

Protect Yourself from the Flu This Winter

With fall giving way to winter, now is the time to schedule an appointment with your health care provider for your annual flu shot.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), flu season ranges from November to May. During the past 25 flu seasons, the CDC reported the heaviest flu activity once in November, four times in December, five times in January, 11 times in February and four times in March.

TRICARE covers flu vaccines based on the current flu season guidelines published by the CDC; these can be found at www.cdc.gov/flu. According to the CDC, all persons, including school-aged children, who want to reduce the risk of becoming ill with influenza or spreading it to others should be vaccinated. It is strongly recommended that the following people be vaccinated each year:

- Children ages 6 months through 18 years, with continued focus on those at high risk for flu complications (ages 6 months through 4 years)

- Adults age 50 years and older
- All women who are pregnant during the flu season
- Health care workers involved in direct patient care
- Household contacts and caregivers of children younger than 5 years and adults age 50 years and older, with particular emphasis on vaccinating contacts of children younger than 6 months
- Household contacts of persons at high risk for severe complications from the flu
- People living in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- Adults and children who have chronic pulmonary, cardiovascular (except hypertension), metabolic and renal disorders
- Adults and children who have weakened immune systems, including those caused by medication or HIV
- Adults and children who have any condition (e.g., cognitive dysfunction, spinal cord injuries) that can

compromise respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions, or increase the risk for aspiration

- Children and adolescents ages 6 months through 18 years who receive long-term aspirin therapy and experience Reye syndrome after influenza virus infection

Ask your primary care manager if you need a flu vaccine, which he or she may provide for you. Military treatment facilities may also offer flu vaccines.

TRICARE covers flu shots for beneficiaries age 6 months and older, and FluMist®, the nasal-spray flu vaccine. The use of FluMist is limited to healthy people ages 2 through 49 years who are not pregnant.

For more information about TRICARE's flu coverage, go to www.tricare.mil/faq and search for "flu" or go to Humana Military's Web site at www.humana-military.com and click on "Beneficiary" and then "Health and Wellness." ■

Saluting Our Veterans

Every November 11, Americans around the globe join together to honor our country's veterans. On this Veterans Day, TRICARE offers its profound gratitude to everyone who has answered the call and selflessly served America.

TRICARE works hard to ensure that you—our eligible veterans and your families—get the very best health care both on active duty and when you leave the service.

You and your families make countless sacrifices for the United States, and Veterans Day is our time to remember you. We are grateful for your dedication to our country. It is an honor for TRICARE to serve you—our men and women who were on the front lines, fighting for our freedom. ■



An Important Note about TRICARE Program Information: At the time of printing, this information is current. It is important to remember that TRICARE policies and benefits are governed by public law. Changes to TRICARE programs are continually made as public law is amended. **Military treatment facility guidelines and policies may be different than those outlined in this product.** For the most recent information, contact your TRICARE regional contractor, TRICARE Service Center, or local military treatment facility.

MRSA: What Is It and How Can You Prevent It?

In recent years, the number of infections caused by a specific strain of staph bacteria known as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, or MRSA, has increased, particularly in schools and communities.

MRSA produces pus-filled lesions (abscesses or boils) on the skin and is difficult to treat given its natural resistance to some antibiotics. Left untreated, it can spread to other parts of the body. To minimize your chance of contracting MRSA, it's important to understand how it spreads, who's at risk and what you can do to prevent it.

How It Spreads

MRSA usually is contracted through a cut or abrasion on the skin that comes into contact with a person who has MRSA on his/her skin or a surface touched by an MRSA-infected person.

Who's at Risk?

While anyone can contract MRSA, those most susceptible to it and other staph infections include caregivers, health care workers and individuals who come in close contact with those infected; those with weakened

immune systems; and children. MRSA outbreaks can occur in a variety of settings, including:

- Child care facilities
- Schools
- Households
- Hospitals
- Long-term care facilities, such as nursing homes
- Military training camps
- Prisons
- Overcrowded or unsanitary places

Additionally, those who engage in contact sports or visit gyms frequently also are at risk for MRSA infection.

Treatment and Prevention

Antibiotics are available to combat MRSA skin infections. However, because MRSA is resistant to some antibiotics, like penicillin and amoxicillin, doctors typically do not prescribe antibiotics. This helps to prevent the development of more antibiotic-resistant MRSA strains. Instead, doctors will drain the MRSA-infected area.

In general, MRSA is more easily prevented than it is treated. The following guidelines will help you minimize your risk of contracting MRSA:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and hot water. When soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Treat skin abrasions or wounds with an antiseptic and cover with a clean bandage until healed.
- Avoid sharing personal items like towels, razors and bandages.
- Use a towel or other clean item as a barrier between yourself and gym equipment or anything that is frequently used by others.
- Shower immediately after gym workouts and skin-to-skin contact.

More information about MRSA can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web site at www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca.html, and on the Mayo Clinic Web site at www.mayoclinic.com/health/mrsa/DS00735. ■

New E-Mail Service Delivers TRICARE News to Your Inbox

Want the latest news about your TRICARE benefits but don't want to hunt for it? There's now an easy way to stay informed: TRICARE's new e-mail alert system.

The new system is up and running at www.tricare.mil, and subscribing is fast, easy and secure—all you need is an e-mail address. You can be notified as soon as news is posted, or select daily, weekly or monthly updates. With dozens of available topics, you can select only the news you want.

The system also links you to alerts on other Military Health System Web sites, along with news from the Force Health Protection and Readiness and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Web sites. To subscribe, go to "Receive News and Benefit Updates" at www.tricare.mil/pressroom. ■

Correction

In Issue 5 of *TRICARE Health Matters*, a footnote in the article "Save Time and Money with TRICARE's Mail Order Pharmacy" stated the following: "To use the mail-order pharmacy overseas, you must be enrolled in TRICARE Overseas Prime, the prescription must be from a U.S.-licensed provider, and you must have an APO or FPO address. Medications that require refrigeration cannot be shipped to APO or FPO addresses."

The correct footnote is: "To use the mail-order pharmacy overseas, the prescription must be from a U.S.-licensed provider and you must have an APO or FPO address. Medications that require refrigeration cannot be shipped to APO or FPO addresses."

Note: If you are enrolled in or use any TRICARE Overseas Program option, you may use the TRICARE Mail Order Pharmacy. ■

Reconstructing Your Life after Breast Cancer

According to the American Cancer Society®, breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed cancer in American women. If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with it, you know that the diagnosis causes many concerns.

However, with advances in research and treatment, more women are surviving cancer. During October's National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, great efforts are made to increase understanding about the disease. Information on early detection, cancer screenings and treatment, and breast surgery is widely available.

Yet, what happens after surgery and treatment is not as widely known. Often, the most common concern is, "Will my cancer return?"

While there is no absolute way to prevent a recurrence, the National Breast Cancer Awareness Month Web site, www.nbcam.org, suggests these tips:

- **Keep follow-up appointments** – You'll need to see your doctor every three to six months initially, then once a year after five years.
- **Continue screenings/exams** – Both mammograms and breast self-exams are important tools for detecting cancer.
- **Maintain medication regimen** – Prescribed hormonal treatments like tamoxifen or aromatase inhibitors have lowered some women's risk.
- **Eat healthy foods** – Maintaining a healthy weight and eating a low-fat, high-fiber diet of fruits, vegetables and whole grains may decrease your risk. Quitting tobacco and alcohol may also help.
- **Exercise regularly** – Exercise may reduce stress, nausea and pain, and increase energy, strength and the ability to maintain a healthy weight.

In addition to the stress caused by the physical aspects of breast cancer, you

may become concerned about your new body image. This may be particularly true among women who have undergone mastectomies.

While some women may opt to wear breast forms or special bras following surgery, others may prefer reconstructive breast surgery. As a TRICARE beneficiary, you are eligible for post-mastectomy reconstruction following a covered mastectomy.

However, if you choose not to undergo breast reconstruction, TRICARE also will cover external surgical garments, i.e., those that are an integral part of a breast form or prosthesis, as medically necessary supplies in lieu of surgery.

If you or a loved one is diagnosed with breast cancer, it is important to remember that there is life after treatment. Maintaining a positive attitude and following your doctor's orders are the keys to reconstructing your life. ■

Understanding Alcohol Dependence

Alcoholism, or alcohol dependence, is a very real, potentially fatal disease. It not only affects those who are addicted, but also impacts the lives of the people who love them. Without treatment, those with the disease may lose their jobs, relationships, freedoms or even their health.

Like other chronic diseases, such as diabetes or asthma, alcoholism is a progressive disease. Over time, it can negatively affect the brain, heart, liver or other organs and ultimately result in death. Alcohol use and abuse has also been linked to suicide, automobile accidents, violence and other types of trauma.

Recognizing Alcohol Dependency

Contrary to what you might think, the average alcohol-addicted person is not a falling-down drunk. He or she looks "normal" and is likely to be working and otherwise living responsibly. Only about three out of 10 people with alcoholism are unable to function normally in their everyday lives.

Before diagnosing someone with alcoholism, a doctor or other provider will not only examine how much a person drinks, but also how it affects his or her behavior and ability to function.

Developing a tolerance to alcohol, or suffering withdrawal without it, is not necessarily an indicator that you or a loved one is addicted. However, neither should be overlooked. Both can be early symptoms that an addiction is forming.

Can Alcohol Dependence Be Overcome?

While there is no known cure for alcoholism, with proper treatment and a strong will, you can overcome alcohol dependence. As with any other chronic illness, you must understand that simply not wanting to be sick will not make you better. But, seeking help and following a doctor's advice can.

Developing a realistic plan for quitting, and committing to it, is important. Joining a support group like Alcoholics Anonymous may be an important part of your success. Al-Anon, an organization supporting family members as they cope with the daily issues of living with an alcoholic, can also be helpful.

For more information on alcohol dependence, please visit www.humana-military.com and select "Beneficiary," "Health and Wellness," "Behavioral Health," and then click on "Achieve Solutions." ■

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1-877-298-3408 (National Guard and Reserve)
1-888-4GO-WNAP (Warrior Navigation and Assistance Program)
www.humana-military.com

Claims
1-800-403-3950

Behavioral Health
1-800-700-8646

Pharmacy Customer Service
1-866-DoD-TRRX (retail)
1-866-DoD-TMOP (mail order)
www.express-scripts.com/TRICARE

National TRICARE Web Sites
www.tricare.mil www.tricareonline.com

Update DEERS
1-800-538-9552
www.tricare.mil/deers

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Make Sure the Newest Member of Your Family Is Covered

When a new member of your family has arrived, it is important that you take the necessary steps to ensure continuous TRICARE health care coverage. Your child must be registered in DEERS and you will need to enroll your child in a TRICARE Prime option if you want to have continuous TRICARE Prime coverage.

Register in DEERS

A newborn, newly adopted or pre-adoptive child should be registered in DEERS as soon as possible. The sponsor must:

- Take a copy of the child's birth certificate, certificate of live birth you received at the hospital, or adoption papers to the nearest military base or post personnel office. If you do not have an official birth certificate, you can use a certificate of live birth provided by the hospital. For a child born overseas, use the *Consular Report of Birth* (FS 240).
- Fill out an *Application for Uniformed Services Identification Card DEERS Enrollment* (DD Form 1172) signed by the sponsor and a verifying official from a uniformed services identification card-issuing facility.

If the sponsor is absent, the other parent or guardian must show power of attorney.

Enroll in TRICARE Prime

Children are automatically covered by TRICARE Prime for their first 60 days (120 days if overseas) if at least one family member is enrolled in a TRICARE Prime option.

To ensure continuous TRICARE Prime coverage, you'll need to enroll the child in a TRICARE Prime option by filling out the appropriate enrollment form and following the submission guidelines on the form. Forms may be found at www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/Forms.do. The enrollment form must be submitted within 60 days of birth, adoption or placement (120 days if overseas). If the child is not enrolled, coverage automatically converts to TRICARE Standard on day 61 (or day 121 if overseas).

Don't Lose Eligibility

Eligibility for TRICARE Standard ends one year (365 days) after birth, adoption or placement for a child not properly registered in DEERS. On day 366, your child will no longer be able to receive TRICARE benefits until properly registered.

For more information about TRICARE eligibility, visit the TRICARE Web site at www.tricare.mil/mybenefit/home/overview/Eligibility/DEERS/Children. ■