For deployed female service members, good health starts at home

By Emily Greene, Military Health System

Did you ever wonder about women's special health needs while deployed? In fact, there are very few differences between the needs of women and men in theatre.

The primary exceptions are menstruation and reproductive health concerns. Fortunately, the Military Health System covers female health both at home and overseas. Experts say the first steps to maintaining good health while deployed start at home.

Women should ensure all their preventative health screenings are up to date, including Pap smears and mammograms (if needed) in plenty of time to have a follow-up for any abnormalities prior to leaving their home stations.

Female service members should also discuss what hormonal medication, if any, they will use during their deployment. And they should talk with their doctors about what their job entails including physical demands.

For known health issues, service members are advised to take a three-month supply of prescriptions with them overseas. This ensures they have a window of time to get settled in theater and determine where they will get refills. In addition to getting prescribed medications in theatre, the TRICARE pharmacy program can supply refills by mail.

While there are some limitations to female-specific care in theatre, all combat support hospitals have primary care physicians and many also have OB-GYN doctors. Most level two facilities also have primary care physicians trained to care for women.

Some common medical issues seen by medical personnel are menorrhagia (heavy periods), unwanted menses and dysmenorrheal (painful periods). All three of these issues may be treated with hormonal medications which control flow, duration and the frequency of menses.

In very rare cases, women who are unable to maintain sanitary conditions due to menses in austere conditions may require surgery for clearing of pelvic infections which have been unresponsive to medical management.

Medical personnel recommend that female service members who are menstruating have daily access to bathing facilities. This could mean just a private place with sufficient drainage adequate for a "bird bath" or use of unscented baby wipes.

Another concern deployed service members may have is planning pregnancies.

Women who are considering getting pregnant soon after their return home can begin taking vitamins and folic acid in the last three months leading up to re-deployment. In addition, women are advised to consult with their doctors and to schedule immunizations at least three months prior to conception.

(Center) DCFR Melissa Salgado controls an aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) hose as the number one nozzleman while DCC Joseph Doherty and DC1 Christopher Kujat supervise during a test of AFFF systems aboard *USS George Washington* (CVN 73). Women should ensure all their preventative health screenings are up to date, including Pap smears and mammograms (if needed) in plenty of time to have a follow-up for any abnormalities prior to deployments.

U.S. Navy photo by MC3 Jared Hill

Domestic violence awareness: Primer guide to basics - part two

By Special Agent Robin Kerr, NCIS Far East Field Office Yokosuka

Editor's note: This is part two of a two-part series. It is designed to give readers the basic definition of domestic violence, statistics regarding it, the triggers, and what constitutes restricted and unrestricted reporting. Quite often, victims and friends of victims wonder if they are in, are witnessing or are being told about a domestic violence situation. Hopefully, these answers will be provide from these articles. They are also available on line at: https://www.cnic.navy.mil/ Yokosuka/OperatingForcesSupport/ NCIS/CrimeReductionProgram/index.htm.

The five most common triggers of domestic violence are: suspected infidelity; alcohol and, or drug problems; the relationship ending; children; money and religion. Studies of military members that have gone to war and are subsequently diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) show those persons are significantly more likely to perpetrate violence toward their partners.

Lethality indicators are domestic violence situations likely to cause a more severe physical assault. Those indicators are (but not limited to) the following: loss of job, the threat thereof or financial strain; the victim recently left the home; pending divorce and, or child custody battles; alcohol abuse; access to weapons or threats to obtain weapons; access to the victim; violations of civilian protection orders or military protection orders; stalking; depression and obsession regarding the victim. If you are experiencing any of these indicators coupled with physical abuse, or you know someone in this situation, it's time to act before things escalate.

The military has a program called Restricted Reporting. Restricted Reporting allows an adult victim of domestic violence, eligible to receive military medical treatment, the option to report an incident of domestic violence to specific individuals without initiating the investigative process or notification to the victim or offender's command. If a victim desires Restricted Reporting, they can make a report of domestic violence to a victim advocate, the supervisor of the victim advocate, a healthcare provider or a chaplain. Any other disclosures (even to a friend or coworker) do not have the same confidentiality and most likely will result in a criminal investigation being initiated.

Exceptions to Restricted Reporting are when one or more of the following conditions exist: the victim authorizes an investigation be conducted; to prevent or lessen a serious or imminent threat to health or safety of victim or another person as in homicidal or suicidal threats; stalking or abuse during pregnancy; strangulation; a weapon is used; forced sex; suspected child abuse; during disability retirement boards; when required for supervision of victim services; and when required by state or federal statute. Naval Criminal Investigative Service (NCIS) is charged with conducting these types of investigations for the Department of the Navy, depending on the circumstances.

Unrestricted Reporting means a domestic violence incident is referred to law enforcement and an investigation is initiated. Military personnel are required to notify the appropriate authorities of criminal activity, to include domestic abuse, unless they are the victim and have requested Restricted Reporting. If the information comes to the command or Family Advocacy from someone other than the victim, law enforcement is apprised and an investigation is initiated. If the victim discloses the abuse to any one other than the Restricted Reporting individuals (victim advocate, victim advocate supervisor, healthcare provider or a chaplain), an investigation may be initiated and Family Advocacy notified. Telling a best friend or coworker does not meet the criteria for confidential reporting, meaning this information is now unrestricted and if reported to law enforcement, an investigation may be initiated.

Once an allegation is reported to NCIS, an investigation will be conducted. This investigation includes, but is not limited to interviewing the victim, any witness, and the suspect; photography; a crime scene examination; record reviews; criminal history checks and other steps as deemed necessary. The command may issue a military protective order and in more severe cases, the suspect may be put into pretrial confinement. The safety of the victim is the first priority, and a safety plan will be developed to create a safe place during the pendency of the investigation.

There are many services available to get you through the process safely and without losing everything so when you are ready to end the cycle of violence, contact NCIS, base security and, or the Fleet and Family Support Center for assistance. No one deserves to be assaulted, and these types of incidents escalate. Today's verbal abuse can become tomorrow's physical assault.

You can reach NCIS during regular working hours at 243-7535. After hours, contact base security, who will then contact an NCIS agent on duty. We have special agents specifically trained to handle these types of investigations, so please take that first step to keep yourself safe.

Proper dry cell battery disposal

To ensure your safety during accumulation, transportation and disposition of alkaline or manganese batteries, present practice requires the usage of clear cellophane tape to bind both ends of the metal terminals due to possible short-circuit when two or more metallic objects come in contact and may cause a possible fire or an explosion. The common battery types in household and light industrial use are: AA, AAA, C, D, N, and 9V. For disposal purposes on base, turn in the taped alkaline or manganese batteries to an authorized hazardous waste accumulation point or drop off the taped alkaline or manganese batteries to CFAY Public Works Department Hazardous Waste Yard at building 1822 located at Rickert Drive. Call 243-3840 for more information.

Image by CFAY Public Works Department