

Zika Virus and Pregnancy (What you should know)

Compiled from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website

When planning summer vacations, pregnant women and those who plan to become pregnant within the next two years should consider the risk of birth defects posed by the Zika virus.

Zika is spread primarily by the bite of an infected mosquito, but infected men can pass it on to their partners during sex, according to the CDC. Most people are unaware they are infected because symptoms of fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis are typically mild.

Zika poses its greatest threat to unborn children because infected pregnant women can pass the virus on to their fetuses. The virus is linked to microcephaly, a rare but serious birth defect. Babies with microcephaly are born with smaller brains and heads, leading to lifelong medical problems and impaired development.

Mosquitos carrying the virus have been identified in a number of countries and territories popular with tourists, including Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands and American Samoa. The CDC expects outbreaks in even more countries because mosquitoes that carry the virus are found all over the world.

At least three pregnant Zika-infected women in the U.S. delivered babies with birth defects this year, the CDC reported. Three others did not carry their fetuses to term. The women acquired Zika either through travel abroad or sexual transmission, CDC said.

Anyone traveling to areas with known outbreaks is at risk. For the most up-to-date information on areas with mosquito-borne transmission of Zika virus, visit the CDC's website at: <http://www.cdc.gov/zika/index.html>.

How to protect yourself:

- Check the CDC's website to identify areas with Zika.
- Talk to your doctor or health care provider prior to traveling to areas with Zika.
- If pregnant, avoid travel to any area with confirmed or potential Zika virus.
- Cover arms and legs to prevent mosquito bites.
- Purchase or make your own natural insect repellents. EPA-registered insect repellents are safe for use during pregnancy. Visit www.epa.gov/insect-repellents for more details on EPA-registered repellents.
- Avoid sex or use latex condoms with partners who have visited areas with Zika.

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Text4baby

A free text-messaging service will send updates on the Zika virus to your mobile device. VA has partnered with Text4baby to deliver information to pregnant women and mothers with infants under the age of one.

VA Pittsburgh encourages pregnant women Veterans to enroll in Text4baby by texting BABY (or BEBE for Spanish) to 511411.

Women will receive three free text messages weekly, timed to their due date or their baby's birth date. The messages contain safety info and expert advice on various health topics.

Visit Google Play or iTunes to download other free apps offering additional information on pregnancy, a baby's development, childcare and more.



Veteran Spotlight: Mindy Johnson, LPN

Hello! I'm **Mindy Johnson**, a flight medic in the U.S. Air Force and a licensed practical nurse with VA Pittsburgh, Women Veterans Health Care Clinic.

Serving as a flight medic is an amazing and honor-filled job. I am proud to assist in bringing home our nation's fallen and wounded service members. Making a difference in a person's life and witnessing firsthand the relief on service members' faces when they are brought onboard a plane - knowing they are going home - cannot be explained with words. Celebrating their return, yet sharing in their grief from leaving others behind, is rewarding and very challenging.

On deployments, I flew downrange with my crew, picked up the wounded and

transported them to Germany to receive care. We then flew service members to Maryland, where other teams transported them to stateside destinations.

Returning home and continuing my nursing work with Veterans at VA Pittsburgh is a blessing for me. I work in the gynecology clinic, supporting women Veterans.

Serving as a woman in the military is not an easy job. However, the number of women Veterans is growing daily, and I enjoy caring for those who seek treatment at VA Pittsburgh.

I also have had the honor of working with older Veterans. Stories told by our WWII,



Korean, and Vietnam War Veterans are like none you have ever heard. It is most definitely an honorable and humbling experience.

I look forward every day to what is to come with my military and nursing career.

Meet VA Pittsburgh's new gynecologist



Dr. Noah Rindos is board-certified in obstetrics and gynecological care. A provider at Magee-Womens Hospital of UPMC, Dr. Rindos recently joined VA Pittsburgh's gynecology department. Prior to coming to Pittsburgh for a fellowship in minimally invasive gynecology, Dr. Rindos

completed his residency training in Boston, Mass. He is trained in fibroids management, pelvic pain and laparoscopic surgery. Our women Veterans and staff are very happy to have such a personable, genuine, highly qualified and talented addition to the gynecology clinic. We welcome Dr. Rindos.

Women's Health Physical Therapy

By: Sarina Beasley, PT, DPT, WCS, CLT

A Women's Health Physical Therapy clinic is now available at VA Pittsburgh through the Physical Therapy Department and Women Veterans Program.

The program offers physical therapy (PT) services to assist women who have urinary incontinence, constipation, bowel incontinence, frequent urination, overactive bladder, pelvic pain associated with sex, pregnancy-related pelvic pain and certain types of lower back pain.

A PT specialty, women's pelvic health focuses on the pelvic floor muscles and surrounding structures. The pelvic floor is a bowl of muscles that runs around the opening of the urethra, vagina and anus. It supports pelvic organs and has three functions: supportive, sexual and sphincteral.

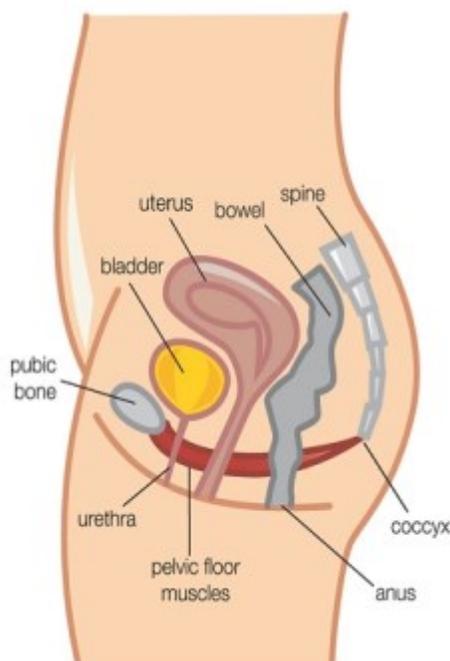
When the pelvic floor's functions fail, women experience pain, sudden release of urine or stool or other problems. Women's health physical therapists (WHPTs) are trained to help with all of these problems.

WHPTs practice internal and external evaluation and treatment techniques

supported by current medical research. Evaluations consist of thorough histories and physical exams. During exams, WHPTs check for painful areas and assess strength, endurance and muscle coordination.

Individualized treatment plans may include manual therapy, relaxation exercises, strengthening and stretching exercises and/or dietary modifications. Patients can be treated at home or in the clinic.

If you are experiencing pelvic problems, please don't hesitate: Ask your provider today for a referral to Women's Health Physical Therapy.



New Hepatitis C (HCV) Medication at VAPHS

VA Pittsburgh now offers medications with the potential to cure hepatitis C virus (HCV) in as little as 12 weeks and with far fewer side effects than older drugs. Veterans identified in our system with HCV — even those previously treated with the older drugs — should contact primary care for an exam to see if they are good candidates for the new drugs. Whether enrolled or not, all Veterans with HCV or suspected HCV are encouraged to call 412-822-3000, option 5, to schedule an exam to determine their treatment candidacy. More than 225 Veterans have already taken advantage of the medicine at VA Pittsburgh. Learn more about the virus and the drugs at www.hepatitis.va.gov.



HAPPENINGS



A **Veteran Ladies Tea** sponsored by women from the Order of the Eastern Star was held May 24 in the Women's Health Clinic at University Drive. Homemade sweets and treats were available along with take-home china tea cups for attendees.



Picnicking Tips

Summer is perfect for picnics and outdoor eating, but nothing spoils the fun faster than a trip to the emergency room for food poisoning.

To stay safe when dining al fresco, VA Pittsburgh recommends sticking to these food-safety tips:

- Organize coolers. Pack beverages and perishables in separate coolers to reduce perishables' exposure to warm air as picnickers hunt for cold drinks.
- Keep coolers closed. Limit the number of times coolers are opened to keep contents colder.
- Avoid cross contamination. Securely wrap raw meat, poultry, and seafood to prevent juices from contaminating other foods.
- Clean all produce. Wash fruits and vegetables – even those with rinds or skins that won't be eaten – under running tap water. Dry with clean towels or paper towels.
- Maintain proper food temperatures. Pack ice or frozen gel packs around cold foods to keep coolers at 40 degrees until serving time. Wrap hot foods securely in insulated containers to keep temperatures at 140 degrees or above until served.



- Once food is removed from coolers, bacteria multiply rapidly. To prevent food-borne illnesses, never let foods stay in the "danger zone" – between 40 and 140 degrees – for more than two hours. Reduce the time to one hour when outdoor temperatures are 90 or above.

We at VA Pittsburgh wish you a safe and happy picnic season keeping these tips in mind!

VA Pittsburgh showcased its health and social services for women during an **open house** on March 31 in the University Drive atrium. Women's Health Program partnered with internal and external partners for the event, which included a quilting square table for participants to honor and thank female Veterans for their service through words and art.



RECIPE CORNER

Chicken and Sun-Dried Tomato Bruschetta

INGREDIENTS

- 2 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- 1 1/4 cups Italian salad dressing, divided
- 4 cups fresh spinach, torn
- 1/3 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 8 sun-dried tomatoes, packed without oil, chopped
- 1 one-pound loaf focaccia bread, cut into 1/2-inch thick slices
- 1/4 cup olive oil

Place chicken and 1 cup salad dressing in bowl. Cover. Marinate at least 3 hours in refrigerator. Lightly oil grill grate and preheat grill to high. Discard dressing used for marinating. Grill chicken 7 minutes per side or until juices run clear. Cool and shred. In a large bowl, mix the cooked chicken, spinach, feta cheese, sun-dried tomatoes and remaining dressing. Brush focaccia bread with olive oil. Cook 1 minute per side on the prepared grill or until lightly toasted.



Place chicken-mixture portions on toasted focaccia and serve.

Source: Allrecipes.com

Hot flashes in the Summertime

By Brittany Galiano, PharmD (VA Pittsburgh Pharmacy Practice Resident)

Rising temperatures herald summer's arrival.

Add hot flashes to a sizzling summer day and menopausal women who experience the sudden feelings of warmth may find it difficult to escape the intense heat waves.

Approximately 75 percent of menopausal women suffer from hot flashes, which are symptoms of decreased estrogen levels. Obesity, smoking and reduced physical activity are just a few risk factors that may potentiate the symptoms.

Most symptoms are managed by drinking plenty of water, using fans and air conditioners, wrapping a cold towel around your neck and avoiding spicy foods and stressful situations.

But for some women, depending on their severity, hot flashes can lead to a decreased quality of life. Women with severe symptoms may need to ask their doctor about medication options, which include the following:

- Hormonal therapy. Estrogen and progestin therapies may relieve symptoms for women who have not had hysterectomies. Estrogen is the only option for women who have had hysterectomies. Regimens are patient-specific.

- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) and serotonin-norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs). These drugs are options for women who are not candidates for hormonal therapy. They can relieve hot flashes within days and include venlafaxine, desvenlafaxine, paroxetine, citalopram, and escitalopram.
- Gabapentin. Commonly prescribed for seizures and nerve pain, gabapentin is also effective for hot flashes, especially those occurring overnight.

Women at VA Pittsburgh who suffer from severe hot flashes should see their primary care, designated women's health provider for help.

Gentle Yoga for Women

VA Pittsburgh hosts one-hour yoga sessions 11 a.m. Mondays. To join, please have your VA provider contact Margie Muldoon, our certified yoga instructor. Muldoon will contact you for a start date, once your provider clears you for class. Wear comfortable clothing. Yoga mats are provided or you may bring your own.



Symptoms of Hot Flashes

- Intense feelings of heat in the face
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Flushing or reddened face and neck
- Sleep disturbances
- Perspiration
- Cold chills



Coping with Grief

By: Chaplains Gretchen Hulse and Tara Wiederstein

*What we have once enjoyed
deeply, we can never lose.
All that we love deeply,
becomes a part of us.*
— Helen Keller

We all experience losses at one point or another that are so overwhelming they can lead to depression, anger or anxiety.

Some losses are expected, while others are unanticipated tragedies. Many are easily recognized, such as the death of a loved one or the end of a marriage. Others are just as painful, but are less understood, including infertility, miscarriages, illness, an unplanned move, a job loss or the death of a pet.

Losses span the past, present and even the future. For example, you may grieve not only for the current loss of your child, but also for the loss of your future dreams for your child.

Veterans experience losses unique to the military, including during combat, or while deployed. Some may find their feelings too complicated, or impossible, to handle.

Whatever your situation, your grief is real, and your loss is important.

Too often, we turn to coping methods that worsen our emotional, psychological and spiritual pain. Alcohol and drug abuse, isolation, minimizing issues, working long hours, allowing anger to fester or just refusing to talk, or to feel pain, are all unhealthy ways of numbing grief. Such behaviors act as barriers to the healing process.

The first step to coping with grief is to talk to someone about your pain. Talking is the healthiest way to begin to deal with grief, especially when the pain seems too difficult to bear. VA Pittsburgh has skilled professionals, including psychotherapists and chaplains, available to help you work through your grief.

It has been said that “grief is about a broken heart, not a broken brain.” It weighs heavy on our minds, emotions, bodies

and spirits. Unprocessed, grief can negatively affect relationships.

The reality of life is that sometimes the path is difficult and we experience pain and disappointment. But you do not have to travel that path alone. If you would like help please contact the chaplain's department at 412-360-1826.

*“Anything that’s human is
mentionable, and anything
that is mentionable can be
more manageable. When
we can talk about our
feelings, they become less
overwhelming, less
upsetting, and less scary.
The people we trust with
that important talk can
help us know that we
are not alone.”*
— Fred Rogers



Primary Care Locations



Beaver County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

90 Wagner Rd
Monaca, PA 15061
Phone: 724-709-6005



Washington County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

1500 West Chestnut Street
Washington, PA 15301
Phone: 724-250-7790



H.J. Heinz Campus

1010 Delafield Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15215
Phone: 412-822-3000



Belmont County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

103 Plaza Dr. Suite A
St. Clairsville, OH 43950
Phone: 740-695-9321



Westmoreland County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

5274 Route 30 East, Suite 10
Greensburg, PA 15601
Phone: 724-216-0317



University Drive Campus

University Drive
Pittsburgh, PA 15240
Phone: 412-822-3000



Fayette County Community Based Outpatient Clinic

635 Pittsburgh Road
Uniontown, PA 15401
Phone: 724-439-4990

Connect with VA Pittsburgh Healthcare System and Women's Healthcare Program on Facebook and Twitter at: [Facebook.com/VAPHS](https://www.facebook.com/VAPHS) and [Twitter.com/VAPittsburgh](https://twitter.com/VAPittsburgh).

