



## **New Veteran Orientation Handbook**

**Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center, Iron Mountain, MI 49801**

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**2015 Edition**

# New Veteran Orientation Handbook

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## **Health Care Contact Information**

**Your Primary Care Provider is:**

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**Your Primary Care Nurse is:**

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To contact us please call:  
1-800-215-8262 Ext: 33115

Or

906-774-3300 Ext: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Other Useful Numbers:**

Prescription Refill: 1-800-805-1870 (see page 14 for details)

Iron Mountain VA Pharmacy: 906-774-3300 ext: 32480

Patient Advocate: 906-774-3300 ext: 32020

Travel Clerk: 906-774-3300 ext: 32666

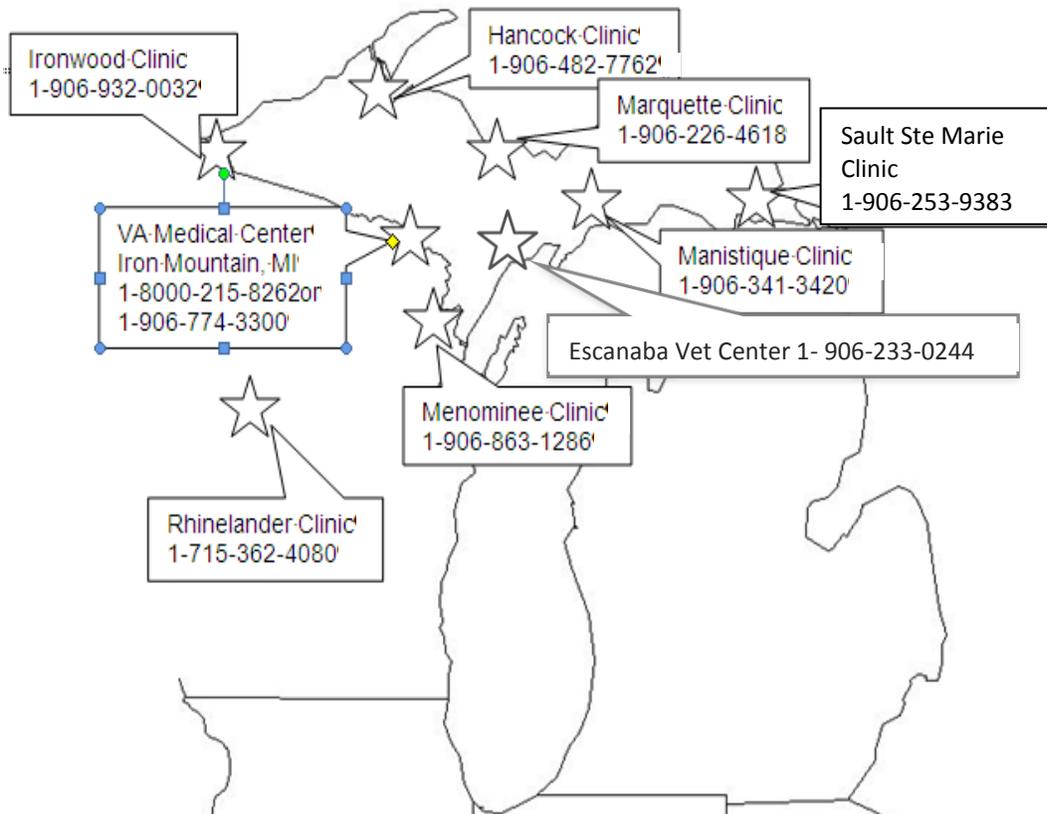


## WELCOME

Welcome to the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center (OGJVAMC) and Community Outpatient Clinics. We thank you for allowing us the privilege of providing your health care.

The OGJVAMC provides for the health care needs of Veterans in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and Northeast Wisconsin. Whether you served us in war or in peacetime, on battlefields around the world, or in cities and towns closer to home, we want to thank you for your service to our country and ourselves. Now it is our turn to serve you. Our goal is to provide you with the highest quality health care available. Your satisfaction is a key measure of our success.

We encourage you to share with staff any concerns you may have regarding your condition or treatment. The entire staff is committed to treating you with respect and courtesy. We wish to make your time at the OGJVAMC as pleasant as possible.





## OGJ VA Medical Center Mission

Honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional healthcare that improves their health and well-being.

## OGJ VA Medical Center Vision

Leaders in rural healthcare-focused on excellence-putting Veterans first.

## Core Values

VA embraces five "Core Values" for all of our employees. These five core values (I.C.A.R.E.) are:

- **Integrity:** Act with high moral principle. Adhere to the highest professional standards. Maintain the trust and confidence of all with whom I engage.
- **Commitment:** Work diligently to serve Veterans and other beneficiaries. Be driven by an earnest belief in VA's mission. Fulfill my individual responsibilities and organizational responsibilities.
- **Advocacy:** Be truly Veteran-centric by identifying, fully considering, and appropriately advancing the interests of Veterans and other beneficiaries.
- **Respect:** Treat all those I serve and with whom I work with dignity and respect. Show respect to earn it.
- **Excellence:** Strive for the highest quality and continuous improvement. Be thoughtful and decisive in leadership, accountable for my actions, willing to admit mistakes, and rigorous in correcting them.



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## **Agent Cashier / Travel Benefits**

The Agent Cashier is available to Veterans wishing to make co-payments or to receive reimbursement for eligible travel expenses. If you wish to apply for travel benefits report to the Travel Clerk located on the 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Room 1218. Hours are Monday—Friday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. unless otherwise posted.

## **How Travel is Paid at the Community Outpatient Clinics**

At the Community Outpatient Clinics (CBOC's), the clerk will print the voucher and obtain the Veteran's signature and fax to the medical center for processing. Payment is made by Electronic Fund Transfer (EFT) within ten business days.

Travel is paid to the nearest VA facility that can provide the needed care for those that qualify. Mileage is determined by a VA travel dashboard which uses Bing maps.

## **Bus Transportation (to the Milwaukee VAMC)**

Tuesdays and Thursdays except Holidays.

### **Pick up and drop off sites:**

Iron Mountain VA Hospital  
The Piggly Wiggly Store – Crivitz, Wisconsin  
Mary's Place – Beecher, Wisconsin  
McDonald's – Abrams, Wisconsin  
The Milwaukee VA Medical Center

Reservations are required.

Please contact the Travel Clerk at 906-774-3300 Ext. 33849 to make your reservation.

## **Cafeteria / Canteen Retail Store**

The cafeteria and retail store are located on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. Breakfast is served from 7 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. Hot lunch is served from 10:45 a.m. to 2 p.m. (including subs / wraps). A limited menu is available until 3 p.m.

The store is open from 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday—Friday. It stocks various Made in the USA products (duty free—tax free). All profits are given back to support Veterans and VA programs such as The Fisher House, VA’s Homelessness Initiative, VA’s Rehabilitation Special Events, and VA’s OEF / OIF Poly-Trauma Centers.

## **Chaplain**

Our VA chaplains are clinical pastoral care specialists. They offer assistance to patients and their family members through all phases of outpatient healing, hospital care, weddings, funerals, sacraments, and other services. The Interfaith Chapel is open 24 hours a day. Catholic worship services are held at 11:00 a.m. every Friday and holy days. Protestant services are held at 10 a.m. every Sunday. All services are held in the chapel on the first floor. For information about the chapel or Chaplain services, contact the Chaplain at 906-774-3300, Ext: 32066.

## **Interpreter Services**

It is important to this medical center that you can communicate with us and take part in your health care. If you or a family member has limited English ability, let your provider or a staff member know. They will contact the Language Line to help you. This is a telephone-based system and is available 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week.

## **Lost and Found**

The medical center has a lost and found area. Please take any items you might find to the information desk at the front entrance, to the VA Police, or directly to the AOD office. The AOD office is located in the Emergency Department in room 1302. The office is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In the Community Outpatient Clinic, any found items can be brought to the staff.

## **Organ and Tissue Donation**

Organs you can donate include heart, kidneys, pancreas, lungs, liver, and intestines. Tissues you can donate include eyes, skin, bone, heart valves, veins, and tendons.

In the state of Michigan you can enroll online or by mail. Contact:

Gift of Life Michigan  
3861 Research Park Drive  
Ann Arbor, MI 48108  
800-482-4881

<https://services.sos.state.mi.us/OrganDonor/Pages/Registry.aspx>

In the State of Wisconsin you can designate your choice on your driver's license. Sign your driver's license and tell your family members you want to be a donor. Then e-mail [driverrecords.dmv@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:driverrecords.dmv@dot.state.wi.us). Include a statement "I would like my record to reflect that I would like to be an organ and tissue donor".

## **Parking**

Free parking is available to all Veteran patients of OGJVAMC. Patients and visitors should use the front parking lot; it can be entered from H Street. Handicapped parking is available in both the west and east lots. OGJVAMC police officers provide 24-hour patrols of the facility and parking lots.

All Community Outpatient Clinics have free parking available to all Veteran patients.

## **Police**

The medical center has VA Police on duty 24 hours a day for your care and protection. For general police assistance, please dial (906) 774-3300 Ext. 32030. In case of an emergency, dial 911. Report all suspicious or criminal activity, vehicle accidents, and personal property losses to the VA Police as soon as possible while on the facility grounds. At the Community Outpatient Clinics, please report to staff or call 911 for local police.

## **Cell Phones**

Cell phone usage is limited to non-patient care areas. Please silence your cell phones during appointments and classes.

## **Prohibited Items**

Alcoholic beverages, narcotics, firearms, ammunition, knives, or other weapons are not allowed on the grounds or anywhere in the medical center or its community outpatient centers.

## **Release of Information**

At the OGJVAMC, the confidentiality of your health information is important to us. This means we protect your health information. We use or disclose it only as authorized by law. To make sure that the information is given out only when authorized, please follow the instructions below to obtain information.

To request a copy of your health information for a local provider, another facility or an insurance company, you will need to complete form 10-5345, “Request For An Authorization To Release Medical Records Or Health Information”. To request a copy for your own use, complete form 10-5345a, “Individuals’ Request For A Copy Of Their Own Health Information”.

**FORMS are available by:**

1. You can pick up forms in the Release of Information Office in room 5128, 906-774-3300 Ext. 32603. We can also fax or mail them to you. At the Community Outpatient Clinics, the clerk will assist Veterans with completing the Release of Information request.

2. You may also pick up these forms in your clinic. Once completed, they can be given to the Release of Information Office, clinic staff, or mailed or faxed to the OGJVAMC, Attention—Release of Information 170D.

To authorize communication about your health (including appointments) to someone else, such as a family member, you will need to fill out Form 10-5345. You will need to do this in the Release of Information Office. This form is not available online. However, as stated above it can be picked up in your clinic or in the Release of Information Office.

**Tobacco Policy**

Staff, visitors, volunteers, and Veteran patients may not use tobacco products anywhere indoors or within any exits or entrance ways. This includes electronic cigarettes. Please be considerate of non-tobacco users and only use tobacco products in designated areas. There is a shelter provided in front of the OGJVAMC for patient and visitor use.

## Veterans Benefits Counselors

The medical center has Veterans' Benefits Service Officers who can answer questions about filing claims and offer information on benefits. This office also arranges and provides transportation to appointments for needy Veterans.

<i>Local Service Officers in Michigan</i>		<i>Local Service Officers in Wisconsin</i>	
Alger County	906-387-1635	Florence County	715-696-6770
Baraga County	906-524-5454	Forest County	715-478-3722
Chippewa County	906-635-6370	Langlade County	715-627-6500
Delta County	906-786-7228	Lincoln County	715-536-0325
Dickinson County	906-774-2820	Marathon County	715-261-1141
Gogebic County	906-667-1110	Marinette County	715-732-7650
Houghton / Keweenaw Counties	906-337-3450	Menominee County	715-799-3729
Iron County	906-265-3266	Oconto County	920-834-6817
Luce County	906-293-8654		
Mackinac County	906-643-9411		
Marquette County	906-226-3576 ext. 362		
Menominee County	906-863-5691		
Ontonagon County	906-884-4670		
Schoolcraft County	906-341-3669		

## Volunteers

The staff of the Oscar G. Johnson VAMC and its Community Outpatient Clinics is reinforced by many volunteers. They contribute thousands of hours of valuable service to our medical center and those we serve. Volunteers staff the greeters' desk, transport inpatients and outpatients to their appointments and procedures, hold evening, weekend, and holiday recreation activities, and much more. For information about volunteering contact the Voluntary Services office by telephone at 906-774-3300 Ext. 32780 or at 800-215-8262, Ext. 32780.

## Questions about Voter Registration?

### *Veterans...*

If you need information on how you can exercise your freedom by voting in local and national elections, contact your VA Voluntary Service Office or visit the VAVS national website at [www.volunteer.va.gov](http://www.volunteer.va.gov) and select the orange 'Voter Assistance' button in the upper right corner.

You may also contact your VA Voluntary Service office at this facility:

Oscar G Johnson VA Medical Center

Voluntary Service (Room 6107)

(906) 774-3300, ext: 32780

## **Joint Commission**

Complaints about the quality of care at OGJVAMC and / or its seven Community Outpatient Clinics may be submitted to The Joint Commission by mail, fax or e-mail.

The Joint Commission encourages you to first bring your complaint to the attention of the health care organization's leaders. If this does not lead to resolution, bring your complaint to the Joint Commission for review.

There are two ways to submit a complaint to The Joint Commission about an accredited organization. You may either provide your name and contact information or submit your complaints anonymously. Providing your name and contact information enables The Joint Commission to inform you about the actions taken in response to your complaint. They can also contact you should additional information be needed.

The Joint Commission does not address individual billing issues and payment disputes. Also, they do not have jurisdiction in labor relations issues or the individual clinical management of a patient. The Joint Commission does not review complaints of any kind in unaccredited organizations.

### **E-Mail:**

complaint@jointcommission.org

### **Fax:**

Office of Quality Monitoring  
(630) 792-5636

### **Mail:**

Office of Quality Monitoring  
The Joint Commission  
One Renaissance Boulevard  
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181



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## Eligibility and Benefits

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to informing Veterans about VA health care benefits and services. It produces various publications to keep you up-to-date.

### “Veterans Health Benefits Handbook”

VA is producing a personalized “Veterans Health Benefits Handbook” for each Veteran enrolled in the VA health care system. The purpose of the handbook is to provide a current and accurate description of VA health care benefits and services. Your handbook will be tailored specifically to you with personal identifying information. You should safeguard it as you would any other sensitive personal document.

The “Veterans Health Benefits Handbook” includes:

- Eligibility and health care benefits,
- Contact information for your local facility,
- Information regarding copayment responsibilities,
- Instructions on how to schedule appointments,
- Guidelines to communicate treatment needs,
- Patient rights,
- Ways to obtain copies of medical records, and
- Other important information.

You will receive your personalized handbook via U.S. mail. Therefore, you should have a current address on file with VA. Handbooks are mailed based on Priority Group, beginning with Priority Group 1 and ending with Priority Group 8. To see when you might receive your handbook, go to [http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhbh/vhbh\\_distribution.asp](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhbh/vhbh_distribution.asp). You may also call VA toll-free at 1-877-222-VETS (8387) if you need to update your address or receive more information.

### “Veterans Health Benefits Guide” and “Health Care Benefits Overview”

VA publishes two other guides as well. The “Veterans Health Benefits Guide” is designed to provide general information about the VA Medical Benefits Package. The “Health Care Benefits Overview” is designed to provide the information Veterans need to understand VA’s health care system. It contains answers to frequently asked questions about eligibility and benefits. Both publications are

available to you at all VA medical centers. They can be downloaded at <http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/resources/epublications.asp>.

These publications are very helpful. We encourage you to refer to them whenever you have questions about your eligibility for specific health care benefits. Additional assistance is available at the following resources:

- Your local VA health care facility's Enrollment Office
- [www.va.gov/healthbenefits](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits)
- [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)
- VA toll-free 1-877-222-VETS (8387) between 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM ET, Monday-Friday



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## Disability Compensation Benefits

### What Is VA Disability Compensation?

Disability compensation is a tax-free benefit. It is paid to a Veteran for disabilities caused or made worse by injuries or diseases that happened while on active duty, active duty training, or inactive duty training. Disability compensation is also paid to certain Veterans disabled from VA health care.

### Who Is Eligible?

You may be eligible for disability compensation if you have a service-related disability and you were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions.

### How Much Does VA Pay?

The amount of basic benefit paid ranges from \$123 to \$2,673 per month, depending upon the degree of your disability. The amount may change annually as determined by Congress. You may be paid additional amounts, in certain instances, if:

- You have very severe disabilities or loss of limb(s)
- You have a spouse, child(ren), or dependent parent(s)
- You have a seriously disabled spouse

### How Can You Apply?

#### Use a paper form

Fill out VA Form 21-526, "Veterans Application for Compensation and/or Pension." If you have any of the following materials, please attach them to your application:

- Discharge or separation papers (DD214 or equivalent)
- Dependency records (marriage & children's birth certificates)
- Medical evidence (doctor & hospital reports)

--OR--

**Apply online:** <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp>.

The Service Officers located in your community or at the OGJVAMC will assist you with filing claims.

### **Related Benefits**

**Note: Entitlement may depend on level of disability**

- Priority Medical Care
- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Clothing Allowance
- Grants for Specially Adapted Housing
- Automobile Grant and Adaptive Equipment
- Service-Disabled Veterans Insurance
- Federal Employment Preference
- State/Local Veterans Benefits
- Military Exchange and Commissary Privileges

### **For more information**

Call VA toll-free at 1-800-827-1000

or visit VA's Web site at <http://www.va.gov>.



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## How VA Health Care Works for You

### Choose a Facility

You have a choice of facilities where you can receive VA health care services. These include primary care, specialty medicine and surgery services, mental health care, etc. Primary Care is your gateway to VA health care. We now call all primary care service “Patient Aligned Care Teams” or “PACT” for short.

The facility you choose is called your preferred facility. Once you choose it, VA staff will provide you with information and help to schedule an appointment with your new provider. The location of the OGJ VAMC and its seven Community Outpatient Clinics follow:

Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center  
325 East H Street  
Iron Mountain, MI 49801  
Phone: 906-774-3300 or 800-215-8262

Hancock VA Outpatient Clinic  
787 Market Street Suite Number 9  
Hancock, MI 49930-1495  
Phone: 906-482-7762 or 877-470-3811

Ironwood VA Outpatient Clinic  
629 W. Cloverland Dr. Suite 1  
Ironwood, MI 49938  
Phone: 906-932-0032 or 877-470-3811

Manistique VA Rural Outreach Clinic  
813 East Lakeshore Dr.  
Manistique, MI 49854  
Phone: 906-341-3420 or 877-470-3811

Marquette VA Outpatient Clinic  
1414 West Fair Avenue, Suite 285  
Marquette, MI 49855  
Phone: 906-226-4618 or 877-470-3811

Menominee VA Outpatient Clinic  
1110 10th Avenue, Suite 101  
Menominee, MI 49858  
Phone: 906-863-1286 or 877-470-3811

Rhineland VA Outpatient Clinic  
639 West Kemp Street  
Rhineland, WI 54501  
Phone: 715-362-4080 or 877-470-3811

Sault Ste. Marie VA Outpatient Clinic  
509 Osborn Blvd. Suite 306  
Sault Ste. Marie, MI 49783  
Phone: 906-253-9383 or 877-470-3811

## Get Assigned to a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT)

Your PACT can take care of most of your health care needs or refer you for specialty care as needed. You will be assigned a primary care provider—a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician’s assistant—who is part of a PACT Teamlet. The PACT Teamlet includes an RN Care Manager, a clinical associate (LPN or medical assistant) and a clerical associate. The PACT Teamlet staff are responsible for working with you to provide most of your care. Your PACT also includes pharmacists, social workers, dietitians, behavioral health specialists, other health professionals, and support staff. They are all focused on working with you around your health care and well-being.

The team will:

- Build a partnership with you to promote your health and well-being
- Provide or arrange for preventive health services, such as immunizations and screenings
- Give you medical care, and coordinate your care with other providers
- Educate you about healthy living habits, your health problems, and any treatment you may need. They will work with you to achieve the health care goals you choose

## If You Need to See a Specialist

Your PACT will coordinate all care for you. If you need to see a specialist, your PACT will request a consult for you. The specialty care area will contact you about an appointment or the next step in your care. The PACT and specialty care team will work together to care for you.

## If You Live in More Than One Location or Travel a Lot

Once you are enrolled in VA health care, you are eligible for care at any VA facility. We encourage you to receive the majority of your care through your preferred facility and assigned PACT. Your assigned PACT will continue to help you and manage your primary care needs while you are traveling. When you plan extended travel outside your usual VA care area, please give your PACT and pharmacy:

- A temporary address and phone number
- The starting date and the expected date of return

Routine prescription refills can be sent to you at your temporary address. Be sure to allow time (approximately 2 weeks) for the refills to arrive at your temporary address by mail.

## Non-VA Care

In certain circumstances, your VA Medical Center may pay for care you receive from a non-VA provider. This can happen if:

- The services you need are not available in VA
- The services are available in VA, but at a great distance from your home

Services provided by community vendors at VA expense must meet the VA’s quality standards and must be authorized in advance

Information about payment for Non-VA services can be found at this VA website link:



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## How to Access VA Health Care

### VA Telephone Care

You can access VA care 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Use VA's telephone service to:

- Schedule appointments for all clinical areas. This includes primary/ambulatory care, community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs), and specialty clinics
- Call the VA pharmacy to access the automated telephone refill services for medications or supplies
- Get advice about your health care concerns

### During Business Hours (Monday through Friday, 8:00 am to 4:30 pm)

Call 906-774-3300 Ext. 33115

1. Make an appointment, change an appointment, or cancel an appointment. Calling the call center will help us to make arrangements with your own primary care provider and extended team as much as possible. If you know you are going to miss an appointment, please cancel it as soon as possible so that another Veteran can get an appointment.
2. Get advice about your health concerns. You can work through your assigned care manager as well as the other members of your patient aligned care team. This includes the extended team members from your clinic such as pharmacy, social work, mental health, etc.
3. If you are feeling sick, you will be referred to the nurse advice line which is located at the Madison VAMC.
4. Please understand that if you "walk in" to a primary care clinic without a scheduled appointment, we will evaluate your condition. You will then be seen according to the severity of your medical situation.

### After Business Hours (Evening, Night, Weekend, Federal Holidays)

Call the after-hours telephone advice care line: 906-774-3300 #33101

Use this service to get advice about your health concerns. The advice line is staffed by registered nurses. They will discuss your medical concern and work with you to determine the care you need. The registered nurse will document the telephone call in your electronic medical record and notify the appropriate medical provider.

The OGJVAMC utilizes an automated telephone call to remind patients of an upcoming clinic appointment. This helps reduce missed appointments and improves access for all Veterans.

Utilize the on-line “secure messaging” function in MyHealthVet to inquire about non-emergency issues to send specific questions concerning your medication, upcoming appointments, day to day health plan, and etc. 24 hours a day. Your clinic will respond to you through the on-line response or phone you if necessary to provide the answers and service you need.

## **Benefits of VetLink Kiosks**

When a Veteran checks into an appointment using the VetLink kiosk, they can update their personal data. When a Veteran checks into an appointment using a kiosk, it saves the clerk at the clinic time because the clerk does not have to spend the time checking the Veteran in. The time saved not performing the check-in and quite possibly not having to update the Veteran’s personal data during check-in, allows the clerk time to tend to other Veteran related tasks. It is a win-win for Veteran and staff! Below are some of the key features and benefits of the VetLink kiosk.

Veterans can now:

- Check in electronically for pre-scheduled appointments
- View future appointments
- Update personal information
- Review account information
- Review insurance information
- Request beneficiary travel

Using VetLink kiosks:

- Reduces check-in wait time for Veterans
- Provides more flexibility and efficiency for VA staff
- Increases seamless communication between the front desk and back
- Reduces wait time for requesting beneficiary travel



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## Partner With Your VA Providers & Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT)

### Veteran-Centered Care

VA provides Veterans with care that is patient-centered, data-driven, continuously improving, team-based, accessible, timely, comprehensive, and coordinated. It provides continuity of care over time.

- We will focus all our efforts on giving you what you need.
- We will treat you with dignity and respect.
- We will ask you about and honor your values, preferences, and needs.
- We will provide safe, high-quality care that is designed for you.
- You will receive the right care, at the right time, in the right care setting.
- We will coordinate your care to make sure we meet your needs.
- We will explain your health problems and treatment options in ways you can understand.
- We will teach you about self-care and help you learn to manage your health problems.

You are the center of your treatment team. The team wants to work with you to design the best plan of care for you. The clinicians on the team have expertise in preventing, diagnosing, and treating illness. You have expertise about your body and your life. Together, we can create a plan to maintain your health and well-being.

### Health Care Partnerships

We know that patients who are actively involved in their health care have better results and are more satisfied with their care.

There is no single “right” way to partner with your treatment team. There are many ways to work together, and they may change over time. Your VA providers will talk with you about this. Together, you can find ways to build a partnership that meets your needs and offers you the best possible outcomes.

### What You Can Do

You can take an active role in your health care in many ways. Give your treatment team accurate and complete information about:

- Your current health problems
- Your concerns about your health
- Past illnesses
- Hospitalizations
- Your medicines, including over-the-counter and herbals
- People that help you with your health care needs at home
- Other matters related to your health
- Plan ahead for your visits by writing down the questions and concerns you want to raise; share them with your provider at the beginning of each visit
- Share your beliefs about your health problems and your treatment
- Share your preferences for treatment options
- Ask questions about anything that isn't clear to you
- Ask for written information and instructions you can keep and share with your family
- Gather information about your health problems from your treatment team, the VA library, and websites such as My HealtheVet
- Participate in decisions about your health care—you and your provider should agree on what will be done during each step of your care
- Know your medicines and why you take each one
- Ask when and how you will get results of any tests or treatments
- Make sure you have the name and telephone number of a person to call if you have a problem
- Let your team know if you face any obstacles to your care or if your condition changes
- Have a family member or friend come with you to help you, if you wish
- Know the next steps in your care
- Speak up if you have any concerns about the care you are receiving or if you think something is wrong

### **What Your VA Providers Will Do**

Your providers will help you take an active role in your health care. They will:

- Ask if you have questions or concerns you want to discuss
- Encourage you to talk about your health concerns and the impact on your life
- Explain your health problems and treatment options in ways you can understand
- Tell you their own treatment recommendations
- Work with you so that, together, you can create a treatment plan that works for you
- Ask you to take some responsibility for following the treatment plan you have developed together



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## Co-Managed Care / Dual Care

We encourage you to receive all your medical care through the VA. This means a single VA primary care provider and team who coordinate all aspects of your care. However, we are willing to work with your private doctors to provide and coordinate your health care. We call this Co-managed Care or Dual Care. It means that your VA Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) and non-VA providers will work together to provide safe, appropriate, and ethical medical care.

### VA Policy

If you are seeking care, medications, or supplies from VA, you must enroll in VA health care. This means you must have a primary care provider who manages your care, even if some of your care is provided in the community.

Specialty services will be provided according to the local facility or Veterans Integrated Services Network (VISN) policy once you are enrolled in primary care.

### VA Provider Responsibilities

Your VA provider will work with your community health care organization. But, it is not required that your VA provider write prescriptions or order tests for any health problem not directly managed by the VA.

If your non-VA provider writes a prescription for a medicine that is not on the VA list of approved medicines, your VA provider may offer you another medicine that is very similar, safe, and effective for your condition. If you choose, you may want to talk to your non-VA provider before changing to the medicine offered by VA.

Some medicines need special blood tests. Your VA provider will not write prescriptions for any high-risk medicines unless you agree to have the tests done by the VA. If you live far away or have difficulty traveling, you have the option of providing the written results from your non-VA provider's blood tests to your VA provider.

If you request a highly specialized medication, you must be seen by a VA provider competent in that specialty. Or, the prescribing clinician must communicate directly with a VA provider competent in that specialty. This may be verbally or in writing.

VA providers are under no obligation to follow a treatment or medication plan recommended by non-VA providers if:

- they disagree with that plan
- that plan conflicts with national or local policies related to prescription of medications.

VA providers will explain to you their reasons for changing or declining a treatment or medication plan.

If you receive controlled substances on an ongoing basis, close monitoring is required by **one** designated provider. Dual care is avoided unless your community provider and VA provider both agree that this is in your best interest.

### **Patient Responsibilities**

Your PACT will work with you to coordinate your care when you have non-VA providers. You need to tell both your VA provider and your non-VA provider that you want to have your care coordinated.

You need to give your VA provider the name, address, and telephone number of all your non-VA providers. You should also give your non-VA providers the same information about your VA provider.

You must have all necessary records and documents from your non-VA provider sent to the VA. If you would like information from your VA medical record sent to your non-VA provider, you may contact the Release of Information office. You can then sign a release form to have that done.

For your safety, let your VA provider know about all medicines you're taking. This includes prescriptions written by your non-VA provider, over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, supplements, and herbals. You will also want to tell your non-VA provider about any medicines prescribed by your VA provider.

You need to tell your VA provider about any changes in your health, or changes in treatment or medicines made by your non-VA provider. You will also want to tell your non-VA provider about any changes made by your VA provider.

You must pay any required VA co-payments.

Please feel free to talk further with your VA primary care provider about co-managed/dual care health benefits.



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## Your Medicines

### VA Pharmacy Benefits

VA has excellent pharmacy benefits. You can get all medications and medical supplies your VA provider orders for you.

If you are transferring your prescriptions to VA, your VA providers may need to replace some of your medications with similar medications carried by the VA pharmacy. VA providers will work closely with your community provider to coordinate your care. You must bring information from your community provider that explains why the medication was prescribed, the name of the medication, and the dose.

By law, VA pharmacy cannot fill a prescription written by a non-VA provider. VA is not responsible to pay for medications filled at a private pharmacy.

Don't forget to tell your VA provider or pharmacist about any medications you get filled at a pharmacy other than the VA or any other medicine (like antacids, laxatives, or pain medicine), herbal supplements or vitamins you purchase on your own.

### Pharmacy Co-payments

Depending on your eligibility, you may need to pay a co-payment for medications. Depending on your finances, you may apply for free medications. You can get information about patient eligibility from the eligibility clerk or AOD at the OGJ VAMC.

### Pharmacy Telephone Care System

This system is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can use it to:

- Check on a prescription
- Learn about your medicine
- Order refills for your medicines
- Talk to someone in the VA pharmacy during business hours (Monday through Friday, 7:30 am to 4:00 pm).

You need a touch-tone telephone to use this service. Before you call, have at hand your Social Security Number and the prescription number printed on the bottle. The automated phone system will give you step-by-step instructions.

### **New Prescriptions**

A pharmacist will talk with you about any new medicine your provider orders for you. You can pick up new prescriptions at the VA pharmacy or have them mailed to your home. Mailed prescriptions usually take 14 days to arrive.

### **Refills for Prescriptions**

Medications are not refilled automatically. You can request refills in any of these ways:

#### **Call the telephone ordering system using a touch-tone phone:**

1. Dial 800-805-1870. (LISTEN CLOSELY).
2. Enter your social security number and press: # (POUND KEY).
3. For Pharmacy ordering information press 2.
4. To refill a prescription, press 1.
5. To check a prescription, press 2.
6. To talk with a Pharmacist, press 8
7. Enter your prescription number from the label of your medicine bottle (RX # - leave off the letter at the end of the number)
8. Press # (POUND KEY).
9. To make sure you are refilling the proper prescription, use the prescription number on the label of your medicine bottle.
10. Repeat steps 4 & 5 for each refill.
11. When finished, follow the instructions or hang up.

**--OR--**

**Mail the refill slip that comes with your prescription.** Refill slips are given to you when you pick up your medications or when your medications are sent to you. Mail the refill slips to the address on the pre-addressed label. Sign and send in your refill slips as soon as you get your medications. Send them in right away so you do not lose the slips or forget to mail them in!

If you are at the medical center, you may save a stamp by placing the refill slips in the box located on the pillar to the left of the window where you pick up your medication. (Look for the metal box with the sign on it.) Your prescription will be mailed to you before you run out of medication.

#### **IF YOU HAVE LOST YOUR REFILL SLIP:**

Put your name, address, and social security number on a slip of paper along with the name of the medication you require and mail it to the pharmacy. Your prescription will be mailed to you.

**--OR--**

Use the Internet.

Enroll in My HealtheVet at <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>.

Request refills 2-3 weeks before you need more medicine to allow time for your prescription to be refilled and mailed to you.

When you get your refill, check the bottle to make sure these things are correct:

- Your name on the bottle
- The name of the medicine
- The color and shape of the medicine
- The amount you should take for each dose
- The directions you should follow for each dose.

You will need a new prescription when your current prescription has no more refills but you need to stay on the medication. Contact your VA provider through ext. 33115 as soon as possible to have the new prescription ordered. It's a good idea to check your medicines before each visit with your provider to see how many refills are left. You can then ask for a new prescription of the medication at the visit.

Opioids and certain controlled medications cannot be refilled. A new prescription is needed for each month's supply. You and your VA provider should discuss how and when you can get these prescriptions.

### **Additional Information**

You can get more information about your medicines in several ways:

- Talk to a VA pharmacist
- Talk to your provider
- Use the Internet
- Log on to the My HealtheVet website at <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>
- Log on to the National Library of Medicine website at <http://www.medlineplus.gov>



## My HealthVet

My HealthVet (MHV) is VA's award-winning online Personal Health Record. It was designed to improve health care for all Veterans no matter where they receive care. It provides one-stop, online access to help our Veterans (and their caregivers) better manage their overall health, make informed health decisions, and record and store important health and military history information. Access is easy and convenient anywhere the internet is.

My HealthVet provides tools and resources to help Veterans better understand their health. A key goal is to improve and enhance the partnership between Veterans and their health care team. My HealthVet does just that. It is about Veterans taking charge of their health. Begin today; there are five easy steps:

### 1. **START: Visit My HealthVet** [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)

My HealthVet provides Veterans reliable health information. There are tools to help you track your health and build a Personal Health Record (PHR). To learn more about what is available, visit [How to Use My HealthVet](#). On the My HealthVet home page, select **About MHV**, go to **Overview** and select **How to Use MHV**.

### 2. **REGISTER: Get Started with My HealthVet**

Anyone can register on My HealthVet. This includes Veterans, their families, caregivers and others. As a Registered user, you can take advantage of the self-management features My HealthVet offers. You can also use the **VA Blue Button** to print or download your information. Veterans registered as a "VA Patient" may get an Advanced My HealthVet account. This account type gives you the ability to refill your VA Prescriptions online. It is simple to get started with My HealthVet—all you have to do is register.

### 3. **AUTHENTICATE: Get An Upgraded Premium My HealthVet Account**

Authentication is a process by which the VA verifies a Veteran's identity. This is done before allowing access to the Veteran's personal VA health information. There are two ways that a VA patient can upgrade his/her account:

- **In-Person Authentication (IPA)** – The VA patient can upgrade his/her account in person at the local VA Medical Center or Community Outpatient Clinic; or
- **Online Authentication** – The VA patient can upgrade his/her account online through [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov).

With an upgraded Premium My HealthVet account, you may be able to:

- View your VA Chemistry/Hematology Lab results
- Receive information on VA Appointments, including email reminders
- View VA Allergy and Adverse Reactions records
- Receive VA Wellness Reminders
- View additional parts of your VA health record, as they become available
- Use Secure Messaging to communicate with your VA health care team
- View Department of Defense (DoD) Military Service Information (for some Veterans)

#### 4. **COMMUNICATE: Participate in Secure Messaging**

Use Secure Messaging to communicate online with your VA health care team. To use Secure Messaging, you must be a VA patient. You also need to receive care at a VA facility and have an upgraded Premium account. Secure Messaging can be used to request renewals of your VA medications. You can also follow-up on medical conditions, request VA appointments, and ask general questions about your health. Secure Messaging gives you quick, easy access to communicate *non-urgent messages* with members of your VA health care team. You can do this anytime, anywhere, at your convenience.

**Secure Messaging is only for non-urgent, non-critical communication!**

#### 5. **SHARE: Use VA Blue Button to view, print and/or download your information**

The **VA Blue Button** is a tool that gives you easy access to your My HealtheVet health and military service information. You can get your information anytime and anywhere you can reach the Internet. **VA Blue Button** gives you control. It provides information to you that can help you make healthier choices. You can share your information whenever you need to. You can do this without the hassle of calling for paper records. This gives you choices about how you use your information.

#### **RESOURCES**

Go to the My HealtheVet home page, [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov), select the **Help** tab at the top of the page, and select from the User Guides provided. Visit the **FAQs** (Frequently Asked Question) tab at the top of the My HealtheVet home page. This page has questions and answers to help you understand more about each feature My HealtheVet offers.

The MyHealtheVet Coordinator at the OGI VAMC may be reached at 906-774-3300 Ext. 32517 or 800-215-8262 Ext. 32517.

## **Ambulatory Surgery**

Surgery or other diagnostic tests will be completed on an outpatient basis whenever possible. Your health care team makes the decision for outpatient service. The ambulatory surgery staff will manage your surgical care, pre-operative teaching, and post-operative follow-up.

## **Dietitians**

Dietitians are available to help you with nutritional concerns. If you have a problem such as diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, are underweight or overweight, or just want to learn about healthy eating, a registered dietitian can provide education and counseling. Please ask your primary care provider for a referral if you would like to see a dietitian.

## **Home-Based Primary Care (HBPC)**

Home Based Primary Care (HBPC) provides primary care to homebound Veterans with chronic disease or to those whom routine clinic based visits are not effective. The HBPC team is interdisciplinary. It includes a provider, registered nurses, a social worker, a registered dietitian, physical therapist, and psychologist. HBPC gives Veterans an opportunity to remain within their homes while receiving health care services. Goals of the program are to:

- Maximize function and independence
- Slow the advance of chronic diseases
- Reduce the need for clinic and emergency room visits and hospitalizations
- Improve quality of life
- Keep Veterans in their homes longer, reducing the need for nursing home care
- Teach Veterans and caregivers ways to restore or maintain independence

## **Mental Health Care Services**

The VA places a high priority on providing mental health services for Veterans of all eras of service. The behavioral health services at OGJVAMC and Community Outpatient Clinics provide consultation, evaluation, and treatment for a variety of issues that can affect emotional well-being. The department consists of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers. They are available at the OGJVAMC and at the Community Outpatient Clinics. The programs help Veterans work toward a healthy, productive life. Services provided address a wide range of concerns.

## **Military Sexual Trauma (MST)**

The VA has services available to help men and women who have experienced Military Sexual Trauma (MST). The VA provides free, confidential counseling and treatment for mental and physical health conditions related to MST. Service connection or disability compensation is NOT required to receive free treatment for conditions resulting from MST. Veterans can get help or find more information by talking with their Primary Care Physician or contacting OGJVAMC's MST Coordinator at 1-800-215-8262, extension 32531. Information is also available at <http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome.asp>

## **Minority Veteran Program**

The Center for Minority Veterans is the Department of Veteran Affairs model for interagency and intra-agency cooperation. It ensures that all veterans receive equal service regardless of race, origin, religion, or gender. The Program:

- Promotes the use of VA benefits, programs and services by minority Veterans.
- Supports and initiates activities that educate and sensitize medical center and Community Outpatient Clinic staff to the unique needs of minority Veterans.
- Targets outreach efforts to minority Veterans through community networks.
- Advocates on behalf of minority Veterans by identifying gaps in service.
- Makes recommendations to improve service delivery within their facilities.

For more information, please call 906-774-3300 Ext. 32708 or 800-215-8262 Ext. 32708.

## **MOVE! Program**

MOVE! is a national weight management program for Veterans enrolled in the VA healthcare system. It is designed to help Veterans lose weight, keep it off, and improve their health. MOVE! has different treatment options to meet your individual needs. It allows you to control your weight, making you a partner with your healthcare team. Individual consultation, technology linked care, and group sessions are available at the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center and each Community Outpatient Clinic.

## **OEF / OIF / OND**

Returning combat Veterans are eligible for five years of cost free medical care from the date of their official discharge from active duty. This is for any conditions related to their deployment experience. Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center has an OEF / OIF / OND Care Management Team ready to welcome you and to help coordinate your care. For more information, please call 906-774-3300 Ext. 32706/32708 or 800-215-8262 Ext. 32706/32708.

## **Palliative Care**

The Palliative Care Team is a specially trained group of healthcare professionals. They work with Veterans and their families to provide comfort and compassionate care when a Veteran has a life-limiting illness. We work to meet physical and spiritual needs. Our mission is to assist the Veteran in maintaining independence and dignity with the best quality of life until the moment of death. The Palliative Care RN is available at 906-774-3300, Ext: 34504; Room 1137 in the Community Living Center.

## **Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Services (PM&R)**

Your provider may refer you to one of PM&R's four services: Audiology, Speech, Physical, and Occupational Therapy. Audiology evaluates and treats hearing disorders. Speech pathology diagnoses and treats speech, language, swallow / feeding, voice, and other communication problems. Physical therapy evaluates and treats gross motor control, mobility, joint dysfunction, and pain management. Occupational therapy focuses on evaluation and treatment of fine motor control as well as problems that might affect the ability to perform activities of daily living.

## **Social Work**

Social workers are assigned to each Primary Care Team. They are trained to help Veterans and family members deal with financial, social, and emotional problems that result from illness or hospitalization. They also work with Veterans and families to help deal with long-term illness and rehabilitation. They are also involved in discharge planning. A social worker is available to help you with completing advance directives such as a healthcare power of attorney or a living will (discussed earlier in this guide). Please contact a Social Worker at 906-774-3300 ext. 34773 or ext. 34080.

## **Substance Abuse Treatment Program**

The VA has a variety of programs based on the recommendation of our professional substance abuse counselor. Please contact Mental Health Service at 906-774-3300 Ext. 32541 or 800-215-8262 Ext. 32541 for further information.

## **Telehealth Clinics**

Telehealth uses new technologies, including state-of-the-art videoconferencing, to make diagnoses, manage care, and perform evaluations at a distance. Telehealth allows veterans who live in rural areas to come to the medical center or one of the Community Outpatient Clinics for an appointment with a specialty provider from Milwaukee or Madison. This saves having to travel these long distances.

## **Women Veterans Health Care Program**

The Women's Veterans Health Care Program at OGJVAMC is committed to excellence in addressing health care needs of all women Veterans. The Program ensures that timely, equitable, high-quality, and comprehensive health care services are provided in a sensitive and safe environment.

OGJVAMC provides clinical services in the areas of patient education, medical care, mental health, and specialty care to women Veterans. A separate clinic area has been completed at OGJVAMC. It offers a private waiting area for female Veterans and their children. Fee basis care is offered to each woman Veteran for gynecology and obstetrics services not available at OGJVAMC or clinic location.



# Emergency Care in Non-VA Facilities



At some time in your life, you may need emergency care. This document explains what the VA might be able to do for you if you need emergency care. When it is not possible for you to go to a VA medical center, you should go to the nearest hospital that has an emergency room. If you are in an ambulance, the paramedics will usually take you to the closest emergency room. Here is what you should know...

## **What is an emergency?**

A medical emergency is when you have an injury or illness that is so severe that without immediate treatment, the injury or illness threatens your health or life.

## **How do I know my situation is an emergency?**

Use your best judgment. If you believe your health or life is in danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.

## **If I believe my life or health is in danger, do I need to call the VA before I call for an ambulance or go into an emergency room?**

No. Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room right away.

## **Do I need to notify the VA after an ambulance takes me to an emergency room, or when I am treated and released?**

Yes. You, your family, friends or hospital staff should contact the nearest VA medical center as soon as possible—within 24 hours, so you are better aware of services the VA may limit payment for. Provide the VA with information about your emergency event and services being provided to you. Ask the VA for guidance on how they will consider reimbursing these emergency charges on your behalf, so you can plan accordingly.

## **If the doctor then wants to admit me to the hospital, must I obtain advance approval from the VA?**

If the admission is an emergency—NO, although prompt notification of the VA is necessary.

If the admission is not an emergency—YES.

## **If a VA bed is available and I can be safely transferred, do I have to move to the VA hospital?**

Yes. If you refuse to be transferred, the VA will not pay for any further care.

## **If I am admitted to the hospital as a result of an emergency, how much will VA pay?**

This depends on your VA eligibility. The VA may pay all, some, or none of the charges. Ask your local VA medical center's patient benefits counselor about what is allowed under non-VA emergency care programs:

For service-connected conditions

For non-service-connected conditions

## **Will I have to pay for any part of my emergency care?**

It is possible. Sometimes co-pays are required based on your VA enrollment. Sometimes the extent of healthcare services Reimbursable by the VA are limited by federal law.

## **Will VA pay for the ambulance and any possible emergency room charges if I leave the emergency room before being treated by a doctor?**

Possibly not. If you leave the emergency room prior to being treated by a physician, the VA may not consider claims for that emergency event. You may be liable for some or all resulting ambulance and emergency room charges, regardless of your Veteran eligibility.

## **Does my enrollment in the VA Health Care System affect my eligibility for emergency care at VA expense?**

Yes. Your local VA medical center's benefits counselor can explain how enrollment (or other special status categories) affect your eligibility.

## **If I have other insurance (TRICARE, Medicare, Medicaid, Blue Cross, etc.), will it affect whether claims for emergency services will be paid at VA expense?**

Yes, it may. Your local VA medical center's benefits counselor can explain how other insurance can affect whether the VA can pay for your non-VA medical claims.

## **Will VA pay for emergency care if I am in jail?**

No. The VA is prohibited, by federal law, from paying for the medical claims of incarcerated veterans (or fugitive felons).

## **How long do I have to file a claim for reimbursement for emergency medical care?**

File your claim with the nearest VA medical center quickly. Time limits of 90-days usually apply. Contact your local VA medical center's patient benefits counselor for more information on the timely filing requirements for non-VA care programs.

## **Will VA pay for emergency care received outside the United States?**

Yes in certain cases. VA will only pay for emergency care outside the US if your emergency is related to a service-connected condition. For more information, contact the VA Health Administration Center at (877) 345-8179 or consult this web site

<http://www4.va.gov/hac/forbeneficiaries/fmp/fmp.asp>

**Non-VA Emergency Care The right care... At the right time... At the right place...**

**Know your options ahead of time in case an emergency arises. See your VA Medical Center about your eligibility today!**

*"Focused on Excellence – Putting Veterans First"*

## Crisis Prevention

People experience emotional and mental health crises in response to a wide range of situations—from difficulties in their personal relationships to the loss of a job. For Veterans, these crises can be heightened by their experiences during military service. When emotional issues reach a crisis point, it's time to call on the Veterans Crisis Line for support.

**Sometimes a crisis may involve thoughts of suicide. Learn to recognize these warning signs:**

- Hopelessness, feeling like there's no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends

**The following signs require immediate attention:**

- Thinking about hurting or killing yourself
- Looking for ways to kill yourself
- Talking about death, dying, or suicide
- Self-destructive behavior such as drug abuse, weapons, etc.

If you are a Veteran or know a Veteran who is showing any of the above warning signs, call **1-800-273-8255** and Press 1, [chat online](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/) at <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net/> and click on the **Confidential Veterans Chat** button, or send a text message to **838255** to receive free, confidential support from an experienced, caring VA responder 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

### Resources

Veterans Crisis Line

- 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1
- Chat online <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net> and click on the **Confidential Veterans Chat** button.

- Send a text to **838255**
- Visit [www.Veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.Veteranscrisisline.net)

#### VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators

- Each VA Medical Center has a suicide prevention coordinator to make sure Veterans receive needed counseling and services. Our local Suicide Prevention Coordinator may be reached at 906-774-3300 Ext. 32769 or 800-215-8262 Ext. 32769.

#### Mental Health

- The OGJ VAMC provides specialty outpatient mental health services at the facility and its community outpatient clinics. Inpatient mental health care is provided at other VA facilities such as Madison and Tomah. All mental health care provided by VHA supports recovery, striving to enable a person with mental health problems to live a meaningful life in the community and achieve his or her full potential. The OGJ VAMC provides outpatient care. Inpatient mental health care is provided at other VA facilities such as Madison and Tomah.
  - For more information on VA Mental Health Services visit [www.mentalhealth.va.gov](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov) or talk to PACT for a referral.

#### Make the Connection

- MakeTheConnection.net is a one-stop resource where Veterans and their families and friends can privately explore information about physical and mental health symptoms, challenging life events, and mental health conditions. On this site, Veterans and their families and friends can learn about available resources and support. Visit [www.MakeTheConnection.net](http://www.MakeTheConnection.net) to learn more.



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## **Rights and Responsibilities of VA Patients and Residents of Community Living Centers**

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) is pleased you have selected us to provide your health care. We will provide you with personalized, patient-driven, compassionate, state-of-the-art care. Our goal is to make your experience as positive and pleasant as we can. As part of our service to you, to other Veterans and to the Nation, we are committed to improving health care quality. We also train future health care professionals, conduct research, and support our country in times of national emergency.

In all of these activities, our employees will respect and support your rights as a patient or resident of a community living center (CLC). Your basic rights and responsibilities are outlined in this document. You will receive this information in your preferred language. Please talk with the VA treatment team members who are providing your care or to a patient advocate if you have any questions or would like more information about your rights and responsibilities.

### **1. Nondiscrimination and Respect**

- You will be treated with dignity, compassion, and respect as an individual. Consistent with Federal law, VA policy, and accreditation standards of The Joint Commission, you will not be subject to discrimination for any reason, including for reasons of age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.
- You will receive care in a safe environment free from excess noise, and with sufficient light to ensure comfort and safety.
- You have a right to have access to the outdoors.
- We will seek to honor your cultural and personal values, beliefs, and preferences. We ask that you identify any cultural, religious, or spiritual beliefs or practices that influence your care.

- You or someone you choose has the right to keep and spend your money. You have the right to receive an accounting of any funds that VA is holding for you.
- We will respect your personal freedoms in the care and treatment we provide you. This includes trying to accommodate your normal sleep and wake cycles, food likes and dislikes, and other personal preferences.
- In the Community Living Center, you have the right to be free from chemical and physical restraints. In the inpatient acute care setting, and only in rare cases, the use of chemical and physical restraints may be used if all other efforts to keep you or others free from harm have not worked.
- In the Community Living Center, you may keep personal items and are expected to wear your own clothes. As an inpatient, you may wear your own clothes depending on your medical condition.
- You have the right to keep and use personal items as long as they are safe and legal.
- You have the right to social interaction and regular exercise. You will have the opportunity for religious worship and spiritual support. You may decide whether to participate in these activities. You may decide whether or not to perform tasks in or for the Medical Center or in the Community Living Center.
- You have the right to communicate freely and privately. You will have access to public telephones and VA will assist you in sending and receiving mail. You may participate in civic rights, such as voting and free speech.
- When a loved one is involved in support and care of a VA patient or CLC resident, VA considers a patient or CLC resident's *family* to include anyone related to the patient or CLC resident in any way (for example, biologically or legally) and anyone whom the patient or CLC resident considers to be family. If you are an inpatient, any persons you choose can be with you to support you during your stay. Medical staff may restrict visitors for inpatients if medical or safety concerns require it. You will be told promptly about any visitor restriction and the reason for it.
- In order to provide a safe treatment environment for all patients or CLC residents and staff, you and your visitors are expected to avoid unsafe acts that place others at risk for accidents or injuries. Please immediately report any condition you believe to be unsafe.

## **2. Information Disclosure and Confidentiality**

- Your privacy will be protected.
- You will be given information about the health benefits you can receive. The information will be provided in a way you can understand.
- You will receive information about the costs of your care (for example, co-payments), if any, before you are treated. You are responsible for paying your portion of any costs associated with your care.
- Your health record will be kept confidential. Information about you will not be released without your authorization unless permitted by law (an example of this is State public health reporting). You have the right to have access to, or request a copy of, your own health records.
- Please respect the privacy of other patients and CLC residents and do not reveal their health information that you may overhear or otherwise become aware of.

## **3. Participation in Treatment Decisions**

- You have a right to express your preferences concerning future medical care in an advance directive, including designating a health care agent to make health care decisions on your behalf when you can no longer do so.
- You, and any person(s) you choose, will be involved in all decisions about your care. You will be given information you can understand about the benefits and risks of treatment in your preferred language. You will be given other options. You can agree to or refuse any treatment. You will be told what is likely to happen to you if you refuse a treatment. Refusing a treatment will not affect your rights to future care but you take responsibility for the impact this decision may have on your health.
- Tell your provider about your current condition, medicines (including over-the-counter and herbals), and medical history. Also, share any other information that affects your health. You should ask questions when you do not understand something about your care. This will help us provide you the best care possible.
- You will be given, in writing, the name and title of the provider in charge of your care. You have the right to be involved in choosing your provider. You also have the right to know

the names and titles of those who provide you care. This includes students and other trainees. Providers will properly introduce themselves when they take part in your care.

- You will be educated about your role and responsibilities as a patient or CLC resident. This includes your participation in decision making and care at the end of life.
- If you believe you cannot follow the treatment plan, you have a responsibility to tell your provider or treatment team.
- You will be informed of all outcomes of your care, including any possible injuries associated with your care. You will be informed about how to request compensation and other remedies for any serious injuries.
- You have the right to have your pain assessed and to receive treatment to manage your pain. You and your treatment team will develop a pain management plan together. You are expected to help the treatment team by telling them if you have pain and if the treatment is working.
- As an inpatient or CLC resident, you will be provided any transportation necessary for your treatment plan.
- You have the right to choose whether or not you will participate in any research project. Any research will be clearly identified. Potential risks of the research will be identified and there will be no pressure on you to participate.
- You will be included in resolving any ethical issues about your care. If you have ethical issues or concerns, you may speak with the Medical Center's Ethics Consultation Service for help.

#### **4. Concerns or Complaints**

- You are encouraged and expected to seek help from your treatment team or a patient advocate if you have problems or complaints. Any privacy complaints will be addressed by the facility Privacy Officer. You will be given understandable information about the complaint process in your preferred language. You may complain verbally or in writing, without fear of retaliation.
- If you believe that you or your family member has been neglected, abused or exploited by VA staff, please report this promptly to the treatment team or patient advocate. You will receive help immediately.

- If you believe the organization has failed to address or satisfy your concerns about health care quality and safety, you may contact The Joint Commission’s Office of Quality Monitoring at 1-800-994-6610. If you believe that the organization has failed to address your concerns about suspected criminal activities, fraud, waste, abuse, or mismanagement, you may contact the VA Office of the Inspector General at 1-800-488-8244 or email [vaoighotline@va.gov](mailto:vaoighotline@va.gov).

## **5. Additional Rights and Responsibilities of Community Living Center Residents**

- Because the CLC serves as your home for short or long-stay services, you have the following additional rights and responsibilities as a CLC resident:
  - Staff will knock on your bedroom door prior to entry.
  - You have the right to receive care from the same staff member every day to the extent that consistent assignment is possible.
  - You may have visitors at any time of the day or night provided visitors are respectful of you, your need for privacy and the privacy of others. You may refuse visitors at any time.
  - You have a right to conjugal visits and you have a right to privacy during those visits.
  - Your care will be delivered in a setting that resembles home. Therefore, you will be invited to have your meals in a designated dining area and you will have access to those activities that contribute to meaningful use of time.
  - In preparation for being discharged to your own home, you and or your caregiver may be invited to participate in activities that prepare you to go home such as self-administration of medications and treatments.
  - You and your caregivers have a right to attend treatment planning meetings and participate in household or resident council.



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## Advance Directives

As a VA patient you have a say in the health care you receive. When you are ill, your doctor should explain what treatments are available for your illness so that you can decide which one is best for you. But if you were too ill to understand your treatment choices or to tell your doctor what treatment you want:

- Who would you want to make decisions for you?
- What type of health care would you want?
- What health care **wouldn't** you want?

Questions like these may be hard to think about, but they're important. That's why VA wants you to know about a legal form you can complete. It's called an "advance directive."

### What is an Advance Directive?

An advance directive is a legal form that helps your doctors and family members understand your wishes about medical and mental health care. It can help them decide about treatments if you are too ill to decide for yourself, for example, if you are unconscious or too weak to talk. There are two types of advance directives: a durable power of attorney for health care and a living will.

### What is a Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care?

This form lets you name the person you trust to make health care decisions for you if you can't make them yourself—your "health care agent." He or she will have the legal right to make health care decisions for you. You can choose any adult to be your agent. It's best to choose someone you trust, who knows you well and who knows your values. You should make sure the person is willing to serve as your agent. If you don't choose an agent, your doctor will choose someone to make decisions for you in the following order: legal guardian (if you have one), spouse, adult child, parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild, or a close friend. Your health care team, or a court, will make decisions for you in accordance with VA policy if none of the above is available.

## What is a Living Will?

A living will is a legal form that states what kinds of treatments you would or wouldn't want if you become ill and couldn't decide for yourself. It can help your health care agent and your doctor make decisions the way you want them to. Writing down what kind of treatment you would or wouldn't want can help make it easier for those who are asked to make decisions for you. Talk with your family, your health care agent, and your doctor about your wishes so they won't have to wonder what you want and if they're doing the right thing. If you don't have a living will, decisions will be made for you based on what is known about you in general and about your values. That's why it's important to discuss your wishes with your loved ones, your doctors, and your health care team.

## Must My Health Care Agent Always Follow My Living Will?

Most of the time, yes. Your health care agent should try to respect your wishes. But it can be hard to imagine future health and say just what treatment you would want at that time. So sometimes your agent may have to interpret your wishes. In a VA advance directive, you can state if you want your agent to do exactly what your living will says, or if they may make the decision they think is best for you at that time, even if it isn't what you said you would want.

## Should I Have an Advance Directive?

Yes, it's a good idea to have one. An advance directive helps protect your right to make your own choices. It helps make sure people respect your values and wishes if you can't speak for yourself. *Your advance directive is used only when you aren't able to make decisions yourself.*

## How do I Complete an Advance Directive?

Fill out VA Form 10-0137, "VA Advance Directive: Durable Power of Attorney and Living Will." Or use any valid state advance directive form. Talk to a health care professional at your local VA health care facility. This might be a social worker or your primary care provider. Or talk to your spiritual advisor or attorney. Your VA health care team can make your advance directive part of your medical record. Social workers are available to help; they are located in the outpatient clinic at the OGJ VAMC. They may be reached at either 906-774-3300 Ext. 34773 / 34080 or 800-215-8262 Ext. 34773 / 34080.

## Do I Need to Fill Out a Durable Power of Attorney *and* a Living Will?

No. Even though the VA form contains both, it's up to you whether you complete the durable power of attorney for health care, the living will, or both.

## Can I Change My Advance Directive?

Yes, you may change or cancel your advance directive at any time. In fact, you should review your advance directive periodically, especially if there is a change in your health, to make sure it's up to date. If you change it, be sure to tell your health care team and have them put it in your health record. Share your new directive with your family members and other loved ones.

**Reference: VA Form 10-137B, What You Should Know About Advance Directives**

<http://vaww4.va.gov/vaforms/medical/pdf/vha-10-0137B-fill.pdf>



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## Service Level Patient Advocates

We want you to get the best care possible. Your treatment team is your first point of contact. This team includes your provider, nurse, social worker, dietitian, pharmacist, chaplain, therapist, and other professionals who provide your medical care.

If you or your family member believes your concerns are not being addressed by your treatment team, you may contact a VA Patient Advocate. A Patient Advocate is an employee whose job is to help resolve your issues. We want you and your family to have someone to go to for discussion of your concerns or issues. The Patient Advocate works directly with management and employees to help resolve your issues. Patient Advocates may be reached at 1-800-215-8262 and then the appropriate extension number below.

**Primary Care Service  
(OUTPATIENT/CLINIC CONCERNS)**

\*Ext. 34429

**Patient Administrative Service**

\*Ext. 32659

\*Ext. 32636

**Pharmacy Service**

\*Ext. 32481

\*Ext. 32481

**Engineering Service**

\*Ext. 32240

**Laboratory Service**

\*Ext. 32300

**Imaging Service**

\*Ext. 34016

\*Ext. 32400

**Dental/Physical Therapy**

\*Ext. 32020

\*Ext. 32636

**Mental Health Service**

\*Ext. 32779

\*Ext. 32537

**4 East/ICU/CLC  
(INPATIENT CONCERNS)**

\*Ext. 34429

**Surgical Service**

\*Ext. 32908

\*Ext. 32908

**Nutrition, Environmental Support  
Services**

\*Ext. 32050

**Voluntary Service**

\*Ext. 32781

**Police and Security Service**

\*Ext. 32030

\*Ext. 32030

**Community Based Outpatient Clinics**

\*Ext. 34429

## Ethics Consultation

### I'm Just not Sure... What is the Right Thing to do? Should I Ask for an Ethics Consultation?

In health care, patients and families often face the difficult question of “what should be done?” The right choice for one patient may be the wrong choice for another. If you're unsure, or if you can't agree with your health care team or your loved ones about what's best, you can ask for an ethics consultation.

### What is an Ethics Consultation?

Ethics consultation is a service provided by specially trained VA staff. When there is uncertainty or conflict about the right thing to do, ethics consultants work with patients, families, and staff to help them make good decisions to resolve these concerns. Ethics consultants will not investigate complaints or allegations of misconduct. Those are handled by the Patient Advocate Office.

### When Should I Think about Asking for an Ethics Consultation?

Here are some examples of why Veterans and families ask for an ethics consultation:

“I have to make a serious decision about a treatment that could affect how long I may live. After talking it over with my health care team, I am still not sure I agree with the doctor's recommendation.”

“My mother is too sick to make her own decisions. How do I know what is best for her now?”

“Our family is unsure and upset. We don't agree about the right thing to do for our brother's care.”

### What Happens in an Ethics Consultation?

Ethics consultants will not make a decision for you, but they will help you figure out what is best for your situation. They will also:

- Ask about your concerns.
- Gather information from all the people involved.
- Determine if other experts are needed. For example, lawyers will be asked for legal opinions; medical specialists will be asked for medical opinions.
- Identify possible options.
- Make recommendations to you and the other people involved.
- Write a note in your health record if the ethics consultation relates to your medical care.

- Ask you to fill out a feedback form that lets the ethics consultation team know about your overall experience. This form is voluntary and your health care will not be affected by whether you fill out this form.

### **Who Can Request an Ethics Consultation?**

Anyone can ask for an ethics consultation.

### **What Does an Ethics Consultation Cost?**

Ethics consultations are free. You will not be billed for an ethics consultation.

### **How Do I Request an Ethics Consultation?**

To request an ethics consultation, contact the OGJ VAMC Ethics Consultation staff.

Main Number 906-774-3300 or 800-215-8262, Extension 34514.

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## Healthy Living

We are committed to providing you the highest quality health care. We also want to help you take care of yourself. There has been a lot of research in recent years on the best ways to maintain health and well-being. Nine Healthy Living Messages have been developed that can have the most impact on your health. We encourage you to make these behaviors part of your daily life. All of the healthy living messages are located on the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention’s website: <http://www.prevention.va.gov>.

For more information about these healthy living messages, check out the recommended websites, talk to your VA provider, and review the directory of VA health education programs and services in the next section. We’ll be happy to help you. The Nine Healthy Living Messages are:

### 1. Be Involved in Your Health Care

There are many ways to take an active role. Work with your health care team to improve your health. Give your health care team accurate and complete information about:

- Your current health problems
- Your concerns about your health
- Past illnesses
- Past hospitalizations
- Your medicines, including over-the-counter, herbals, and vitamins
- Other matters related to your health
- Stressful aspects that actively affect your health and well-being

Plan ahead for your visits by writing down the questions and concerns you want to raise. Share them with your provider at the beginning of each visit.

Share your ideas and beliefs about your health problems and treatments with your provider.

For more information go to:

National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention website  
<http://www.prevention.va.gov>

My Health<sub>e</sub>Vet website  
<http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

Healthfinder: Take Charge of Your Health\*  
<http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx/topicid=78>

## 2. Be Tobacco Free

Don't use tobacco in any form. If you are using tobacco, the VA can help you quit. Avoid second hand smoke. If you are pregnant, both you and your baby will benefit when you quit using tobacco.

For tips on how to quit, go to: You Can Quit Smoking Now. <http://www.smokefree.gov/VET>

To talk to someone about how to quit, call the National Quitline: 1-855-QUIT VET.

For more quit-smoking resources, go to: <http://www.healthfinder.gov/> and search for "tobacco."

If you would like information about VA programs to help you quit smoking, please call 1-800-215-8262 or 1-906 -774-3300 ext. 32774.

## 3. Eat Wisely

We all should eat a wide variety of foods to get the daily nutrients we need. Eat wisely to maximize your health. Eat a variety of foods including vegetables, fruits and whole grains. It is important to include fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products in your diet, and limit salt, sugar, fat, and alcohol.

**For more information go to:**

National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention website  
<http://www.prevention.va.gov>

The Food Guide Pyramid\*: <http://www.mypyramid.gov/>

2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans\*  
<http://www.cnpp.usda.gov/dietaryguidelines.htm>

Healthfinder: Eat Healthy\*  
<http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=21>

#### **4. Be Physically Active**

Avoid inactivity. Some activity is better than none. Aim for at least 2 1/2 hours of moderate-intensity aerobic activity each week. Every 10 minute session counts. Do muscle strengthening activities at least 2 days a week. Include all the major muscle groups—legs, hips, back, chest, stomach, shoulders, and arms.

It is up to you, but it is better to spread your activity throughout the week. Slowly build up the amount of time you spend doing physical activities. The more time you spend, the more health benefits you gain. If you are not physically active now, start small. Walking briskly, mowing the lawn, dancing, swimming, and bicycling are just a few examples of moderate aerobic activities.

#### **For more information go to:**

National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention website  
<http://www.prevention.va.gov>

Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans\*  
[www.health.gov/paguidelines](http://www.health.gov/paguidelines)

Healthfinder: Get Active\*  
<http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=22>

#### **5. Strive for a Healthy Weight**

If you need to lose weight, losing even a little will help. If you are of normal weight, maintain it. Staying in control of your weight helps you be healthy now and in the future.

To find the weight range that is right for you, check your Body Mass Index (BMI). It measures body fat based on your height and weight. Go to the BMI calculator from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at <http://www.nhlbisupport.com/bmi/>.

To stay at a healthy weight, balance calories from what you eat and drink with calories you burn off by your activities. To prevent gradual weight gain over time, make small decreases in food and beverage calories and increase physical activity.

**For more information go to:**

National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention website  
<http://www.prevention.va.gov>

VA MOVE!<sup>®</sup> program website <http://www.move.va.gov/>

My HealtheVet website <http://www.myhealth.va.gov>

## 6. Limit Alcohol

If you choose to drink alcohol, drink in moderation (women should average no more than 1 drink a day AND drink no more than 7 drinks total per week; men should average no more than two drinks a day AND drink no more than 14 drinks total per week). Avoid “binge drinking.” Binge drinking means drinking so much on one occasion that it leads to health and safety risks such as car crashes and injuries. For women, this usually occurs after about 3 drinks and for men after about 4 drinks. If you are concerned about your drinking, talk to your VA health care team about getting help. A standard drink is one 12-ounce bottle of beer or wine cooler, one 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits. If you are pregnant, do not drink any alcohol.

**For more information go to:**

National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention website  
<http://www.prevention.va.gov>

Rethinking Drinking: Alcohol and your Health\*  
<http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/IsYourDrinkingPatternRisky/WhatsYourPattern.asp>

Healthfinder: Drink Alcohol Only in Moderation\*  
<http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=16>

## 7. Get Recommended Screening Tests and Immunizations

Get recommended preventive services; including screening tests and immunizations. Recommendations for preventive services depend on your age, gender, health status, and

family history. Find out which screening tests and immunizations are recommended for you!

You can find a list of the recommended services for men and women at these websites:

Men: Stay Healthy at Any Age\*:

<http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthymen.htm>

<http://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/patient-involvement/healthy-men/hombre.html> (en español)

Women: Stay Healthy at Any Age\*:

<http://www.ahrq.gov/ppip/healthywom.htm>

<http://www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/prevention/lifestyle/mujer.html> (en español)

My Healthfinder\*:

<http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/myHealthfinder.aspx>

## 8. Manage Stress

Pay attention to stress. Tools are available to help you manage and reduce your stress. Most people have some stress in their lives. It's important to learn how to manage the stress in your life because stress contributes to your risk for health problems. You may not be able to remove stress from your life, but you can learn what stresses you and how to take care of yourself during periods of stress.

VA also has excellent programs to help you manage post-traumatic stress disorder. Talk to your provider about your concerns, and learn about the many ways VA can help you manage stress in your life.

### For more information go to:

National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention website

<http://www.prevention.va.gov>

Healthfinder: Manage Stress\*

[http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=45\\*](http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=45*)

People who have strong ties to family and friends have higher levels of well-being than those without such support. These networks give you many benefits:

- a feeling of connection to other people
- the knowledge that other people consider you a friend
- the security of knowing you can help others and they will help you.

There are many resources to help you build a support network for yourself. Try this website: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/social-support/>\*

## 9. Be Safe

There are actions you can take to protect yourself and those you love from harm. Common safety issues are avoiding sexually transmitted infections, falls, and motor vehicle crashes.

### For more information go to:

National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention website  
<http://www.prevention.va.gov>

Healthfinder: Get Tested for Sexually Transmitted Infections\*  
<http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicID=32&cnt=1&areaID=0>\*

Healthfinder: Lower Your Risk of Falling\*  
<http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicID=17> \*

Safe driving resources  
<http://www.safedriving.va.gov/resources/driving.asp>

Many VA facilities have health education programs and services to help you make healthy behaviors part of your daily life. Check with your provider or clinic nurse on the educational information / classes available.

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

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