

HEALTH DEPT.

POUNDS OF PREVENTION

Doctors who watch out for their own health are more likely to watch out for yours—that's the conclusion of a recent survey of 1,349 internists. Sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control, the survey showed that doctors who exercise, don't smoke, and otherwise maintain healthy habits are most likely to practice preventive medicine. It was further revealed that prevention-minded physicians tend to be younger (under age 45) and to practice general medicine. Charles E. Lewis, M.D., who led the survey, advises: "Look for a doctor who's neither obese nor anorectic and who doesn't smell of smoke." Then ask about his or her approach to proper diet and exercise, alcohol use, smoking, regular cancer screening, and managing stress through exercise and relaxation.

If your physician is reluctant to talk about prevention, Dr. Lewis suggests that you consider another doctor.

IS COFFEE FATTENING?

Do you drink a lot of coffee? Also overeat? The two may be connected. New research from the University of Michigan Medical Center shows that consumption of more than 750 mg of caffeine a day (about eight cups of coffee) is associated with increased bingeing in women with bulimia and related eating disorders. According to study leader Dean Krahn, M.D., high caffeine intake is both cause and effect of disturbed eating patterns. "Caffeine produces anxiety," says Dr. Krahn, "which may make women with eating disorders prone to binge. But the semi-



starved state these women experience between binges seems to increase their use of caffeine" as well as other stimulants—possibly because a "reward pathway" in the brain prods some people to try substitutes when they're deprived of the reward of food. Dr. Krahn believes his research also has implications for people without diagnosed eating disorders: If caffeine makes a person anxious, she may eat more; if she is a regular dieter, she may use more caffeine, alcohol, diet pills, cigarettes, and other dangerous substances to compensate for hunger.

BEYOND DESERT STORM

Operation Desert Storm placed American military women in close proximity to combat, and as they return, says the military, many can be expected to exhibit psychological symptoms of battle fatigue. Some may suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a condition well documented in male veterans, especially those who served in Vietnam.

There are likely to be differences, though. According to Mary C. Grace, codirector of the University of Cincinnati Traumatic Stress Center, "Women with PTSD tend to express higher levels of anxiety and depression, whereas men tend to display more hostility, belligerence, and, possibly, substance abuse." Women in the military may also be less willing than men to inform

their superiors that they are experiencing PTSD, according to Jessica Wolfe, Ph.D., associate director of the National Center for PTSD at Boston's Veterans Administration Medical Center. "In Vietnam," says Wolfe, "nurses and other service-women suffered a lot but kept it to themselves. They saw their role as that of the caretaker, not the war veteran"—as the person who gives help rather than the person who needs and seeks it. Consequently, while 8.5 percent of women (compared with 15.2 percent of men) returning from Vietnam were known to have the disorder, war-related PTSD has never been fully studied in women—a situation Wolfe hopes to change with research currently in progress.

KEEP-COOL FUELS

Swimming, gardening, tennis, long summer-evening walks—all call for the right nutrition, to which the following are basic:

Vitamins and minerals: Exercise increases the body's need for iron and B vitamins, and perspiration may diminish supplies of iron, calcium, potassium, and other minerals.

Carbohydrates: You may be left lethargic if you skimp on carbohydrates. To add them without adding pounds, try fat-free or low-fat sources, such as pasta, rice, bread, and fruit.

Water: According to exercise physiologist William J. Evans, Ph.D., of Tufts University, "As we grow older, our thirst mechanism becomes somewhat impaired," making it harder to know when to drink. He suggests weighing yourself before playing tennis or golf, then weighing yourself afterward. For every two to three pounds lost, drink about a liter of water to compensate. ■