

# COMPASS TO HEALTH

Veterans Health Education Newsletter

Summer 2019



## VA MISSION Act

VA's new eligibility criteria for community care, providing more choices for Veterans.

<https://www.missionact.va.gov/>



Choose VA

## Preventing Skin Cancer

Relaxing in the sun may feel good. But it isn't good for your skin. In fact, being exposed to the sun's harmful rays is a major cause of skin cancer. This is a serious disease that can be life-threatening. People of all ages and backgrounds are at risk. In most cases, skin cancer can be prevented.

### Your Role in Prevention

You can act today to help prevent skin cancer. Start by avoiding the sun's UV (ultraviolet) rays (see *When you are outdoors*). Don't use tanning beds, which are no safer than the sun. Taking these steps can help keep you from getting skin cancer. It can also help prevent wrinkles and other sun-induced aging effects. Make sure your children follow these safeguards, too. Now is the time to start taking preventive steps against skin cancer.

## Preventing Skin Cancer, continued:

### When You Are Outdoors

Protect your skin when you go outdoors during the daytime. This includes if you are running errands by car since you are still exposed to the sun and the UV rays. There isn't just one easy way to protect your skin. It's best to follow all these steps:

- Wear clothing that covers your skin. Put on a wide-brimmed hat to protect your face, ears, and scalp. Wear sunglasses that block as many UVA and UVB rays as possible. Sunglasses that wrap around the eyes are best because they block UV rays on the sides.
- Watch the clock. Try to avoid the sun between 10 am and 4 pm when planning to be outdoors. The UV rays are the strongest at this time. You're still at risk on cloudy days because clouds only block about 20 percent of UV rays.
- Head for the shade or create your own. Use an umbrella when sitting or strolling.
- Know that the sun's rays can reflect off sand, water, and snow. This can harm your skin. Take extra care when you are near reflective surfaces.
- Shield your skin with sunscreen. Also, apply sunscreen to your children's skin.

### Tips for Using Sunscreen

To help prevent skin cancer, choose the right sunscreen and use it correctly. Try the following tips:

- Choose a sunscreen that has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. The sunscreen should shield you from UVA and UVB (Ultraviolet A and B) rays
- If one brand irritates your skin, try another
- Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours or sooner if you get wet or sweat a lot. If you're active, do this more often.

## Tips continued:

- Cover any sun-exposed skin, from your face to your feet. Don't forget your ears and sunscreen lip balm to protect your lips.

Know that while sunscreen helps protect you, it isn't enough. You should wear protective clothing, too.

Reference:

<http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/>  
[https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic\\_info/sun-safety.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/sun-safety.htm)



## HEALTHY AGING IN WOMEN

Are you making healthy aging a priority in your life? Staying healthy as you grow older means taking time to recognize and address your changing health needs.

### Regular primary care visits

As you age, it's more important than ever to have regular visits with your primary care provider. New health issues may be emerging, and your designated women's health provider can help you address them early.

### Nutrition

How you fuel your body becomes more important as you age, too. A calcium-rich diet can help prevent osteoporosis. Eating well can reduce your risk of developing heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, some kinds of cancer, and anemia.

### Exercise

Activity is important at all stages of life, but many aging adults don't make an active lifestyle a priority. Even light exercise and physical activity can improve your health as you grow older, even if you already have conditions that accompany aging. <http://go.usa.gov/yK8F>  
[www.choosemyplate.gov/](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/)

## 3 Reasons to Visit the VHL

The Veterans Health Library (VHL) is a one-stop shop for health information specifically for Veterans.

### 1. Learn more about your health condition.

The VHL has information on cancer, chronic pain, diabetes, and much more. Click on "Diseases & Conditions" on the home page for other health conditions.

### 2. Browse health information

The home page includes a Health Encyclopedia, so Veterans can browse the VHL's entire health library.

### 3. Get tips for prevention and wellness.

Click on the "Living Well" tab for information on exercise, fall prevention, tobacco cessation, and more.

<http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/>

## Do you have thoughts about suicide?

If you or a loved one has thoughts about death or suicide, **call 911** or the Veterans Crisis Line at **800-273-TALK (800-273-8255) and press 1**, or use other emergency services. Or you can chat with a trained counselor online at [www.VeteransCrisisLine.net](http://www.VeteransCrisisLine.net).



### Events:

Visit Iron Mountain VA Medical Center on Facebook  
<https://www.facebook.com/VAIronMountain/>

**Veteran Town Halls:** Check Facebook for future Town Hall meetings

**Whole Health Orientation:** 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of every month from 10-11 Am Cst, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of every month from 2-3:30 pm cst