alert all day. Try to get between 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night.
- Don't deal with stress in **unhealthy ways** (drinking too much alcohol, smoking, or overeating)
- **Volunteer.** Helping in your community allows you to make friends and gives you joy from knowing you helped a good cause.

VA Links

www.myhealth.va.gov

This is the link to the My HealthVet page. There you can learn all the ways it can help you stay connected to your healthcare team, how to enroll, reorder medications, etc. Once enrolled in the My HealthVet you can participate in our MEANS program.

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Dr. Luis Rivera, MD



his specialty in OB/GYN from University of Puerto Rico.

Dr. Luis Rivera received his bachelor's degree and US Army ROTC Commission as 2nd Lieutenant from Kansas State University in 1983. He then spent 4 years as active with the US Army in Europe as a Chemical Officer in the Infantry Division. Dr. Rivera then transferred to the US Reserve Medical Corps with multiple active duty tours. He remained in Europe where he graduated from medical school at University of Salamanca in Spain. He obtained

Dr. Rivera is currently a Colonel in the US Army Reserve with 32 years (combined active and Reserve) experience at different US Army Hospitals including a deployment to Iraq during OEF/OIF. He has been practicing OB/GYN for 15 years with the federal government and continues to deliver babies at US Army Hospitals every month during weekend Drills. Dr. Rivera provides GYN services at the Miami VA Medical Center to include contraception counseling, subdermal contraceptive implants, intrauterine device, colposcopy for abnormal pap smear, laparoscopic and major GYN surgeries. Dr. Rivera feels it is an honor to serve in the US Army and he is very proud to be part of the Miami VA Medical Center.