

Veterans' Health Today

SUMMER 2007

**HealthierUS
Veterans**

Fighting Fat

**Pick up the Pace
with a Pedometer**

**Know Your Meds
Stay Healthy!**

**VA DESERT PACIFIC
HEALTHCARE NETWORK**



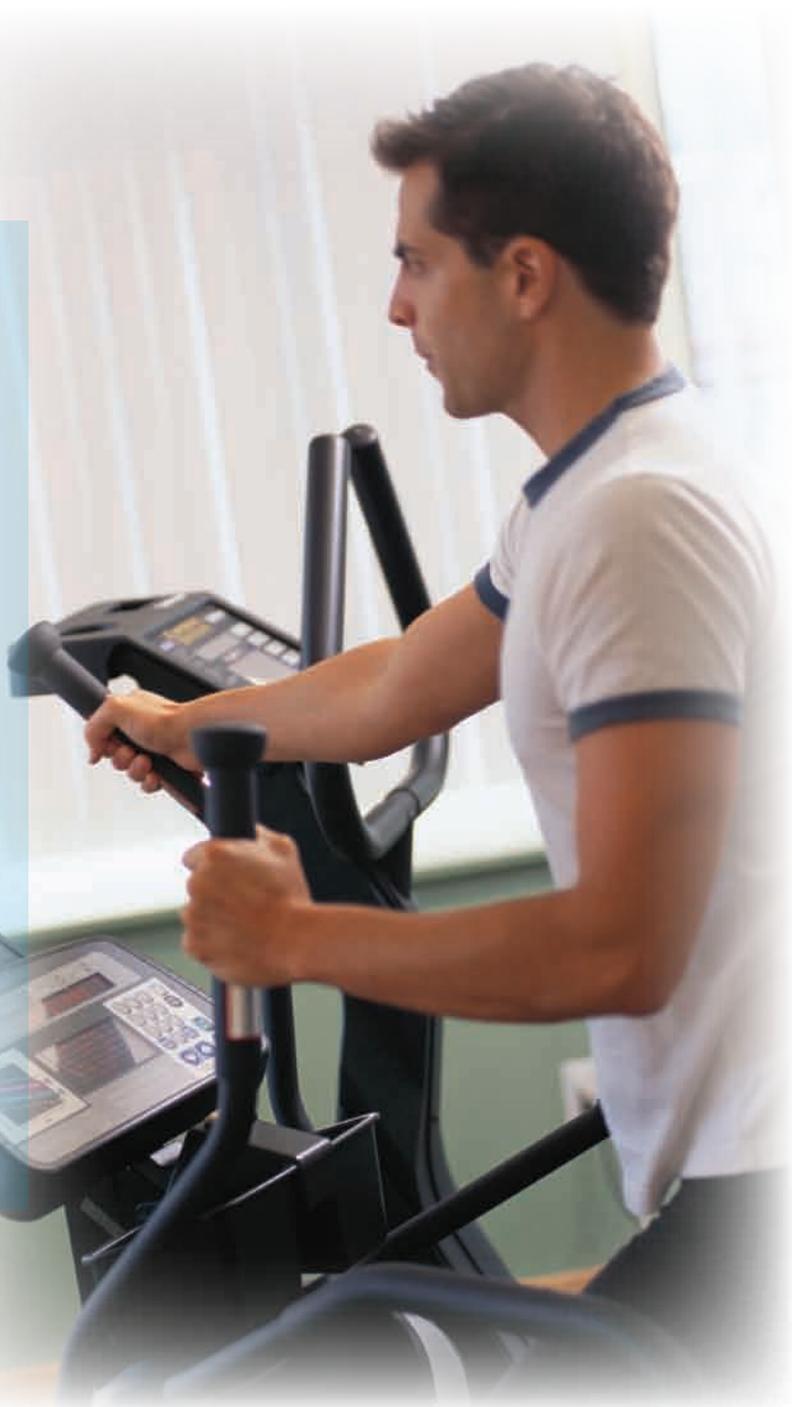
HealthierUS Veterans

the start to a healthier you!

HealthierUS Veterans (HUSV) is a joint effort between the Department of Veterans Affairs and the Department of Health and Human Services. The focus of this initiative is to educate veterans, family members, and surrounding communities about the health risks of obesity and diabetes. It is designed to help you improve your own health by making healthier food choices and being more active.

The HealthierUS Veterans website provides many tools online that will help you start down the path to a healthier you! You can find information and activities related to nutrition, fitness, diabetes, obesity, and other topics. Please visit www.healthierusveterans.va.gov to learn more about HealthierUS Veterans and your own health!

Another part of this program is the President's Challenge. This is a friendly competition and tool that helps you track your daily activities. It encourages you to make activity a part of your everyday life. All activity and fitness levels are welcome to join (along with family members, co-workers, and friends). Please visit www.presidentschallenge.org to register.



Eat Healthy • Be Active • Get Fit For Life

Pick up the Pace with a Pedometer

Do you exercise without realizing it? We all do because each step we take – mowing the grass, putting away laundry and taking out the dog – burns calories! Walking is an excellent, easy, workout, which is why many healthcare experts say that we should take at least 6,000 steps each day. That sounds like a lot, but one little gadget makes it much more fun.

A *pedometer* is a small device (about the size of a pager) that “senses” your

body movement and counts your steps. Wearing it is a great motivator because you can continually strive to walk more steps than the day before, with or without a formal walking routine.

Pedometers cost from \$3 to more than \$300 based on features. At a minimum, they show the number of steps you’ve taken. Depending on the model, however, some have timers, pulse rate monitors, calorie trackers, panic buttons, radios, and other additional features. Don’t be fooled by prices or promises, however. Some pedometers actually showed a 50 percent margin of error when tested, others didn’t start counting until

Basic Pedometer Requirements:

- ✓ Easy to read
- ✓ Fastens securely
- ✓ Comfortable to wear
- ✓ Easy to use

the fifth step, and batteries were hard to replace in others.

How should you choose? Well, all you really need is a simple step counter that keeps track of how many steps you walk each day. Beyond that, ask pedometer owners what they like and dislike about their unit or look online for customer reviews at sites like www.pedometers.com.

Using a pedometer is a fun way to jazz up your exercise routine or keep track of the exercise you already do each day without even knowing it!

- ✓ 12,000-15,000 steps a day for successful, sustained weight loss
- ✓ 10,000 steps a day for long-term health and reduced health risk
- ✓ 3,000 fast steps daily for aerobic fitness



Fighting Fat:

Loosening Your Belt is Not Enough

Most of us know when we are putting on weight. We feel it in our pant-size and energy level, and we see it when we look in the mirror. The problem is, our weight gain is so slow that we tend to think, “It’s not too bad,” and we simply loosen our belts.

Medical experts use more accurate methods for measuring our weight, and the results can be surprising! What tools do they use and what do these tools tell?

- ▶ **BMI** (body mass index) measures your weight against your height. BMI charts aren’t perfect, but they are a good first step for assessing your overall risk of health problems due to weight.



- ▶ **Waist circumference** is a measure of your stomach fat. In general, a waist measurement of more than 40 inches in men and 35 inches in women represents an increased risk of developing serious illnesses.

Your BMI and waist circumference, especially when used along with other risk factors like lifestyle and family history, help determine your likelihood for developing diseases such as type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, heart disease, stroke and certain cancers.

Using the chart below, a BMI of 25 through 29 means you are overweight, and a BMI over 30 means you are obese. If you fall into either category, follow up with your VA health care provider, who can help you get your BMI into a healthier range. Often, a weight loss of just 10 percent helps lower your risk of other health problems!

Calculate Your BMI

$$\frac{\text{weight in pounds}}{(\text{height} \times \text{height})} \times 703 = \text{BMI}$$

1. Multiply your height in inches by your height in inches.
2. Divide your weight in pounds by the answer to #1.
3. Multiply the answer to #2 by 703.

Example: If you are 5’ 8” (68”) tall, you would multiply 68 x 68, which equals 4,624. If you weigh 150 pounds, you would divide 150 by 4,624, which equals 0.032. Then you would multiply 0.032 x 703, which would give you a BMI of 22.5. This falls in the normal weight range.

- 18.5 or less = Underweight
- 18.5 to 24.99 = Normal Weight
- 25 to 29.99 = Overweight
- 30 to 39.99 = Obesity
- 40 or greater = Morbid Obesity

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Easy Ways to Cut

Calories



Losing weight seems easy for some people. It can be relatively simple for you too, if you think creatively about ways to cook and eat differently. Simply trimming a few calories here and there throughout your day can keep you satisfied while helping you reach your weight loss goals.

BREAKFAST

1. Skip the butter on your toast and use 1 tablespoon of all-fruit jam instead.
2. Poach eggs rather than frying them.
3. Love cream in your coffee? Use evaporated nonfat milk instead of half-and-half or a similar creamer.

SNACKS

4. Snack on unsweetened applesauce rather than sweetened.
5. Switch to sugar-free chewing gum.
6. Rather than give up soda, switch to diet soda instead.
7. Don't give up peanut butter; simply use half the normal amount.
8. Snack on dried fruit rather than candy.
9. To satisfy a sweet tooth, eat 1/2 cup of fruit cocktail canned in water instead of heavy syrup.
10. Using a blender, make your own smoothies using low-fat milk and fresh fruit.

LUNCH/DINNER

11. Gradually replace whole milk with nonfat milk by mixing the two until you eventually wean yourself from whole milk.
12. On grilled kabobs, replace some of your meat chunks with fresh whole mushrooms.
13. Exchange baloney sandwiches for lean turkey.
14. Steam fresh asparagus or broccoli and skip the cheese sauce.
15. Don't skip dessert, but cut your serving in half. Give up ice cream in favor of nonfat frozen yogurt.
16. Replace fried chicken with roasted chicken.
17. Use fat-free sour cream, instead of regular sour cream, on baked potatoes or in dips or desserts.

18. Oven-baked potato chips are a great alternative to regular potato chips. When eating a hamburger, oven-baked fries are always a better choice than deep-fried fries.
19. Quit "tasting" while cooking! Those little bites can add up to big calories!
20. Enjoy grilled seafood rather than breaded and fried.



Know Your Meds—Stay Healthy!

Tips for Avoiding Medication Mistakes

Taking prescribed medicine incorrectly can lead to hospitalization or even death. To prevent medication errors and help you understand what you are taking, your VA health care provider will now ask you about all your medications. This keeps your provider from prescribing a duplicate or conflicting drug, and keeps you aware of the medications you are taking and their purposes.

Here are some things *you* can do to help decrease the chance of medication mistakes:

- ✓ Make a complete list of all of the medications, over-the-counter drugs, and supplements (including vitamins and herbs) you take and carry it with you. You can't count on the pill size or color to identify the medication, as these can change. Be sure to bring the list to every appointment and have it available during trips to the emergency room. You can also keep track of (and refill) your medications online through VA's My Health_{Vet} Web site at www.myhealth.va.gov.
- ✓ Anytime a new medication is prescribed, be sure to add it to your list.
- ✓ Write down any allergies or bad reactions you've had to past medicines and share this information with your VA provider.
- ✓ Always ask questions. Make sure you understand what is being prescribed to you, what the medication is supposed to do for you, and what side effects there might be.
- ✓ Develop a system for taking your meds, such as using a days-of-the-week pillbox.

- ✓ Don't keep old medications. If you didn't finish the medicine, or if your medication was changed, throw away the unused portion!
- ✓ Don't mix pills in the same bottle. It's easy to get medications confused or to forget how to take them when they are out of their labeled containers.

Remember, if at anytime you're confused or concerned about a medication you are taking, don't be afraid to ask your VA provider, nurse, or pharmacist, or call our 24-hour Nurse Advice line at 877-252-4866.



Eight **EZ** Weight Loss Tips

If you're waiting for a magic pill or a miracle treatment to help you lose weight, you're in for a let down. "Slow and steady" is still the only safe way to drop pounds, but there *are* simple lifestyle changes that can help jumpstart your efforts toward a longer, healthier life.

1. Set realistic short-term goals, such as losing one or two pounds per week. It may not sound like much, but that is four to eight pounds per month!
2. Only weigh yourself once each week, but keep a **daily** diary of your exercise and eating habits. If your notes show unhealthy patterns (eating when you are stressed or bored), try using a different response to those moments such as taking a walk, counting to 100 or reading.
3. Reward yourself for little victories with something other than food (a massage, tickets to a sporting event, etc.).
4. Enjoy friends and family in non-food settings. Rather than meet for lunch or dinner, for example, take them dancing, hiking, walking or golfing.
5. Change your meal routine. Use a smaller plate so helpings look larger, and eat more slowly so your brain has time to "sense" that you are full.
6. Place "sticky notes" with uplifting sayings in places you see often as a reminder that your efforts are a positive experience. *I have much more energy now. My knees don't hurt as much now. I am setting a good example for my children and grandchildren.*
7. Sneak in extra steps wherever possible. Park farther from the supermarket door, or walk your pet five minutes longer than usual. Take the stairs instead of the elevator at work, or spend part of your lunch hour walking briskly around the block several times.
8. Do your own yard work (mowing, raking leaves, etc) and housework rather than hiring someone to do it.



VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network Vet Centers

Anaheim Vet Center

859 South Harbor Boulevard
Anaheim, CA 92805-5157
714-776-0161

Corona Vet Center

800 Magnolia Ave., Suite 110
Corona, CA 92879-3123
951-734-0525

East Los Angeles Vet Center

5400 E. Olympic Boulevard
Suite 150
Commerce, CA 90022-5147
323-728-9966

Las Vegas Vet Center

1919 S. Jones Blvd., Suite A
Las Vegas, NV 89146
702-251-7873

Los Angeles Vet Center

1045 W. Redondo Beach Boulevard
Suite 150
Gardena, CA 90247-4129
310-767-1221

San Bernardino Vet Center

155 W. Hospitality Lane, Suite 140
San Bernardino, CA 92408-3305
909-890-0797

San Diego Vet Center

2900 Sixth Avenue
San Diego, CA 92103-1003
619-294-2040

San Marcos Vet Center

1 Civic Center Drive, Suite 140
San Marcos, CA 92069
760-744-6914

Sepulveda Vet Center

9737 Haskell Avenue
Sepulveda, CA 91343-1618
818-892-9227

Ventura Vet Center

790 E. Santa Clara, Suite 100
Ventura, CA 93001-2964
805-585-1860

West Los Angeles Vet Center

5730 Uplander Way, Suite 100
Culver City, CA 90230-6615
310-641-0326

REACHING US IS EASY

★ VA Medical Centers

VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System
P.O. Box 360001
Las Vegas, NV 89036
702-636-3000

Mike O'Callaghan Federal Hospital
4700 Las Vegas Boulevard North
Las Vegas, NV 89191
702-653-2215

VA Loma Linda Healthcare System
11201 Benton Street
Loma Linda, CA 92357
909-825-7084

VA Long Beach Healthcare System
5901 East 7th Street
Long Beach, CA 90822
562-826-8000

VA San Diego Healthcare System
3350 La Jolla Village Drive
San Diego, CA 92161
858-552-8585

VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System
11301 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90073
310-478-3711

▲ Community Clinics

Anaheim
1801 W. Romneya Drive
3rd Floor, Suite 303
Anaheim, CA 92801
714-780-5400

Antelope Valley
547 W. Lancaster Blvd.
Lancaster, CA 93534
661-729-8655

Bakersfield
1801 Westwind Drive
Bakersfield, CA 93301
661-632-1800

Cabrillo
2001 River Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90810
562-826-8414



Symbol Key

- ★ VA Medical Centers
- ▲ Community-Based Outpatient Clinics

Chula Vista
835 3rd Avenue
Chula Vista, CA 91910
619-409-1600

Corona
800 Magnolia Avenue #101
Corona, CA 92879
951-817-8820

East Los Angeles
5400 E. Olympic Boulevard #150
City of Commerce, CA 90040
323-725-7557

Escondido
815 East Pennsylvania Avenue
Escondido, CA 92025
760-466-7020

Gardena
1251 Redondo Beach Boulevard
3rd Floor
Gardena, CA 90247
310-851-4705

Henderson
2920 Green Valley Parkway,
Suite 215
Henderson, NV 89014
702-456-3825

Imperial Valley
528 G Street
Brawley, CA 92227
760-344-9085

Las Vegas - Homeless Veterans
912 West Owens Avenue
Las Vegas, NV 89106
702-636-4077

Lompoc
338 S. Dakota Avenue, Bldg. 13850
Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437
805-605-2120

Los Angeles
351 E. Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
213-253-2677

Mission Valley
8810 Rio San Diego Drive
San Diego, CA 92108
619-400-5000

Oxnard
250 W. Citrus Grove Avenue
Suite 140
Oxnard, CA 93030
805-983-6384

Palm Desert
41865 Boardwalk, Suite 103
Palm Desert, CA 92211
760-341-5570

Pahrump
2100 E. Calvada Boulevard
Pahrump, NV 89048
775-727-7535

Pasadena
420 W. Las Tunas Drive
San Gabriel, CA 91776
626-289-5973

San Luis Obispo
1288 Morro St., #200
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
805-543-1233

Santa Ana
Bristol Medical Center
2740 S. Bristol Street
1st Floor, Suite 110
Santa Ana, CA 92704
714-825-3500

Santa Barbara
4440 Calle Real
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
805-683-1491

Sepulveda
16111 Plummer Street
Sepulveda, CA 91343
818-891-7711

South Los Angeles
3737 E. Martin Luther King Jr.
Blvd., Suite 515
Lynwood, CA 90262
310-537-6825

Sun City
28125 Bradley Road
Suite 130
Sun City, CA 92586
951-672-1931

Upland
1238 E. Arrow Highway,
No. 100
Upland, CA 91786
909-946-5348

Victorville
12138 Industrial Boulevard
Suite 120
Victorville, CA 92392
760-951-2599

Vista
1840 West Drive
Vista, CA 92083
760-643-2000

Whittier/Santa Fe Springs
10210 Orr and Day Road
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
562-864-5565

Our web address has changed to www.desertpacific.va.gov.
We hope you'll visit us soon!

Veterans' Health Today
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This publication is provided as a service to enrolled veterans in So. California and So. Nevada.
Additional copies can be found at www.desertpacific.va.gov/publicaffairs.htm
Address changes should be sent to your local VA medical center.

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