

HealthSTAT focus

Health & Wellness Information
to Improve Your Condition

March is Deep-Vein Thrombosis Awareness Month DVT Affects VP Dick Cheney

In March 2005, the US Senate designated March **deep-vein thrombosis (DVT) awareness month— a condition that affects up to two million Americans** annually, according to the American Heart Association. A DVT is a **Blood Clot**. Among the many victims of this condition was well-known NBC News Correspondent David Bloom. While covering the war in Iraq, Bloom was stricken with a fatal pulmonary embolism (PE), a complication of DVT. PE, the most serious complication of DVT, occurs when a blood clot becomes dislodged from a vein, travels to the lung, and blocks or partially blocks the pulmonary artery leading from the heart to the lungs. This can lead to shortness of breath, chest pain, and coughing up blood. When the blood clot blocks the pulmonary artery in the heart, it can be fatal because blood cannot circulate through the lungs.

Of those who develop a PE, up to 200,000 will die each year, which is more than from breast cancer and AIDS combined. Yet, most Americans (74 %) have little or no awareness of DVT, according to a national survey sponsored by the American Public Health Association.

"This little-known condition hospitalizes up to 600,000 people each year, causing additional healthcare costs of more than \$20,000 per person, per case," said Senator Byron Dorgan, chair of the Congressional Heart and Stroke Coalition. "If we are able to raise awareness, we'll save health care costs, but more importantly, we'll save lives."

About Deep-Vein Thrombosis and Pulmonary Embolism

Deep-vein thrombosis is a medical condition that occurs when a thrombus (**blood clot**) forms in one of the large veins, usually in the lower limbs, leading to either partially or completely blocked circulation. The condition may result in health complications, such as PE and even death if not diagnosed and treated.

DVT may be caused by a variety of risk factors and triggering events, including restricted mobility (like sitting on an airplane for a long period of time), major surgery, cancer and certain heart or respiratory diseases. Preventative treatments for DVT include early movement after surgeries, compression devices applied to legs to prevent blood clotting, and blood-thinning drugs, such as heparin and warfarin sodium. It is important to consult your healthcare provider about the signs and symptoms associated with DVT.

Only 40 to 50 percent of people with DVT have obvious signs and symptoms, and the condition often goes unrecognized. When they do occur, signs and symptoms vary depending on the severity of the condition.

DVT may cause pain and swelling in one or both legs, or less commonly, in an arm. There may also be tenderness in the affected area, and an increase in skin temperature (compared to the unaffected limb).

Signs & Symptoms of Deep Vein Thrombosis

- Pain in the leg;
- Tenderness in the calf (**this is one of the most important signs**);
- Leg tenderness;
- Swelling of the leg;
- Increased warmth of the leg;
- Redness in the leg;
- Bluish skin discoloration;
- Discomfort when the foot is pulled upward.

With DVT high up in the leg, superficial veins may become visible over the thigh and hip areas as well as over the lower abdomen.

DVT UPDATE on US VP Dick Cheney

Dick Cheney, the US Vice-President who has previously suffered four heart attacks, is undergoing medical treatment after developing deep vein thrombosis (DVT) in his left leg during a tour of the Asia-Pacific in early March 2007.

The blood-clotting condition - nicknamed 'economy class syndrome' because people who fly in cramped conditions are usually most at risk - was diagnosed in the 66-year-old on March 5, 2007. Despite traveling in comfort in an exclusive compartment on *Air Force Two*, Mr. Cheney is still prone to the condition because of his history of blood clotting and heart attacks. The VP, whose first attack came when he was just 38 years old, last week traveled 25,000 miles and spent 65 hours in the air during a nine-day trip to Japan, Australia, Pakistan, Oman and Afghanistan.

DVT and Professional Baseball

Tony Gwynn, famous San Diego Padres batting champ, was diagnosed with a potentially deadly blood clot (DVT) in 1997; it was detected and treated before causing serious harm or fatality.

Source: DVT.net



Questions & Answers: Test Your Knowledge about Women's Health

1. Birth defects and disabilities cannot be prevented.

True False

False. Some birth defects and disabilities can be prevented. There are steps that a woman can take to increase her chance of having a healthy baby. **Take 400 micrograms of folic acid daily** before and during pregnancy to reduce the risk of birth defects of the brain and spine. **Avoid drinking alcohol** to prevent fetal alcohol syndrome, a disorder characterized by growth retardation, facial abnormalities, and central nervous system dysfunction. **Avoid smoking and second-hand smoke.** Cigarette smoking can result in low birth weight and cause long-term learning disabilities. It is also associated with infertility, miscarriages, tubal pregnancies, infant mortality, and childhood morbidity. **Get prenatal care.** Discuss family history of pregnancy complications or birth defects, medical history, medications, immunizations, and other issues to ensure that you are on the right track for a healthy pregnancy.

2. Cervical cancer is associated with a sexually transmitted infection.

True False

True. Genital human papillomavirus infection is a sexually transmitted disease (STD) that is caused by certain types of human papillomavirus (HPV). Human papillomavirus is the name of a group of viruses that includes more than 100 different strains or types. Over 30 of these viruses are sexually transmitted. Some "high-risk" types of HPV may cause abnormal changes on the cells of the cervix (opening of the womb) and may, in rare cases and after several decades, lead to cervical cancer (cancer of the cervix). Other "low-risk" types may cause mild abnormalities of the cervix or genital warts. Although only a small proportion of women have persistent infection, persistent infection with "high-risk" types of HPV over many years is the main risk factor for cervical cancer.

A Pap test can detect pre-cancerous and cancerous cells on the cervix. Regular Pap testing and careful medical follow-up (with treatment if necessary) can help ensure that pre-cancerous changes in the cervix do not develop into life-threatening cervical cancer. Women should begin getting a Pap test within 3 years of the onset of sexual activity, but no later than at age 21.

Because genital HPV infection is most common in men and women who have had multiple sex partners, abstaining from sexual activity (i.e. refraining from any genital contact with another individual) is the surest way to prevent infection. For those who choose to be sexually active, a monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner is the strategy most likely to prevent future genital HPV infections. For those who choose to be sexually active but who are not in a monogamous relationship, reducing the number of sexual partners and choosing a partner less likely to be infected may reduce the risk of genital HPV infection. The available scientific evidence is not sufficient to recommend condoms as a primary prevention strategy for the prevention of genital HPV infection, but it does indicate that the use of condoms may reduce the risk of HPV-associated cervical cancer.

3. Breast cancer is the leading cause of death in women.

True False

False. Heart disease is the leading cause of death in women. Heart disease was responsible for approximately 356,014 deaths in women in 2002. Breast cancer caused about 41,514 deaths in women the same year. You can lower your risk for heart disease by getting regular exercise, eating healthy, maintaining a healthy weight, and being smoke-free. See your health care provider to determine risks and to develop a plan to treat existing heart disease.

4. Female workers are at greater risk for musculoskeletal disorders than are male workers.

True False

True. Sprains and strains, carpal tunnel syndrome, tendonitis, and other musculoskeletal disorders account for more than half (52%) of the injuries and illnesses suffered by female workers, as compared to 45% for male workers. Further research is needed to determine the factors that place women at greater risk for musculoskeletal disorders. Research will examine if physical differences between men and women, or differences in the jobs they hold, contribute to this increased risk for women. Periodic rest breaks throughout the work shift can help reduce musculoskeletal discomfort. Ergonomics interventions that fit workplace conditions and job demands to the capabilities of workers can help prevent work-related musculoskeletal disorders.

Surviving Dry Skin During Cold Weather Months



The colder months are notorious for causing dry, irritated, flaky skin. Fortunately, a few tips can make it easier to keep skin glowing and healthy, whatever the weather may be.

The combination of lower temperatures and reduced humidity associated with the colder months naturally draws moisture from the skin, making it feel flaky, scaly, irritated and itchy. According to experts, the key to keeping itching and scratching at bay is protecting your skin with the right moisturizer. Here are a few Tips to help your skin survive winter weather.

1. **Keep your skin hydrated.** Probably the most important thing you can do to prevent and treat dry, itchy skin is to moisturize every day. Look for creams formulated with glycerin – a key moisturizing agent – and oatmeal to soothe the itch.
2. **Limit exposure to water.** Believe it or not, water can be very drying to the skin. Keep your showers and baths short and adjust to lukewarm water rather than taking long soaks in a very hot tub or hot shower. After stepping out of the shower or bath, pat your skin almost dry with a towel. Immediately after you towel off, lock in moisture by applying lotion or cream while your skin is still damp.
3. **Wear soft, baggy clothing when possible.** Dress in breathable fabrics like cotton and avoid scratchy fabrics that may be uncomfortable on itchy, irritated skin.
4. **Use a humidifier.** Don't assume that staying out of the cold will solve your skin problem. Even staying indoors almost all of the time won't keep your skin moisturized. A heated room has only about 15% relative humidity, leaving your skin feeling dry and tight. This can be avoided by adding humidity to your room with a humidifier or by placing pans of water near radiators.

Even though the cold winter months cause dry, itchy, irritated skin, taking precautions and moisturizing properly can keep your skin in good shape.

Source: *Virginian Leader* 1/17/06

Kids Health Topic – Talking to Your Teens About Sex



March Is National Talk With Your Teen About Sex Month



(just what most parents dread). But this is one area where the “don't ask don't tell” mentality can lead to big problems with long-term impact for both you and your teen.

Make sure your teen is equipped with the knowledge to make responsible decisions about sex. Your teen needs to know your values regarding sex and sexual relationships. And, be sure your teen has the right information about safe sex to guard against sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. Knowledge is the key to protecting your teen – mentally and physically. Even if they are doing something you do not want them to do, you want them to be safe.

For more information on how to start these conversations about sex with your teen, visit:

<http://www.talkingwithkids.org>



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Questions & Answers: Test Your Knowledge about Men's Health



1. What is the leading cause of cancer death for men?

A. prostate cancer B. colorectal cancer C. lung cancer D. skin cancer

Correct answer: C - lung cancer The leading cause of cancer death for both men and women is lung cancer. Compared to nonsmokers, men who smoke are about 23 times more likely to develop lung cancer, and women who smoke are about 13 times more likely. Smoking causes about 90% of lung cancer deaths in men and almost 80% in women. Quitting smoking is one of the most important things you will ever do. You will live longer and live better. Quitting will lower your chance of having a heart attack, stroke, or cancer.

2. Major signs of stroke include:

A. sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arms, or legs B. sudden confusion, trouble speaking/ understanding others
C. sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes D. sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance
E. sudden severe headache with no known cause F. A, C, and D
G. all of the above

Correct answer: G - all of the above Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States. It is very important to know the symptoms of a stroke and act immediately – call 9-1-1. With timely treatment, the risk of death and disability from stroke can be lowered. A stroke or cerebrovascular accident (CVA) occurs when the blood supply to the brain is cut off or when a blood vessel bursts. Without oxygen, brain cells begin to die. Death or permanent disability can result. High blood pressure, smoking, and having had a previous stroke or heart attack increase a person's chances of having a stroke.

3. Colorectal cancer can be prevented by removing precancerous polyps or growths, which can be present in the colon for years before invasive cancer develops. Current guidelines recommend regular screening for all adults aged:

A. 21 years or older B. 30 years or older C. 40 years or older D. 50 years or older E. 65 years or older

Correct answer: D - 50 years or older Colorectal cancer is cancer that occurs in the colon or rectum. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer-related death in the United States, but it doesn't have to be. If everybody age 50 or older had regular screening tests, at least one-third of deaths from this cancer could be avoided. Colorectal cancer is most often found in people 50 and older. So if you are 50 or older, start screening now. The risk for getting colorectal cancer increases with age. Recommended screening tests and intervals are as follows:

- fecal occult blood test or stool test every year;
- flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years;
- double-contrast barium enema every 5 years;
- colonoscopy every 10 years.

Persons at higher risk should begin screening at a younger age and may need to be tested more frequently.

4. What is the minimum amount of moderate-intensity physical activity adults should engage in 5 or more days of the week?

A. 20 minutes per day B. 30 minutes per day C. 60 minutes per day D. 90 minutes per day

Correct answer: B - 30 minutes per day Physical activity does not need to be hard to provide some benefit. Participating in moderate-intensity physical activity is a vital component of a healthy lifestyle for people of all ages and abilities. Moderate-intensity physical activity refers to any activity that burns 3.5 to 7 calories per minute. These levels are equal to the effort a healthy individual might burn while walking briskly, mowing the lawn, dancing, swimming for recreation, or bicycling. Increasing the intensity or the amount of time that you are physically active can have even greater health benefits and may be needed to control body weight. About 60 minutes a day may be needed to prevent weight gain.

5. Adults should get vaccinations to protect against preventable diseases. This statement is:

A. True B. False

Correct answer: A - true Vaccines aren't just for kids. Far too many adults become ill, are disabled, and die each year from diseases that could easily have been prevented by vaccines. Everyone from young adults to senior citizens can benefit from immunizations.