



Be Safe



Did you know there are practical steps you can take to be safe? To maintain your health, it is important to be safe and protect yourself from sexually transmitted infections, falls, and motor vehicle crashes. Read below to learn more about how to be safe.

How do I prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?

- STIs can be passed to another person during sex. You can protect yourself from STIs by abstaining from sex. If you are sexually active, use a latex condom every time you have sex (vaginal, anal, or oral) if your partner is or might be infected.
- You can also decrease your number of sexual partners to reduce your risk.
- If you are in a mutually monogamous relationship with an uninfected partner (you and your partner have sex only with each other), you can reduce your risk of developing STIs.

What are the symptoms of STIs?

- Unfortunately, many STIs do not have symptoms. This means you can have an STI without knowing it. If you think you may have an STI or have been exposed, talk to your health care provider.
- STIs can also be passed from a pregnant woman to her baby before or during the baby's birth. If you are pregnant, get tested for STIs and seek appropriate treatment if the test is positive to avoid passing the infection to the baby.

How are STIs treated?

- Some STIs can be cured with antibiotics if they are treated early. Untreated STIs can cause serious health problems, such as infertility.
- If you are treated for an STI, your sex partner(s) should also be treated to prevent re-infecting you.

A Better Way to

LIVE

Talk with your
health care team
about your goals.



How dangerous are falls in the home?

- Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths. About half of all falls happen at home. Falls are also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospital admissions for trauma.
- If you or a loved one has fallen recently or has balance problems, make sure your home is safe. You can request a home safety assessment from your VA health care team.

What can I do to prevent falls in my home?

- You can prevent tripping and falling by removing small throw rugs. If you choose to use them, use double-sided tape or anti-slip mats underneath the rug.
- You can improve the lighting in your home. As you get older, you need brighter lights to help you see well. Hang light-weight curtains or shades to reduce glare.
- Wear shoes inside and outside the house. Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.
- Remove things (papers, books, clothes, shoes) from stairs and places where you walk, so you will be less likely to trip.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets that you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Make sure you use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Install grab bars next to your toilet and in your tub or shower. Also install handrails and lights in all staircases.
- If you can engage in regular physical activity, especially strengthening exercises, you may reduce your risk of falling by increasing strength and balance (see the *Be Physically Active* handout).

How do I prevent motor vehicle crashes and injuries?

- Don't drive while under the influence of alcohol or drugs or ride with somebody who is.
- Impaired driving is dangerous and causes more than half of all motor vehicle crashes.
- You can reduce your chances and your loved ones' chances of dying from a motor vehicle-related injury by correctly using seat belts and car seats. Wear seat belts in cars and helmets on motorcycles and bicycles.

- Don't text message or talk on a cell phone while driving. Pull far over to the side of the road away from traffic.
- Be aware that motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death in Veterans in the early years after returning home from deployment.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- VHA National Center for Health Promotion & Disease Prevention: www.prevention.va.gov

STIs

- American Social Health Association, How to use a condom*: http://www.ashastd.org/condom/condom_overview.cfm
- Clinical Public Health Program: HIV/AIDS: <http://www.hiv.va.gov/>
- Healthfinder — Quick Guide to Healthy Living*: <http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicID=32&cnt=1&areaID=0>

FALLS

- What You Can Do to Prevent Falls*: http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/pubs/English/brochure_Eng_desktop-a.pdf
http://www.patientsafety.gov/SafetyTopics/fallstoolkit/media/fall_prevention_at_home.pdf
- Healthfinder — Reduce Your Risk of Falling*: Quick Guide to Healthy Living: <http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicID=17>

MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

- Veteran's Safe Driving Initiative: http://www.safedriving.va.gov/docs/safe_driving_brochure.pdf
- Driving Resources — Veteran's Safe Driving Initiative: <http://www.safedriving.va.gov/resources/driving.asp>
- Distracted Driving: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers*: <http://www.distraction.gov/content/get-the-facts/faq.html>

* Indicates that the link leads to a non-VA website. The VA is not responsible for content on the site.

If you have questions about how to make healthy living changes, please talk with your health care team.