



# HEALTHCONNECT

connecting patients for better health

JUNE 2016



## MOTORCYCLE SAFETY

Everyone feels the need to be out in the open every once in a while instead of being enclosed in a small space, and some of us find that freedom through riding motorcycles. However, whether or not you are one of those, all motorists play a part in keeping roads safe for motorcyclists.

When a motorcycle is involved in a collision, it is usually the other vehicle that violates the motorcyclist's right of way, because we often don't think about the motorcyclists who we share the road with. This is a problem. According to Injury Facts, although motorcycles make up 3 percent of all registered vehicles and only .7 percent of all vehicle miles traveled in the U.S., motorcyclists accounted for 15 percent of all traffic fatalities, 18 percent of all occupant fatalities and 4 percent of all occupant injuries.

Motorcycles are relatively small and drivers don't see them, on top of that the driver's view of the motorcycle is obstructed, often by the vehicle's blind spots or other vehicles. Drivers also may not anticipate motorcycles' movements.

As a motorcyclist you can help protect yourself by going the speed limit, avoid weaving between cars, invest in antilock brakes, and always wear all of your protective gear. New riders should take a motorcycle safety course, and experienced riders should take refresher courses after being off their bikes for a while. As a driver, make sure that you always keep an eye out for motorcycles, look over your shoulder before switching lanes or making sudden maneuvers, and never tailgate a motorcycle. As a rider, or driver, do your part to keep roads accident free.

**Nurse Advice Line 24/7**  
800-TRICARE  
(800-874-2273)

**Hampton Roads  
Appointment Center**  
(866) 645-4584

**Emergency Room**  
(757) 953-1365

**Pharmacy Refill**  
Local: (757) 953-MEDS (6337)  
Toll Free: (866) 285-1008

**Information**  
(757) 953-5008

**Customer Service Office**  
(757) 953-2600

**Relay Health Secure Messaging**  
[www.RelayHealth.com](http://www.RelayHealth.com)

## HEAT SAFETY

Needless to say that when summer rolls around, so do the high temperatures, putting everyone at risk for serious or even fatal heat injuries. This does not mean that you can't enjoy outdoor activities, just follow some of the necessary safety precautions.

Seniors, people with a chronic medical condition, children, homeless or poor, outdoor workers, and athletes are most at-risk to heat sickness. Stay cool by staying in air-conditioned buildings as much as possible and avoid direct sunlight. Most cities even offer cooling centers or other air-conditioned shelters to the homeless or poor during times of extreme heat.

Never leave infants, children, or pets in a parked car. Drink plenty of water and don't wait until you're thirsty to rehydrate. Stay updated on local weather forecasts so you can plan activities safely when it's hot outside.

Signs of heat exhaustion include heavy sweating, weakness, cold pale clammy skin, a fast weak pulse, nausea or vomiting, and fainting. Signs of heat stroke include high body temperature (above 103°F)\* hot red dry or moist skin, rapid and strong pulse and possible unconsciousness. If you or anyone you know starts experiencing symptoms of heat related sickness, seek medical care immediately.







## HEALTHY WEIGHT

ShipShape Weight Management Program - 8-week intensive program for adults. To register, call the HRAC at (866) 645-4584

Right Weight - 4-week program for learning to manage your weight the right way. To register, call (757) 953-1925 or 953-9247

For more information on Health Promotions and Wellness Department programs and resources, call (757) 953-1925

## SUMMER SAFETY

Summer will end, but consequences can endure. While summer is the time of year everyone looks forward to, serious mishaps can still happen.

Did you know that up to 70 percent of all water recreation deaths of teens and adults involve the use of alcohol? Make sure that you are taking all the necessary safety precautions this summer to keep you and your loved ones unharmed. Alcohol impairs judgment and increases risk-taking, a dangerous combination for swimmers and boaters. Even experienced swimmers have ventured out too far from shore and not made it back, or developed hypothermia because they did not realize how cold they were getting. Surfers could become over-confident and try to ride a wave beyond their abilities. Even around a pool, too much alcohol can have deadly consequences. Inebriated divers may collide with the diving board, dive where the water is too shallow, or slip on wet concrete and hit their heads.

A fun alternative to drinking is, of course, sports. However, make sure you play nice! According to the Naval Safety Center, last summer, the top five injury-producing activities for both the Navy and Marine Corps were; basketball, baseball/softball, bicycling, football, followed by jogging/running. That does not mean you have to rule these out, just take precautions and play by the rules.

According to the U.S. Coast Guard and the National Association of State Boating Law Administrators, alcohol can impair a boater's judgment, balance, vision, and reaction time, and passengers are more likely to fall overboard. Boaters are also more like to become reckless and overly confident and not wear their life jackets.

Needless to say, summer is also the most dangerous time on the road because people are more likely to drink. Always be sure have a designated driver on standby or a taxi available if you've been drinking. This way you can protect yourself and others from DUI related incidents.

## TOBACCO CESSATION

Workshop - 1st Mondays, 8 a.m. to noon

4-week class - begins 1st Tuesdays, 1-2:30 p.m.

Tobacco Meditation Walk-In Clinic - 1st Tuesdays, 2-4 p.m.

For more information, call (757) 953-1927 or 953-1925



Donate blood



Save a life



Become a hero

Call 757-953-1730/1717 to schedule a blood donation appointment today!



# EMERGENCY ROOM UTILIZATION

On an average day, 200 patients are seen in the Naval Medical Center Portsmouth emergency room. During cold and flu season, that number easily hits 280 to 290, and sometimes goes over 300. This volume of patients is higher than most of the ERs in the region and higher than all emergency rooms in the Navy.

This statistic may come as no surprise for some since Hampton Roads has the highest concentration of Navy personnel assigned. But what may be surprising is that many of the patients report with medical complaints that could be seen through an appointment with their primary care doctor. At the same time, many primary care appointments go unfilled every day.

“When we get to that level, it begins to seriously strain the resources we have, with our staff and our space, as well as our consultant services, like radiology and the laboratory,” said Cmdr. Matthew Lawrence, the department head of NMCP’s Emergency Department. “We really seek to identify our acutely ill and injured patients, and triage like any emergency department does. Patients aren’t seen in the order they arrive.”

Lawrence said that while the emergency room does not have an urgent care or low-acuity care area, some patients are under the impression it does.

“There is a significant subset of our patients who realize what they have going on isn’t an emergency,” Lawrence said. “We have patients every day who are sick and can’t go to work, and say their chief needed a sick note. Or a parent requests a note for their child to be cleared to go back to daycare after an illness. These types of issues are better served in the primary care community than the Emergency Department.”

For those who are not experiencing a true emergency, patients should first contact their primary care office. Each clinic with primary care doctors, whether it’s with Family Practice, Internal Medicine or Pediatrics, has same-day, acute care appointments available. This is the case for NMCP’s main medical center, as well as the branch health clinics and TRICARE Prime clinics throughout the region.

“Many of the days that we see a high number of low-acuity patients, when we cross-match with the primary care offices, we see a lot of appointments were unfilled,” Lawrence said. “If these appointments were filled even 90 percent of the time, we wouldn’t have the need to focus on ER utilization.”

Lawrence said convenience may be a driving factor since patients believe they can show up on their schedule and get X-rays and lab work done quickly. But in reality, there may be a four- to six-hour visit, instead of a 15-minute appointment and referral to walk down to the lab or radiology.

“The bigger picture is trying to do the greatest good for the most patient,” Lawrence said. “When patients show up with primary care needs, it makes it more difficult to treat the sicker patients who need us the most.”

Patients who are in need of care, but are not experiencing an emergency, should call their primary care teams to set up an appointment, or they can call the Hampton Roads Appointment Center at (866) 645-4584. Patients who are not sure if they can self-treat at home, need an appointment, or should go to an emergency room should call the Nurse Advice Line. The Nurse Advice Line is available 24/7 to all TRICARE beneficiaries by calling (800) TRICARE – (800- 874-2273) – and selecting option 1. Callers will be connected to a team of registered nurses who can answer a variety of urgent health care questions. The nurse can make same-day appointments for TRICARE beneficiaries enrolled to a military hospital or clinic.

## GET CONNECTED

Download the NMCP app today and get access to:

- News and announcements
  - Interactive maps
  - Pharmacy wait times
  - Telephone directory
  - Safe Ride
  - Relay Health
  - ICE feedback
- and so much more!**



# 118,000

patients with a PCM at one of our ten facilities

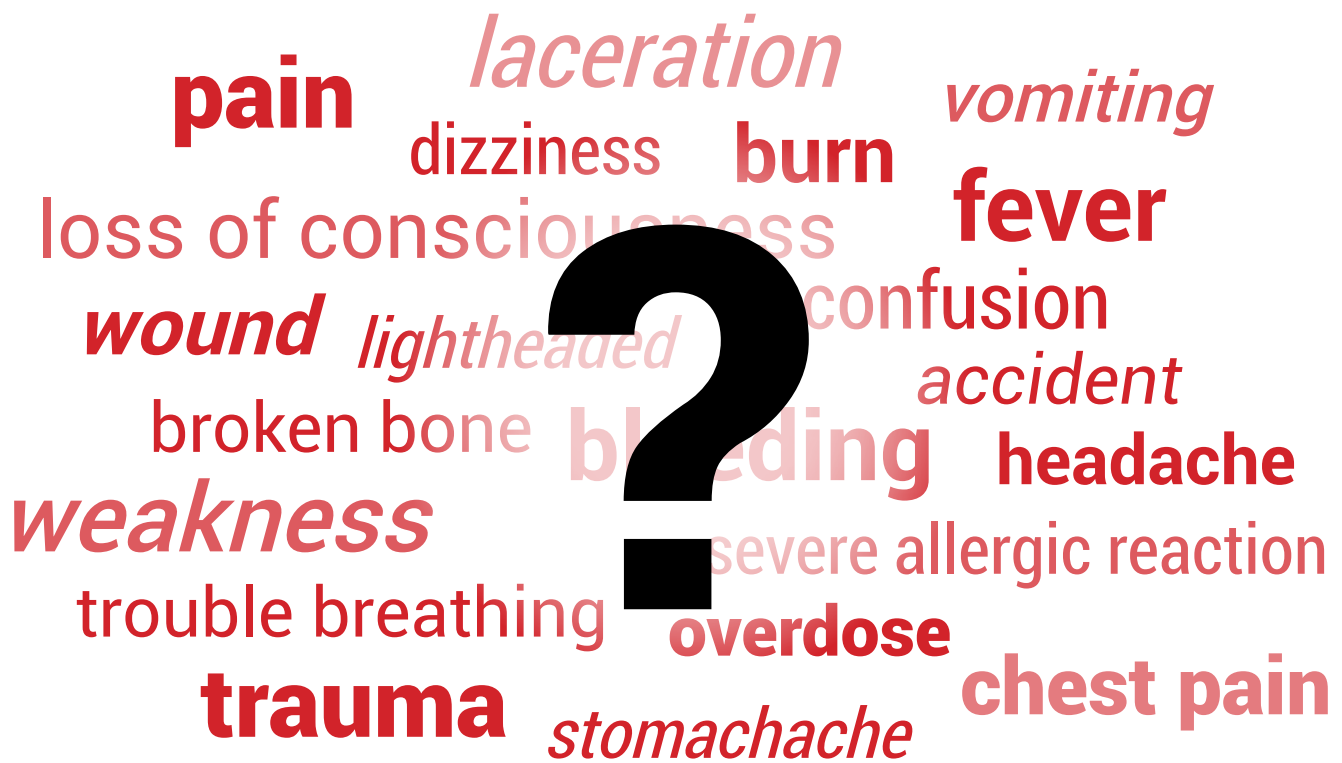
# 22

Medical Home Port teams

# 440,000

patients we serve - active duty, retired and families





## Do you know when to go to an emergency room (ER)?

According to the American College of Emergency Physicians, you should visit the ER if you have any of the following warning signs or conditions:

- Chest pain or pressure
- Uncontrolled bleeding
- Sudden or severe pain
- Coughing or vomiting blood
- Severe allergic reaction
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Sudden dizziness, weakness, or changes in vision
- Severe or persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- Changes in mental status, such as confusion

## ER waiting room times can be as long as 4 hours

**If you are not experiencing any of the above symptoms, consider these options:**

Call the TRICARE Nurse Advice Line, 1-800-TRICARE, Option 1; available 24/7

or call the Hampton Roads Appointment Center to see if there are any available appointments; 1-866-MIL-HLTH (1-866-645-4584)

