

You've Been Prescribed Medication for Depression: Now What?

If you have been diagnosed with depression, your doctor may prescribe medication. The thought of taking medication may be uncomfortable, but it is important to remember that you went to your doctor for help because you did not feel right. To reach your goal of feeling better, it is very important to follow your doctor's recommendations, including taking medicine if necessary.

When you begin to take medicine for depression, it may take a few weeks before you feel significant results. This is normal—do not give up on the medicine too early, thinking it is not helping. If you become frustrated, contact your doctor for guidance. Additionally, sometimes patients may need to try several medications before finding the right “fit.” Do not stop taking the medication without your

doctor's approval. Remember, some medications should be stopped slowly, even some antidepressants.

Antidepressants should be taken for at least four to nine months, but some patients stop them prematurely, within a few weeks. Studies have shown that patients diagnosed with depression do much better—and their depression is less likely to return—if they stay on the medicine for six months or longer.¹⁻³

If you want to stop taking a prescribed antidepressant, discuss it with your doctor and develop a plan to address any problems or concerns you have. Some options your doctor may offer are decreasing the dosage temporarily, adding an additional “helper” medication (if you do not feel the medication is working well enough),

changing medications (if you are having significant side effects) or developing a plan to gradually discontinue the medication.

The main thing to remember is you are not alone. Please contact your doctor for assistance if you have any concerns. If you do not already have a doctor and wish to see someone, contact ValueOptions, the TRICARE South Region's behavioral health care partner, at 1-800-700-8646 for assistance. ■

¹ American Psychiatric Association Practice Guidelines for the Treatment of Psychiatric Disorders: Compendium 2006. American Psychiatric Association, 2006.

² Mental Health Medications. NIH Publication No. 08-3929. National Institute of Mental Health, Revised 2008.

³ Kaplan & Sadock's Synopsis of Psychiatry: Behavioral Sciences/Clinical Psychiatry. Lippincott Williams & Wilkins, 2003.

The Doctor is in ... Countdown to a Safe Holiday Season

Dr. Jack Smith, M.D., M.M.M.

Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Clinical and Program Policy
Office of the Assistant Secretary of
Defense for Health Affairs

Before the toasts, cheers and countdowns begin, TRICARE and the Military Health System want you to be aware of the effects of alcohol abuse during the holiday season—and year-round.

Take steps to make sure you and everyone with whom you celebrate avoid the pitfalls of excessive alcohol use. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, excessive alcohol use is the third leading lifestyle-related cause of death in the United States—it was linked to approximately 79,000 deaths annually during 2001–2005.¹

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration has reported that the holiday period is the deadliest time of year for alcohol-related traffic deaths. In the years 2001–2005, the average

number of traffic fatalities involving alcohol-impaired drivers during the period between Dec. 25 and Jan. 1 was an astounding 40 percent, compared to about 28 percent for the rest of December.²

continued on page 2

Inside This Issue ...

- New Behavioral Health Care Services Available
- TRICARE Coverage of Maternity-Related Ultrasounds
- What Is the Right of First Refusal?



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 and federal regulation. Changes to TRICARE programs are continually made as public law and/or federal regulation are amended. **Military treatment facility guidelines and policies may be different than those outlined in this publication.** For the most recent information, contact your TRICARE regional contractor, TRICARE Service Center, or local military treatment facility.

New Behavioral Health Care Services Available

With the introduction of two new services—the Web-based TRICARE Assistance Program (TRIAP) Demonstration and telemental health (TMH)—time and distance will no longer be obstacles for TRICARE beneficiaries seeking behavioral health care.

TRIAP Demonstration

The TRIAP demonstration began on Aug. 1, 2009, and is available in the United States to active duty service members, their spouses (any age) and family members (age 18 and older), as well as beneficiaries age 18 and older enrolled in the Transitional Assistance Management Program and TRICARE Reserve Select.

The TRIAP demonstration allows you to interact with licensed counselors via your personal computer, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. There are no referral and authorization requirements, and you may

use TRIAP services an unlimited number of times for online behavioral health assessments and nonmedical counseling or advice. TRIAP services provide:

- Expert, short-term behavioral health care on demand
- Counseling for commonly occurring life circumstances, such as deployment stress, relationships, personal loss and parent-child communications
- An avenue for private, non-reportable discussion of personal life issues, such as family difficulties and pressures, anxiety, self-esteem, loneliness and critical life decisions on a one-on-one basis in the context of a confidential relationship

If a TRIAP counselor determines it is necessary, you may be referred to a higher level of behavioral health care.

TMH Program

The TMH program is available under the existing TRICARE telemedicine benefit. TMH uses interactive audio/video technology to provide clinical consultation, office visits, individual psychotherapy, psychiatric diagnostic interview examination and pharmacologic management when appropriate and medically necessary.

TMH interaction may involve two-way live audio and video visits between patients at an “originating site” and medical professionals at a “distant site.” The originating site is a TRICARE-authorized facility where beneficiaries may go to receive care. The distant site is where the TRICARE-authorized provider is located at the time the service is provided via a telecommunications system.

continued on page 3

The Doctor is in ... Countdown to a Safe Holiday Season

continued from page 1

In addition to drunk driving, domestic violence rates increase during the holidays. Financial obligations for gifts or travel and too much family togetherness can cause stress and lead to cases of domestic violence. Alcohol does not cause abuse in a relationship, but according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 75 percent of domestic violence cases, the offender is drunk at the time of the offense.³

Here is a countdown of the top five things you should know to help

reduce alcohol abuse during the holiday season:

- **Five ...** It’s not the type of alcoholic drink, but the amount of alcohol consumed that affects a person.
- **Four ...** A standard drink contains 0.6 ounces, or 1.2 tablespoons, of pure alcohol. Generally, this amount of pure alcohol is found in:
 - 12 ounces of regular beer or wine cooler
 - 8 ounces of malt liquor
 - 5 ounces of wine
 - 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits or liquor (e.g., gin, rum, vodka, whiskey)
- **Three ...** Binge drinking is five or more drinks during a single occasion for men and four or more drinks

during a single occasion for women.

- **Two ...** Heavy drinking is more than two drinks in a day for men and more than one drink in a day for women.
- **One ...** The Department of Defense developed a Web site and ad campaign to raise awareness of the negative effects of excessive alcohol use. For details, visit www.thatguy.com. TRICARE’s awareness Web page is www.tricare.mil/alcoholawareness. It explains binge drinking, alcoholism and underage drinking.

Here’s wishing you a happy and safe holiday season! ■

¹ www.cdc.gov/alcohol/ardi.htm

² www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pubs/810870.pdf

³ www.alcoholmonitoring.com/index/browse/press-releases/all/read/1271

TRICARE Coverage of Maternity-Related Ultrasounds

Prenatal care is important, and we strongly recommend that those who are pregnant, or who anticipate becoming pregnant, seek appropriate medical care. TRICARE Prime covers all necessary maternity care, from your first obstetric visit through six weeks after your child is born, including:

- Obstetric visits throughout your pregnancy
- Medically necessary fetal ultrasounds
- Hospitalization for labor, delivery and postpartum care
- Anesthesia for pain management during labor and delivery
- Medically necessary cesarean section
- Management of high-risk or complicated pregnancies

Routine Ultrasounds Are Not Covered

Some providers offer routine ultrasounds after 16–20 weeks of gestation. However, TRICARE does **not** cover routine ultrasounds or ultrasounds to determine gender. TRICARE only covers medically necessary maternity ultrasounds. If you are considering an ultrasound without a valid medical reason, you may be responsible for payment.

Medically Necessary Ultrasounds Are Covered

Under TRICARE, medically necessary maternity-related ultrasounds include those needed to:

- Estimate gestational age due to unknown date of last menstrual period, irregular periods, size/date difference of greater than two weeks or pregnancy while on oral contraceptive pills (Confirmation of estimated gestational age is not a medically necessary indication.)
- Evaluate fetal growth when the fundal height growth is significantly greater than expected (more than 1 cm per week) or less than expected (less than 1 cm per week)
- Conduct a biophysical evaluation for fetal well-being when the mother has certain conditions (e.g., insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus, hypertension, systemic lupus, congenital heart disease, renal disease,

hyperthyroidism, prior pregnancy with unexplained fetal demise, multiple gestations, post-term pregnancy after 41 weeks, intrauterine growth retardation, oligo/polyhydramnios, preeclampsia, decreased fetal movement, isoimmunization)

- Evaluate a suspected ectopic pregnancy
- Determine the cause of vaginal bleeding
- Diagnose or evaluate multiple births
- Confirm cardiac activity (e.g., when fetal heart rate is not detectable by Doppler, suspected fetal demise)
- Evaluate maternal pelvic masses or uterine abnormalities
- Evaluate suspected hydatidiform mole
- Evaluate the condition of the fetus in late registrants for prenatal care

Fetal ultrasounds that are not medically necessary, including three- and four-dimensional ultrasounds, are not covered by TRICARE. A physician is not obligated to perform ultrasonography on a patient who is low risk and has no medical indications.

For additional information and updates on maternity-related ultrasound coverage, visit Humana Military Healthcare Services, Inc.'s Web site at www.humana-military.com or call 1-800-444-5445. ■



New Behavioral Health Care Services Available

continued from page 2

TMH services are subject to the same requirements, criteria and limitations that apply to medical and psychological services. Current TRICARE rules regarding behavioral health care

(e.g., prior authorization and out-of-pocket costs, if applicable) also apply to TMH services.

For additional information about TRICARE's behavioral health care

coverage and resources, visit the "Mental Health and Behavior" section on the TRICARE Web site at www.tricare.mil/mybenefit. ■

TRICARE HealthMatters

Humana Military Healthcare Services, Inc.
500 West Main Street
P.O. Box 740062
Louisville, KY 40201-7462

TRICARE

An Excellent Value

- Generous coverage
- Superior health care
- Decisions are health driven, not insurance driven
- High satisfaction with care
- Low out-of-pocket costs
- Easy access



What Is the Right of First Refusal?

If you are a TRICARE beneficiary living in a TRICARE Prime Service Area (PSA) and a civilian provider submits a referral or authorization request on your behalf, you may be referred to a military treatment facility (MTF). If this has ever happened to you, it may have come as a surprise to you and your family. Knowing why this happens and understanding how the process works can make a world of difference.

The MTF has the right of first refusal for any services requested by a civilian provider. If you live near an MTF and are referred for specialty care by a civilian provider, and if the service is available at the MTF, then the MTF may decide to provide the care. If the service is not available at the MTF, you will then be referred to a civilian network provider.

How Does the Process Work?

When a civilian provider submits a referral or authorization request to Humana Military Healthcare Services, Inc. (Humana Military), if the specialized services required are available at the MTF, the request will be sent to the MTF's point of contact for review. The MTF will notify Humana Military if they are able to provide the care, usually within one business day for routine requests and within 30 minutes for urgent requests.

If the MTF accepts the referral, Humana Military will complete the referral to the MTF, and the MTF will contact you to schedule an appointment.

If the MTF refuses the referral, Humana Military will complete the referral to a civilian network provider, and you will receive notification so that you may schedule your appointment.

The important points to remember are:

- An MTF has the right of first refusal for specialty care that the facility can provide for TRICARE Prime beneficiaries living within a 40-mile radius or 60-minute drive time of an MTF.
- Referrals from your civilian provider may be sent to the MTF if the service/care is available at the MTF.
- MTFs may accept or refuse a referral.
- If the MTF accepts a referral, staff members may call you to schedule an appointment at the MTF.
- If you live near an MTF, you should not schedule an appointment with a network provider until you receive your approval letter for network care.

For more information about MTFs and the right of first refusal, visit Humana Military's Web site at www.humana-military.com. ■