

HEALTH BEAT

A health and wellness newsletter published by the VA Medical Center Huntington

June 2009

June is Time to Celebrate “Rebuild Your Life” Month

by *Chuck Weinberg, Local Recovery Coordinator*

The physical and emotional stressors our Veterans have to deal with affect them every day, inserting pain and difficult obstacles in their lives. Some feel stuck in what never seems to change, others overwhelmed with things here today and gone tomorrow. Many may wonder how to survive and get through?

With a traumatic past and an uncertain future, it is hard to navigate the moment. A moment is needed, a moment to breathe, an instant to try to slow it all down. Maybe a second breath, and if it

helps, a third and a fourth slow deep breath, eyes closed, letting go of all those worries and all that pain, even if only for a few seconds.

When taking a time-out, it is possible that when eyes are reopened things may be seen just a little differently, a possible opening to a new road. Or by taking time out to refuel and regroup, diving back in better equipped may increase chances of some success.



Stigma, pride and guilt may get in the way of seeking help, but most cannot solve these problems alone. Most need some support.

**Continued on Pg. 2
See Rebuild Life**

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Aphasia Affects More Than A Million Americans.....pg. 3

When Rain Comes Falling Downpg. 4

Tips for Dealing with Natural Disasterpg. 5

Don't Let Osteoporosis Slow You Down.....pg. 6

Diet and Exercise Helps Prevent Heart Disease & Diabetes ...pg. 7

9/11 GI Bill is an Extensive Education Programpg. 8

Eligibility Changes for Priority Group 8 Veterans Take Effect in June

Veterans should be aware of proposed changes that will expand eligibility to allow certain Priority Group 8 Veterans to enroll for VA health care services.

Effective in June 2009, these Veterans will qualify for VA health care if their household income does not exceed the current VA income thresholds by more than 10 percent.

An Enrollment Calculator is available on the VA Web site at www.va.gov to help Veterans determine their potential eligibility

for VA health care services under the proposed regulation.

Questions regarding the upcoming Priority Group 8 changes may be directed to the VAMC Huntington's Eligibility Unit at 304 -429-6755, or toll free at 1-800-827-8244, extensions 2496, 3459 or 2490.

These offices can also provide assistance with any entitlement questions regarding medical benefits that may be available.

Important Numbers

If you have an emergency please dial 911 or your local emergency number.

If you are feeling unsafe or having thoughts of hurting yourself please call 1-800-273-TALK(8255).

Huntington VA Medical Center (HVAMC)	
Toll Free	800-827-8244
Local	304-429-6755
Charleston Outpatient Clinic	304-926-6001
Prestonsburg Outpatient Clinic	606-886-1970
Logan Outpatient Clinic	304-752-8355
Williamson Outpatient Clinic	304-235-2187
Huntington Vet Center	304-523-8387
Charleston Vet Center	304-343-3825
VA Regional Office	800-827-1000

Important Extensions for VA Medical Center Huntington

Appointments - Cancel or Check	2311
Audiology	7116
Billing	2440
Care Coordination	3262
DAV	2979
Dental	7117
Eligibility	2540
Fee Basis	2556
Help Desk/Enrollment	3451
Medical Specialty	7121
Mental Health	7112
MICU	2190
MOVE! Program	2351
Nutrition & Food Service	2351
Optometry (eye)	7115
Pharmacy	7120
Phone Unit	7121
Physical Therapy/Rehab Medicine	7118
Prescriptions - Order or Check	2311
Primary Care (Blue/Green Team)	7121
Prosthetics	2709
Radiology	2749
Release of Information	3152
Same Day Surgery	2862
Social Work	2837
Surgery	7121
Volunteer Services	3685
4-South	2130
5-South	2170

Rebuild Life Continued from Pg. 1

Whether it is courageously sharing with family, friends or clergy, or seeking professional help, unknown resources may be found, including others in similar straits. Offering help to someone else may provide purpose and perspective.

Then huge, seemingly insurmountable issues can be broken down into smaller pieces, allowing the taking of realistic steps over time in the right direction. A magic instantaneous cure is unlikely with big problems that have taken hold and won't let go. But if something new is learned today, and an attitude, feeling, or thought changes, then things have started to get better RIGHT NOW.

It is never easy, and definitely easier said than done. Only people with similar experiences can really know what it is like. But it CAN be done. People every day find strength to cope with and transcend unimaginable stress and pain.

It starts with the need to light a smoldering fuse of HOPE, a way forward. Mike Ellis, our Peer Support Specialist, calls this "the CERTAINTY of the POSSIBILITY of change." Tomorrow will come, and that can mean more calamity, or it can mean a miracle, even if a small one.

For more information, contact Chuck Weinberg at 304-429-6755, ext. 3721.

Want to receive the latest edition of Health Beat and other VA newsletters by e-mail?

Go to the Medical Center's Web site at www.huntington.va.gov, and click on the News by E-mail link to sign up.

Aphasia Affects More Than A Million Americans Each Year

By Rachel A. Bartram, M.A., CCC-SLP, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

June is National Aphasia Awareness Month. One million Americans or 1 in 250 people are affected by Aphasia. More than 100,000 Americans acquire the disorder each year yet most people have never heard of it.

What is Aphasia?

Aphasia is an acquired communication disorder. It is a language disorder which affects a person's ability to communicate and process language. Aphasia may impair expression, understanding of language and in some cases cause difficulty with reading and writing. It does NOT affect intelligence. Aphasia results from damage to the parts of the brain that contain language.

What causes Aphasia?

Aphasia is most often caused by stroke (25-40 percent of stroke survivors acquire aphasia), but it can also result from traumatic brain injury, dementia, illness, brain tumor and other progressive neurological disorders. Aphasia may occur in people of all ages, races, nationalities and gender.

How is Aphasia diagnosed?

A speech-language pathologist (SLP) works collaboratively with the person's family and other professionals (doctors, nurses, neuropsychologists, occupational therapists, social workers) to address all of the person's needs. The SLP evaluates and determines the type and severity of the aphasia.

Tips for communicating with people who have aphasia:

- Continue to talk to people with aphasia.
- Praise all attempts to speak.
- Talk to the person as an adult and not as a child.
- There is no need to speak louder.
- Encourage independence — avoid overprotection.
- Augment speech with gesture and visual aids.
- Encourage and use other modes of communication (writing, drawing, yes/no responses and facial expressions).
- Continue normal activities (dinner with the family, outings).

You can find more information about aphasia at www.aphasiahope.org, www.asha.org or www.aphasia.org

Timeliness is Important to Us



Our 20 Minute Wait Time Goal

It's very important to us to ensure that you are seen in a timely manner. One of our primary goals is for our providers to see you within 20 minutes of your scheduled appointment time. We know that sometimes that isn't possible due to unforeseen events. However, if you are not seen within 20 minutes, we want to know about it! Please tell the clinic clerk if you have been waiting more than 20 minutes past your appointment time. Keep in mind, the 20 minute wait time starts at the time of the scheduled appointment, not the time you arrive.

Help us meet our goal by being on time and by calling at least 24 hours in advance if you are unable to keep your appointment! If for any reason you are not able to rate our service as excellent, please let us know before you leave.

When the Rain Comes Falling Down ...

By Karen Parsons

The recent floods lately have brought back many memories to me. My grandmother lived in Lenore, West Virginia. When I was about 10 years old, her house was flooded.

An uncle telephoned telling us the water touched the ceiling of her simple house. She left her home in the middle of the night with minimal clothes and her Bible. Everything was lost.

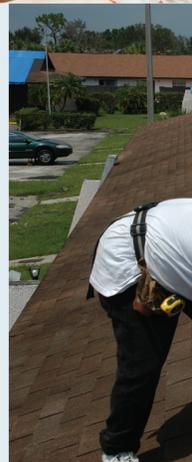
Yet, this was not the first hardship she endured. At the age of 40, her husband died of black lung. She was left a widow with five young children to rear. The other five children were already married or in the military or college.

Black lung benefits were not available for widows at that time. Her only income came from a small social security check. Through that time, she kept her children together and she managed to be a stay-at-home mom in spite of the obstacles in front of her. All of her children grew up to be successful adults in their own right. My grandmother survived other floods after her husband's death and faced multiple challenges in life. After reflecting on her life it is obvious to me, she had the knowledge and skills to rebuild and keep living life to the fullest in spite of obstacles and challenges.

Here are some of the lessons her life has taught me about rebuilding your life after tragedy or difficulty.

- Have faith in God or a Supreme Being greater than yourself.
- Family and relationships are more valuable than things.
- Cry, then make a plan and move on.
- Get rest.
- Eat healthy.
- If things are not getting better emotionally or physically see your doctor for a checkup.
- Laugh!
- Help others.
- Treat yourself occasionally.
- Be thankful.

At some point in time, everyone encounters obstacles or disaster in their lives. At those crossroads we must decide to rebuild our lives. Many people realize after they have survived tragedies and hardships that some of the greatest riches in life have come when we think we lost everything.



Tips for Dealing with Natural Disasters

When communities are hit by natural disasters, they are forced to try to deal with and understand what has happened to them. The stress of the experience comes out in several common reactions:

- Shock and disbelief — There is denial of what has happened. People are traumatized and overwhelmed.
- Fear and anxiety about the future — As the initial shock starts to wear off, there can be extreme fear and anxiety about the future, again the result of trauma, fear of another disaster happening again.
- Problems making decisions or concentrating — Problems thinking clearly about what to do and how to do it.
- Emotional emptiness — Again the result of shock and trauma.
- Nightmares and reoccurring thoughts about the event — Stress, shock, and trauma can cause symptoms to repeat, feeling emotionally stuck with the same symptoms.
- Irritability and anger — Which may get in the way of our relationships.
- Sadness and Depression — A lack of control, feeling hopeless which may result in crying spells, changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- Increased physical complaints such as headaches, back or stomach pains — Where trauma affects both the mind and body.
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs — To try to forget, to try to sleep, to try to feel better.

How To Cope

1. Talk about it — Talking and sharing can be a release and can help to work through the trauma.
2. Seek support from family and friends — Reaching out to loved ones for support.
3. Take care of yourself — Through getting sleep, eating right, exercise, and use of healthy outlets.
4. Try to slow things down to one issue or day at a time — Goals should be broken down into smaller reachable steps.
5. Reach out to others — Where we can take our mind off our stress, and/or find others who are going through similar experiences.
6. Seek professional help as needed — This can be through psychotherapy, or through use of spiritual support from clergy.

NATIONAL
SUICIDE
PREVENTION
LIFELINE™
I-800-273-8255
www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org



WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Don't Let Osteoporosis Slow You Down

by Dena Patton, MSNm Prestonsburg Clinic Manager

A calcium-rich diet can help fight osteoporosis and maintain healthy bones.

Eating a variety of foods rich in calcium, vitamin D, and other vitamins and minerals is essential to long-term bone health.

First Create a Bone Healthy Diet

Look for a low-fat label on these calcium-rich dairy options:

- Yogurt
- Milk
- Cheese
- Cottage Cheese

Other foods that include calcium and vitamin D include:

- Beans
- Almonds
- Canned sardines with bones
- Canned salmon with bones
- Fortified cereal, juice, or soy milk

Calcium: Bone Up on the Recommendations

It is important to get the recommended daily value of calcium for your age. These guidelines can serve as your point of reference.

- Ages 19 to 50: 1000 mg
- Ages 51 and above; 1200 mg

Calcium's Helper: Vitamin D

Without Vitamin D, your body cannot get calcium from the foods you eat. Most adults need at least 400 IU of vitamin D each day.

Eggs, saltwater fish like cod and mackerel, and fortified milk are some dietary sources of Vitamin D. Approximately 15 minutes of natural sunlight (without sunscreen) will give you the Vitamin D you need.

Remember, for good bone health, simple changes such as eating more dairy for calcium, getting 15 minutes of sunlight daily, and eating your vegetables can effectively help protect you from osteoporosis.

For more information on the Women Veterans Health Care program, call Pamela Neal at 304-429-6755 or 1-800-827-8244, ext. 3423.

WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

Don't let osteoporosis slow you down.

Let VA help.

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

Department of Veterans Affairs
Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group WHD 04/2009
www.publichealth.va.gov/womenhealth



Department of
Veterans Affairs

Edward H. Seiler
Medical Center Director

Joseph A. Pellecchia, MD,
FACP
Chief of Staff

John W. "J. B." Finlay
Associate Director

Catherine Locher, RN, MSN
Associate Director for Nursing

Debbie Brammer
Public Affairs Officer/Editor

Scott Arrington
Visual Information Specialist/
Graphic Design

Health Beat is a monthly
publication of:
VA Medical Center
1540 Spring Valley Drive
Huntington, WV 25704.

If you would like to receive a
free copy of Health Beat by
e-mail each month, visit our web
site at www.huntington.va.gov
and click on News by E-mail to
sign up.

Your comments, suggestions,
ideas, and questions regarding
this newsletter can be sent to
the Medical Media Section of
Learning Resources by phone
at 304.429.6755 ext. 3206, toll-
free at 800.827.8244, by fax at
304.429.0272 or by e-mail at
brian.arrington@va.gov.



A health and wellness newsletter published by the VA Medical Center Huntington

Diet and Exercise Helps Prevent Heart Disease and Type 2 Diabetes

*By Jessica Prater, Marshall University Dietetic Intern
VAMC Nutrition and Food Service*

It's no secret that diet and exercise are the two components to weight loss and weight management, but did you know that they are linked to preventing heart disease and type 2 diabetes as well?

It's true! A healthy diet and exercise have been shown to not only strengthen the heart but also help control blood sugar levels. With the summer months approaching, it is easier to achieve both.

Here are some suggestions:

- Begin a walking program. Whether it is around your neighborhood or at the park, walking is a great way to get the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity every day.
- Plant a garden. You will not only get physical activity, but also reap the benefits of fresh fruits and vegetables. Don't have the space for a garden? Try the local farmers market.
- Watch those portion sizes! Many people forget to read the food labels before they eat. Make sure to look at the back of the package and pay attention to what the serving size is and how many total servings are in the container.
- Limit sodium. Processed foods such as French fries, potato chips, and snack cakes are high in sodium, which have been shown to increase blood pressure. Enjoy fresh fruits or vegetables as a healthier choice.
- Drink more water. Many times the signal for thirst is mistaken for hunger. Try drinking a glass of water before eating your next meal or snack.



9/11 GI Bill Most Extensive Education Program Since 1944

Veterans can begin submitting applications online for the Post-9/11 GI Bill, the most extensive educational assistance program authorized since the original GI Bill was signed into law in 1944.

It provides eligible applicants with tuition payments to assist them in getting a college education. For many participants, it also provides a housing allowance and a stipend for books and supplies.

Veterans, service members, reservists and National Guard members with active duty since Sept. 10, 2001, may be eligible for this benefit. Veterans will remain eligible for benefits for 15 years

from the date of last discharge or release from a period of active duty of at least 90 continuous days.

Eligible applicants must have served for an aggregate period of at least 90 days since Sept. 10, 2001, or served at least 30 continuous days on active duty since Sept. 10, 2001, and received a discharge for disability.

Benefit payment rates range from 40 percent of the maximum benefit for an person with at least 90 days, but less than 6 months of aggregate service and up to 100 percent of the benefit for people with at least 36 months of aggregate service or 30 continuous

days and a discharge due to a service connected disability. Prospective beneficiaries may apply on-line through the GI Bill Web site at www.GIBILL.VA.gov.

Qualified Veterans will receive a "Certification of Eligibility" as well as additional information regarding benefits they may qualify for under the Post-9/11 GI Bill, which will become effective on Aug. 1, 2009.

Information about the new program and VA's other educational benefits can be obtained through www.GIBILL.VA.gov or by calling 1-888-GIBILL1 (1-888-442-4551).

Need Help Scheduling an Appointment?

At VAMC Huntington, we will assist you in getting an appointment without a long delay.

Our goals are simple —

- you should be able to see your primary care provider within one to two business days
- you should have faster access to specialty care.

If you have received a postcard stating that you need to make an appointment, please call the Medical Center at 304-429-6741, ext. 3580. For a listing of your current appointments, you can call the Medical Center at 304-429-6741 (or toll free 1-800-827-8244), ext. 2311. If you cannot keep an existing appointment, please contact us as soon as you are aware you cannot make your appointment. This will allow us to reschedule you sooner as well as schedule one of your fellow veterans for the original appointment date and time. Call 304-429-6741, ext. 3580 to reschedule primary care, surgery, and specialty clinic appointments.

To make an appointment with a particular clinic or service, call 304-429-6741, then dial the extension from the list printed on pg. 2 of this newsletter.

