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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  
★★★★★

## September 2015

## Exercise and Fitness

### Why is physical activity so important?

Regular exercise and physical activity are essential for our physical and mental health. Being physically active can keep you doing the things you love and help you stay independent as you get older. Over long periods of time it can produce long-term health benefits by lowering your risk of developing some diseases and disabilities that affect people as they age. Exercise helps treating heart disease, arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, balance problems and trouble walking.

### What is the Difference Between Physical Activity and Exercise?

Both terms mean physical movements you do that burn calories. Physical activities are actions that get your body moving. Examples are gardening, walking your dog and taking the stairs instead of the elevator. Exercise is a form of physical activity that is planned and repeated like weight training, tai chi or swimming.

There are so many ways to be active every day. Find something you love to do, make it part of your routine, and try to increase how much you do over time.

### Physical activity lowers risk of:

- Heart disease
- Stroke
- High blood pressure
- Bad cholesterol levels
- Type 2 diabetes
- Metabolic syndrome
- Lung and colon cancer
- Breast and endometrial cancer
  - Falls
  - Depression
  - Fractures

All information for this newsletter can be found at:

[www.womenshealth.gov](http://www.womenshealth.gov) and  
[www.nia.nih.gov](http://www.nia.nih.gov)

### TYPES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

#### Endurance

Endurance (aerobic) exercise makes your breathing and heart rate go faster, keeps you healthy, improves fitness and helps you with daily tasks that use large muscles (arms, legs, and hips). It improves heart and lung health. Aerobic exercise can delay or avoid diseases like diabetes, colon and breast cancer, and heart disease.

Exercise that build endurance include:

- Brisk walking
- Swimming
- Yard work
- Biking
- Dancing
- Climbing stairs
- Jogging
- Playing basketball

#### Balance

Balance exercises help prevent falls which occur frequently as we age and can lead to fractures. Lower-body strength exercises can also improve your balance.

Balance exercises include:

- Standing on one foot
- Walking heel-to-toe
- Tai Chi
- Yoga

#### Strength training

Strength training increases the strength of your muscles. Do these exercises at least twice a week by doing 8 to 10 different activities that use various muscle groups (abs, chest, arms, and legs). Repeat each activity 8 to 12 times. Slowly increase the resistance or weight over time. Allow a day to rest between sessions to avoid hurting your muscles and joints.

Examples of these exercises are:

- Weight machines
- Push-ups
- Free weights
- Sit-ups
- Resistance bands

#### Flexibility/Stretching

Stretching improves your flexibility and allows you to move more easily. Do stretching exercises after your muscles are warmed up in order to avoid injury.

Stretching can help your body stay flexible. This will let you move more freely during regular physical activity and during everyday activities.

To increase your flexibility, try:

- Shoulder and upper arm stretch
- Calf stretch
- Yoga

The **INTENSITY** of your workout is the level of effort you put in your workout or how much you are pushing yourself.

#### Low intensity

You can easily hold a conversation while you exercise.

#### Moderate intensity

Increase in your heart rate, but you can still talk comfortably while you exercise.

#### Vigorous intensity

Your heart rate is very fast, you are breathing so hard that it is difficult to talk.

For more information on hormone therapies and menopause please visit our websites at:

[www.menopause.varesearchfoundation.com](http://www.menopause.varesearchfoundation.com)

[www.miami.va.gov/menopause](http://www.miami.va.gov/menopause)

## Goal Planning

- Identify Your Goals

Most people find that having a set goal in mind helps them get motivated to be active. Plan both short- and long-term goals. Your success depends on setting goals that are specific, realistic and that really matter to you.

Write down your short-term goals and then your long-term goals. Decide where you want to be in 6 or 12 months. Long-term goals also should be realistic, personal and important to you. Write them down, put them where you can see them, and look over them often.

- Write Down a Plan to Add Exercise and Physical Activity to Your Life

Writing an exercise and physical activity plan helps you keep your promise to be active. Involve another person to help you keep your commitment. Start with realistic activities based on how physically active you are now. When it comes to motivation, the first few months are critical. If you can pick physical activities you enjoy, it is likely that you will be able to make exercise and physical activity a regular part of your routine. Go over your plan often and update your plan and long-term goals so that you can build on your success.

- How Am I Doing?

If you exercise regularly, you will quickly be able to tell when it is time to push yourself to do more. For example, when you can lift a weight easily more than 10 times then it is time to add more weight in your strength exercises. If your endurance exercise stops feeling challenging, it is time to exercise a little longer, or make it a little more difficult, such as walking faster. Test yourself. Once you start exercising, progress can happen quickly. Being aware of your progress will encourage you to do more and let you know if you need to update your goals (such as walking farther or lifting heavier weights). Everyone is different: some people progress with time; for others, it is right for their age and ability level to reach and then maintain a certain level of activity.

- One last tip: Don't forget to congratulate yourself for becoming active!

## VA Links

[www.myhealth.va.gov](http://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.*

### GO TO WEBSITE FOR SPECIFIC EXERCISES FOR GOOD POSTURE

[www.menopause.varesearchfoundation.com](http://www.menopause.varesearchfoundation.com)

[www.miami.va.gov/menopause](http://www.miami.va.gov/menopause)

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## WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

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



As of August 1<sup>st</sup>, the Miami VHAS has a new provider dedicated exclusively to women's health



**Dr. Joslyn Wiley**

Dr. Joslyn Wiley offers primary care services to women Veterans at our Women's Health clinic at the Bruce W. Carter Medical Center

For appointments, call 305-575-7000, extension 7001