

TAKE THIS ISSUE HOME!

# VETERANS Health MATTERS

FALL 2024

Award Winning Wellness Magazine for VISN 8 Veterans  
in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico & the U.S. Virgin Islands



Preventing  
Veteran Suicides

Whole Health for a  
Whole You

Stay Up to Date with  
Recommended Vaccines



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**Veterans Health Matters** is a quarterly health and wellness magazine for Veterans produced by the VISN 8 Office of Communication. VISN 8 is the country's largest network of VA hospitals and clinics serving Veterans in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. Your feedback is welcome. If you'd like to comment on the content, please e-mail to:

**visn8communicationoffice@va.gov**  
**Visit VISN 8 on the web: [www.visn8.va.gov](http://www.visn8.va.gov)**

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# To Our Readers



Preventing Veteran suicides is VA's top clinical priority. With a comprehensive strategy and strong community partnerships, we are advancing evidence-based suicide prevention programs to meet Veterans where they live, work, and thrive. Read more about suicide prevention resources, including a lethal means safety program, on page six.

Are you up to date with recommended vaccines or "shots"? This is one of the easiest and safest ways to protect against infectious diseases. Learn which vaccines may be recommended for you on page three.

VA's Whole Health approach is impacting Veterans' lives in so many positive ways. From improving physical health to reducing stress with mind-body practices, Veterans are finding more ways to live their lives to the fullest. Read about getting started with Whole Health on pages four and five.

Finally, test your word search skills and check out the flavorful and satisfying stew recipe on page seven.

Be well and stay safe!

**David Isaacks, FACHE**  
**Network Director, VISN 8**

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## Improved Online Sign-In Experience



To achieve a simpler and more modern sign-in experience for Veterans and beneficiaries to access VA online services, VA will transition from four online sign-in options (Login.gov, ID.me, My HealthVet, and DS Logon) to two sign-in options: Login.gov and ID.me accounts. Veterans can use these two options to sign in to VA.gov, VA mobile applications, or other VA online services.

Veterans will no longer be able to use usernames and passwords for My HealthVet after Jan. 31, 2025, or DS Logon after Sept. 30, 2025. After these deadlines, Veterans who have not yet transitioned will still be able to access their data and manage their benefits and services online once they have created their new account. This transition helps meet Veterans' requests for a simpler sign-in experience while continuing to improve security standards, comply with federal policies, and ensure Veteran data and identity protection.

# Stay Up to Date with Recommended Vaccines

Getting recommended vaccinations (“shots” or immunizations) is one of the easiest and safest ways to protect yourself from several infectious diseases. Even if you got all your shots as a child, protection from some vaccines wears off over time. Plus, you may be at risk for other infectious diseases based on your age, health conditions, job, lifestyle, and travel.

Vaccines work with your body’s immune system to lower the risk of getting certain diseases and suffering complications from them. When you get immunized, you are also helping to prevent the spread of the disease to loved ones and others. Infants, older adults, and people with weakened immune systems are more vulnerable to getting or suffering from infectious diseases. Any side effects from vaccines are usually mild and go away within a few days. Severe side effects are very rare.

Talk with your VA provider about which vaccines are right for you. Learn more about VA’s recommended vaccines at [www.prevention.va.gov](http://www.prevention.va.gov).



VACCINE	RECOMMENDED FOR ADULTS
COVID-19	All adults
Hepatitis A	Talk with your provider.
Hepatitis B	Age 19-59: Recommended if not already received it Age 60 and older: Talk with your provider.
Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)	Age 19-26: 2-3 doses if series not completed Age 27-45: Talk with your provider.
Influenza (flu)	All adults every year
Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR)	Talk with your provider.
Meningococcal Disease	Talk with your provider.
Pneumococcal Disease	Age 19-64: Talk with your provider. Age 65 and older: All adults
Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)	Age 60 and older: Talk with your provider. Pregnant women: Receive between 32-36 weeks during RSV season
Shingles	Age 19-49: Talk with your provider. Age 50 and older: two doses
Tdap/Td (Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis)	Every 10 years (or sooner for wound management) Pregnant women: Additional dose
Varicella (Chickenpox)	Talk with your provider if born 1980 or later.

# Whole Health for a Whole You

VA's Whole Health approach to care is centered on what matters to you. You are in the driver's seat when it comes to your care, so it supports your needs, goals, values, and preferences to help you live your life to the fullest.



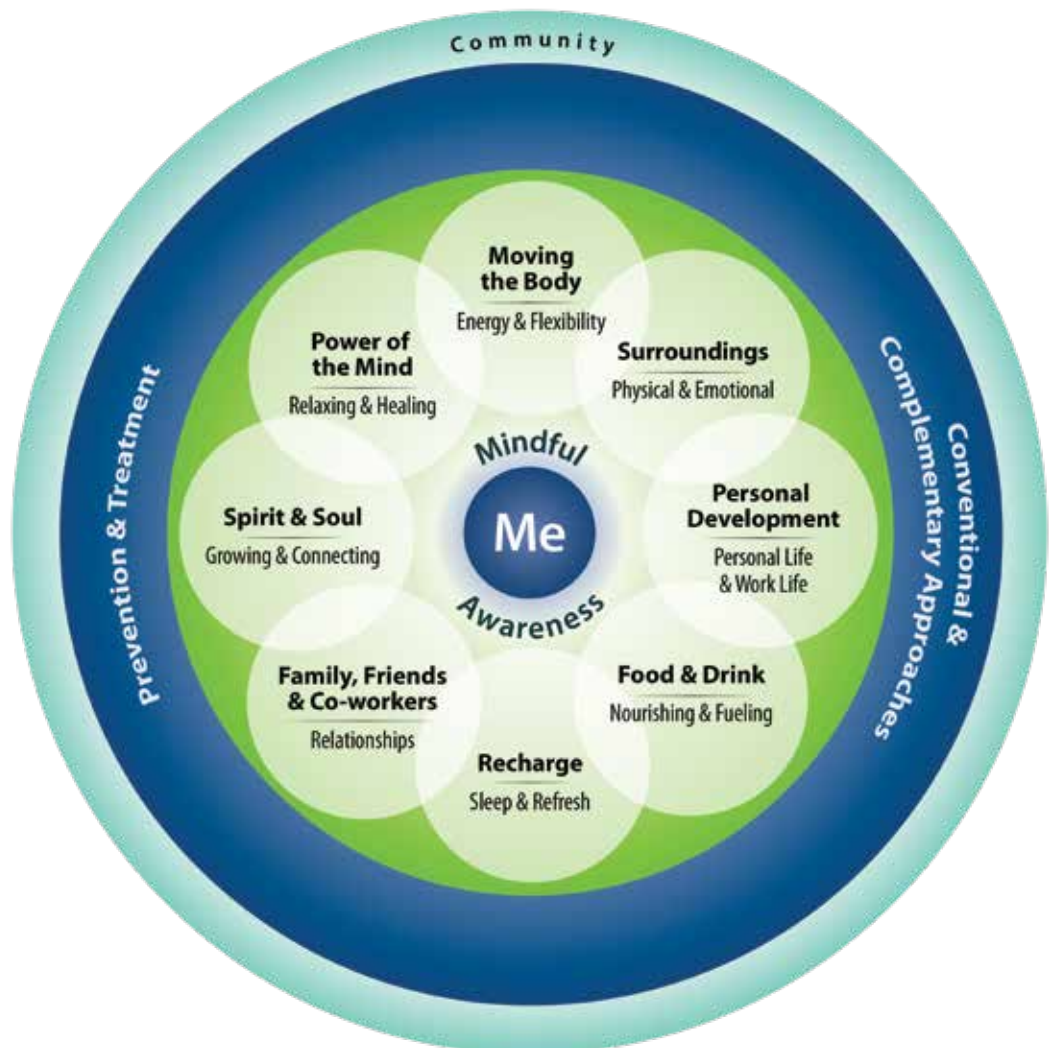
Whole Health is about the "whole" you, including your mind and body. The mind-body connection is powerful. For example, your mood and thinking patterns can positively or negatively impact your physical health, like your blood pressure.

For many Veterans, this may be a different way of thinking about health. Being open to a Whole Health approach and mind-body practices doesn't mean replacing conventional medicine. It's about adding more tools to your health care tool box to help you live a full and enjoyable life.

## Circle of Health

The Circle of Health is the foundation of Whole Health, which shows that all parts of your health and well-being are connected.

It starts with you ("me" in the center) because you are the expert on your life and what matters to you.





## Key Elements

**Mindful awareness:** This is an important tool that can support your Whole Health. It means noticing what is happening as it happens without worry or judgement. This mind-body practice helps you be more aware of your thoughts and feelings so you can tune into and keep track of what matters in your life. There are many ways to practice mindful awareness, but you don't need any special equipment or skills. It can be as simple as taking a few minutes each day to sit quietly and focus on your breath.

**Self-care:** Your VA health care team is here to support the changes you want to make in different parts of your life. These areas of self-care may include improving your relationships or sleep, or learning a new skill to help you grow as a person. Or you may want to learn breathing and relaxation exercises, and other mind-body practices to help lower blood pressure or manage chronic pain. Whatever it is, Whole Health offers a wide range of programs, resources, and tools to fit your needs for self-care and skill-building.

**Professional care and Community:** This includes prevention and treatment of disease and illness with medical care, medicines, immunizations, and health screenings. It also includes complementary care and mind-body medicine, such as meditation, acupuncture, hypnotherapy, yoga, and more. Your community includes all the people, groups, and organizations you connect with and rely on, including where you live, work, and worship.

## Getting Started with Whole Health

Are you curious about what Whole Health can do for you? You can begin by having a conversation with your VA health care team. You can also complete a Personal Health Inventory (PHI) to identify what matters to you (see Your PHI, below). To help decide if Whole Health is right for you, scan the code below to watch videos of Veterans telling their stories about how Whole Health has helped them live better.



To learn more about Whole Health and mind-body practices, including access to the PHI, online tools, mobile apps, and a Whole Health Facility contact person, visit [www.va.gov/wholehealth](http://www.va.gov/wholehealth).



## Your PHI

This tool is a series of questions to help you decide what really matters in your life and what you want your health for. It takes you through the eight areas of self-care in the Circle of Health to help you understand how they affect your health. For example, are you getting enough sleep to recharge your body and mind?

You can complete your PHI on your own, with help from your VA health care team, during Veteran-led Whole Health classes, or from a Health and Wellness coach. The next step is to set some goals by building a Personal Health Plan and working with your health care team to access clinical care, well-being programs, resources, and tools to support the whole you.

# Preventing Veteran Suicides



By Carri-Ann Gibson, MD, Chief Mental Health Officer, VISN 8 and Janet Gates, LISW-CP, Deputy Chief Mental Health Officer & Suicide Prevention Lead, VISN 8



Text 838255  
veteranscrisisline.net

**VA's top clinical priority is preventing Veteran suicides. This is a public health crisis and VA is committed to taking a public health approach. Community partnerships and coalitions are informing the next steps in suicide prevention across the United States.**



#### Watch the Video!

Check out the video, "Suicide Prevention Resources" at [www.visn8.va.gov/visn8/news/publications.asp](https://www.visn8.va.gov/visn8/news/publications.asp).



#### Community Outreach

VA's Community Engagement and Partnership for Suicide Prevention Program is a comprehensive strategy to collaborate at the community, regional, and state levels. This partnership supports evidence-informed suicide prevention programs specific to each area's Veteran population. It also strengthens VA's focus on high-risk individuals in health care settings while embracing cross-agency and community partnerships to meet Veterans where they live, work, and thrive.

#### Promoting Secure Firearm Storage

VA has launched several outreach efforts to educate and provide resources directly to Veterans about lethal means safety. VISN 8 is expanding gun lock distribution to community partners, promoting awareness about the simple steps Veterans and their support networks can take to increase safety. This program includes secure firearm and medication storage, support for Veterans and families, and connections to other available resources.



#### Crisis Warning Signs

If you recognize any of these warning signs of suicide, reach out for help and support:

- Feeling hopeless or trapped, like there is no reason to live
- Having trouble sleeping or eating
- Feeling anxious or agitated; panic attacks
- Increasing alcohol or drug misuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends

#### How to Get Help

VA offers a variety of resources online for overcoming everyday challenges. If a Veteran is in crisis, same day access for mental health care is available at VA medical centers and clinics, or any VA or community emergency department. Veterans can also call the VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center 24/7 for mental health services at 1-877-741-3400. Veterans, family members, or loved ones can also contact the Veterans Crisis Line 24/7/365.

# Word Search

Find these words from the stories in this issue of **Veterans Health Matters**. Remember to also look up, down, and backward. Have fun!

CRISIS	A	F	E	G	S	K	I	N	R	E	L
CHALLENGE	W	H	O	L	E	H	E	A	L	T	H
FLU	P	A	I	U	L	M	D	G	K	A	P
ME	Q	V	W	F	F	D	I	J	R	N	O
MINDFUL	W	S	B	D	C	A	C	H	M	I	S
PREVENT	Y	I	B	N	A	E	I	K	S	C	M
SELF CARE	F	S	A	I	R	K	U	L	F	C	O
SUICIDE	D	I	L	M	E	P	S	W	B	A	M
VACCINATE	P	R	E	V	E	N	T	E	L	V	S
WHOLE HEALTH	T	C	H	A	L	L	E	N	G	E	Y

## Slow Cooker Moroccan Chickpea-Lentil Stew

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups low sodium vegetable broth
- 1 (15-ounce) can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added tomato sauce
- 1 medium butternut squash, peeled and cubed (or one 15-ounce package)
- 1 medium bell pepper, diced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1/2 cup red lentils, rinsed
- 1 tablespoon fresh grated ginger
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon each: turmeric, cumin, and smoked paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon each: cinnamon, black pepper, and salt



### DIRECTIONS

1. Add the broth, garbanzo beans, tomato sauce, squash, bell pepper, onion, and lentils to the pot of a slow cooker.
2. Add the remaining ingredients and stir to combine well.
3. Cover the slow cooker with the lid and set to cook on low for 6-8 hours or high for 3-4 hours. Serve warm.

**Nutritional information:** (6 servings). Per serving: 195 calories, 2 g total fat, 0 g saturated fat, 37 g carbohydrates, 11 g fiber, 11 g protein, and 240 mg sodium.

## Free Veterans Health Matters Subscription

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American Institute for Preventive Medicine  
c/o VISN 8 – VHM  
30445 Northwestern Hwy., Ste. 150  
Farmington Hills, MI 48334

(Please print)

First Name  Middle Initial

Last Name

Address

City

State  Zip

### By Email:

[VISN8VHM@healthylife.com](mailto:VISN8VHM@healthylife.com)  
Be sure to include the above information.

### By Phone:

(800) 345-2476 – press 5 for English or press 6 for Spanish



**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**  
 Veterans Health Administration  
 VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8)

VISN 8 Office of Communication  
 13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.  
 Tampa, FL 33612



You don't have to go through a crisis alone. Dial 988 then Press 1 to reach the Veteran Crisis Line, day or night.

# VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

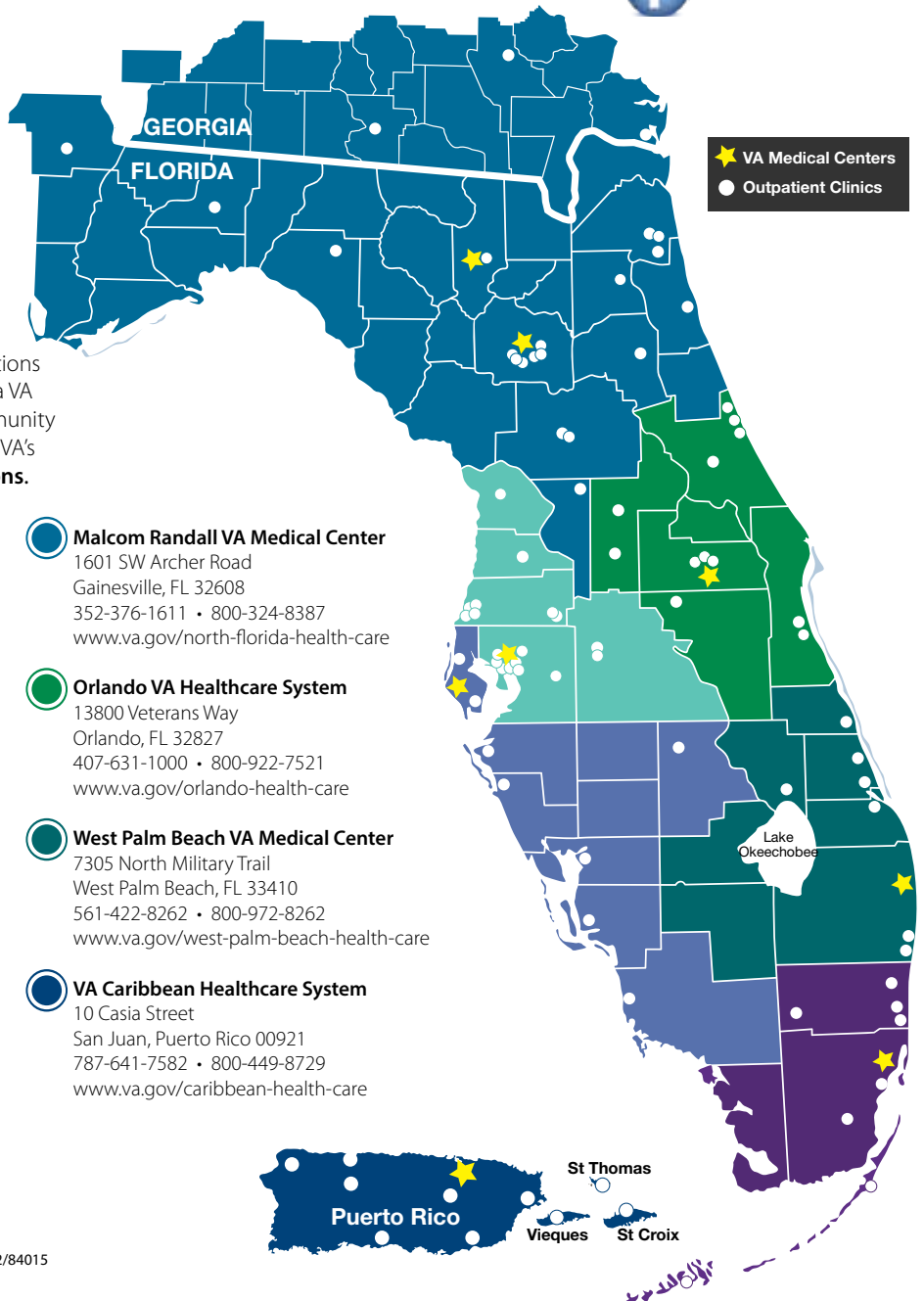
[www.visn8.va.gov](http://www.visn8.va.gov)

at all Medical Centers



The Right Care, Right Now  
**1-877-741-3400**  
 24/7/365 Virtual Urgent Care

**NOTE:** This map shows medical center locations only and associated service areas. To locate a VA healthcare center, outpatient clinic, or community based outpatient clinic near you, please use VA's facility locator at: [www.va.gov/find-locations](http://www.va.gov/find-locations).



**Bruce W. Carter Dept. of VA Medical Center**  
 1201 NW 16th Street  
 Miami, FL 33125  
 305-575-7000 • 888-276-1785  
[www.va.gov/miami-health-care](http://www.va.gov/miami-health-care)

**C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center**  
 10000 Bay Pines Blvd.  
 Bay Pines, FL 33744  
 727-398-6661 • 888-820-0230  
[www.va.gov/bay-pines-health-care](http://www.va.gov/bay-pines-health-care)

**James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital**  
 13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.  
 Tampa, FL 33612  
 813-972-2000 • 888-716-7787  
[www.va.gov/tampa-health-care](http://www.va.gov/tampa-health-care)

**Lake City VA Medical Center**  
 619 South Marion Avenue  
 Lake City, FL 32025  
 386-755-3016 • 800-308-8387  
[www.va.gov/north-florida-health-care](http://www.va.gov/north-florida-health-care)

**Malcom Randall VA Medical Center**  
 1601 SW Archer Road  
 Gainesville, FL 32608  
 352-376-1611 • 800-324-8387  
[www.va.gov/north-florida-health-care](http://www.va.gov/north-florida-health-care)

**Orlando VA Healthcare System**  
 13800 Veterans Way  
 Orlando, FL 32827  
 407-631-1000 • 800-922-7521  
[www.va.gov/orlando-health-care](http://www.va.gov/orlando-health-care)

**West Palm Beach VA Medical Center**  
 7305 North Military Trail  
 West Palm Beach, FL 33410  
 561-422-8262 • 800-972-8262  
[www.va.gov/west-palm-beach-health-care](http://www.va.gov/west-palm-beach-health-care)

**VA Caribbean Healthcare System**  
 10 Casia Street  
 San Juan, Puerto Rico 00921  
 787-641-7582 • 800-449-8729  
[www.va.gov/caribbean-health-care](http://www.va.gov/caribbean-health-care)