

Biking: Great Exercise and Economical Too!

The weather is warm, the sun is shining and the flowers are in bloom. What a great time to get outdoors and explore. Biking is a healthy and family oriented. It is a great way to see the outdoors, take in some fresh air, or just get around town. It offers efficient, low-impact exercise that is a great way to burn excess calories, improve your mental health, and improve heart health. Also, cycling ramps up your metabolism, which is a good thing. Overall, biking keeps you healthy; it's cheap, reliable and good for the environment, but above all it is great fun! Madison and many other cities have bikes paths, bikes lanes and offer scenic rides to be enjoyed by all.

Here are a few tips to help keep you safe.

1. **Protect your head**- always wear a helmet
2. **Stay Alert**-keep an eye out for obstacles in your path
3. **Obey all traffic laws and lights**

Reference on health benefits of cycling: <http://dsc.discovery.com/adventure/the-top-7-health-benefits-of-cycling.html>

For more information on Madison bike registration, bike maps, biking organizations and where to rent bikes, please go to <http://www.cityofmadison.com/bikeMadison/>. We also encourage anyone starting an exercise routine to speak with your provider first.

Meghan Snitkin, MSW and Gail Hunt, LCSW

Are You Getting Enough Sleep?

Sleep. We all need it, but many of us are not getting enough of it. Insomnia, or trouble sleeping, affects many both men and women. Insomnia can mean not being able to fall asleep at night, waking up during the night, or waking up too early in the morning. Getting poor quality or too little sleep leads to feeling tired with low energy. The most common causes of sleep trouble are stress, unpredictable schedules, parenthood, menopause, long naps and too much caffeine or exercise close to bedtime. Another possible cause of Insomnia is a disorder called Sleep Apnea, where a pause in breathing occurs during the night due to a closed airway. If you snore loudly with gasps and abnormal daytime sleepiness even with a full night of sleep, you should talk to your provider about possible treatment. Consider these sleep hygiene tips:

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time everyday and avoid long naps during the day
- Only use your bed only for sleeping or sexual activity
- Avoid caffeine (coffee, cola drinks), alcohol, smoking and exercise a few hours before bedtime
- Get up and read, listen to music or sit quietly if you cannot sleep after 20-30 minutes

Having trouble sleeping and want more advice or help? Contact your Primary Care Provider

References:

1. Basu, S. (2011). Trying to get rest for the weary: managing sleep disorders in returning servicemembers. *U.S. Medicine*, Vol. 47(4)
2. Powell, D. R. and the American Institute for Preventative Medicine, 9th Edition. (2010). *HealthyLife Women's Self-Care Guide*.
3. Wisconsin Sleep. *Sleep Apnea* [Brochure]

Catherine Bonney, B.A. and Gail Hunt, LCSW



Well Deserved

A VA Newsletter for Women Veterans

William S. Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital • Summer 2012 • Issue VII

Girl Scout Gold Award Project Provides Gift Bags for Pregnant Veterans

Growing up in a military family, Danielle (Dani) Seeger knows very well the struggles that many military families face. Dani has volunteered with her mother at the Madison VA since 2008. She became aware of some of the unmet needs of female Veterans and decided to devote her Girl Scout Gold Award project to help pregnant Veterans. Through this unique project, called “Duffle to Diaper Bags,” Dani sought donations and created fully stocked diaper bags to give female Veterans some of the necessary baby supplies they will soon need.

Once complete, the diaper bags are given to the Women Veterans Health Program at the Madison VA to give to women Veteran patients. Through this project, Dani feels that not only has she helped others, but she gained key leadership skills that will carry her into the next chapter of her life. According to Dani, she has “educated others about how the face of our military is changing and, as a result, the needs of our Veterans are different today.”

The Women Veterans Health Program wishes to thank Dani Seeger for her dedication and hard work to help women Veterans!

Ann McCall, MSW and Gail Hunt, LCSW

★ Spotlight on Women’s Health Team



Penny Fanning is the Program Support Assistant in the Women Veterans Health Program. You may have talked to Penny on the phone and she helped you in some way. Penny is a native of Wisconsin and enjoyed a career with Target as a logistics executive prior to retiring and coming to work at the VA four years ago. Penny was recently honored as the Greater Madison Federal Agency Association “Employee of the Year in a Support Position.” This is a well deserved recognition of all the work she does for us in the VA and in the Women Veterans Health Program.

When Penny is not working, she enjoys showing quarter horses and spending time with her 4 children and 5 grandchildren.

VA contacts:

Women’s MOVE!
Weight Management
Classes, contact Kristen
McCaskey, RD
608-256-1901, ext 11420

Tai Chi and Mindfulness
Classes, contact
Kristi Rietz, OTR
608-256-1901, ext 11339

Women’s Mental Health
608-280-7084
Military Sexual Trauma
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Published June 2012