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VETERANS Health MATTERS

SPRING 2025

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



Clinical Contact Center:
Enhancing Veteran Healthcare

Prioritizing Heart
Health for Longevity

Eat Smart, Live Well: Healthy
Weight Management



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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:

department.va.gov/integrated-service-networks/visn-08

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To Our Readers



Heart health plays a critical role in maintaining quality of life, especially as you age. But staying heart-healthy isn't just about living longer—it's about living better. That's why the VA encourages Veterans to prioritize heart health to improve their overall well-being. Learn more about preventing heart disease and how to build heart healthy habits on pages four and five.

Aiming for a healthy weight, staying active, and making wise food choices can have a big impact on your quality of life. With the support of your VA health care team, the MOVE! Program, and the Healthy Teaching Kitchen (HTK), you can create health goals that fit your lifestyle. Find out how to eat smart and live well with VA's approach to weight management on page six.

The VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center, or VA Health Connect, is designed to enhance the healthcare experience for Veterans enrolled for VA care in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Read more about the wide range of support and services from VA Health Connect on page three.

Lastly, test your word search skills and celebrate spring by trying the kale with walnuts and raisins salad recipe on page seven.

Be well and stay safe!

David Isaacks, FACHE
Network Director, VISN 8



VA App Highlight: Vet Change

VetChange is an app for Veterans and Service members who are concerned about their drinking and how it relates to posttraumatic stress, and for all people who are interested in developing healthier drinking behaviors. This app provides tools for cutting down or quitting drinking, tools for managing stress symptoms, and education about alcohol use and how it relates to PTSD symptoms.

VetChange can be used alone or in combination with counseling. However, the app should not be used to replace counseling or professional treatment. VetChange is based on the VetChange web intervention and is a collaborative effort between VA's National Center for PTSD and Boston University. To learn more and to download the app today, please visit **mobile.va.gov/app/vetchange**.

Clinical Contact Center:

Enhancing Veteran Healthcare



The Right Care, Right Now
1-877-741-3400

The VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center, or VA Health Connect, is a transformative service designed to enhance the healthcare experience for Veterans enrolled for VA care in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This innovative center provides a broad spectrum of 24/7/365 virtual services to ensure Veterans receive timely and efficient care, regardless of their location within VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8).

Veterans can reach the center around the clock by calling 1-877-741-3400. They can also connect using the VA Health Chat app, available at no cost on the Google Play or Apple App stores, anytime between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on Federal holidays.



Comprehensive Healthcare Services

- **Nurse Triage:** Access professional nursing advice and services around the clock. This allows Veterans to take action and immediately address health concerns with nursing staff.
- **Virtual Urgent and Tele-Emergency Care:** Telehealth technologies like the telephone, VA Health Connect, and VA Health Chat allow Veterans to consult with healthcare providers from home.
- **Prescription Renewal and Management:** The center assists with medication management, including prescription renewals and refills.
- **Scheduling Assistance:** Veterans can receive help scheduling appointments and ensuring timely access to healthcare providers and services.

Benefits to Veterans

- **Improved Access to Care:** The center ensures that Veterans have 24/7 access to healthcare, regardless of their physical location or time constraints.
- **Increased Efficiency:** With streamlined communication and service access, Veterans can manage their healthcare more effectively and efficiently.
- **Enhanced Health Outcomes:** The center helps prevent minor issues from becoming serious health problems by providing timely medical advice and assistance.
- **Reduced Burden on In-Person Facilities:** Remote services alleviates pressure on physical VA facilities, allowing them to focus on in-person care.

Save the center's telephone number in your mobile device today so you can get quality care when you need it!

Prioritizing Heart Health for Longevity

Heart health plays a critical role in maintaining your quality of life. But staying heart-healthy isn't just about living longer—it's about living better lives.

When your heart is strong, you have more energy to do the things you love. Whether it's playing with grandchildren, enjoying a nature walk, or completing daily chores, heart health matters. Making small, gradual lifestyle changes and prioritizing heart health can benefit everyone.

Why It Matters

Your heart is the engine that powers your entire body. When it's not functioning well, it can lead to fatigue, shortness of breath, and other serious health problems. All of these symptoms can impact your ability to stay active and independent. Poor heart health doesn't just affect your body; it can also affect your emotional and mental health and memory. By taking steps to care for your heart, you're investing in a healthier and more fulfilling future.

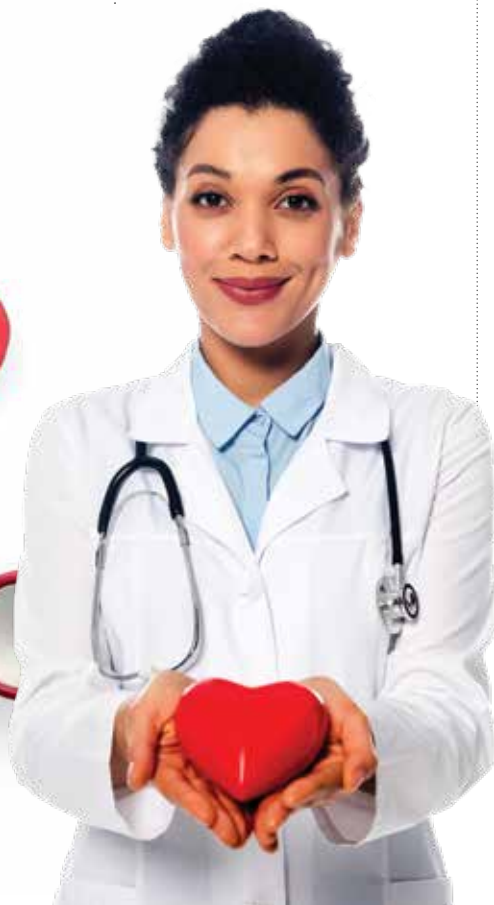
Preventing Heart Disease

Heart disease is a serious condition that can affect people of all ages. However, it becomes more common as we get older. Veterans may have additional risk factors, including post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and depression.

Also, women have life stages that can put them at increased risk, such as pregnancy and menopause. Stress, unhealthy diets, and lack of physical activity can collectively take a toll on your heart.

Your VA health care team can connect you with VA services and resources to help you prevent heart disease. They can assess your risk level, diagnose, and provide treatment. You can take action by learning more about your heart health numbers and discussing them with your health care provider. These include:

- Blood cholesterol
- Blood pressure
- Blood sugar
- Body Mass Index



Healthy Habits for a Healthy Heart



There may be some risk factors that you can't control, such as age and your family history. But as we grow older, we can build healthy habits to protect our hearts. Here are some tips to help you put heart health first:

- **Maintain a healthy weight.** All bodies are different. Talk to your health care provider about what healthy weight management looks like for you.
- **Move more.** Try to move your body daily, even if it's only for a few minutes.
- **Prioritize sleep.** Aim for 7-8 hours of quality sleep each night.
- **Nourish Your body.** Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Include healthy fats such as avocados, nuts, seeds, and olive oil in your diet. Limit unhealthy fats, added sugars, and excessive amounts of salt.
- **Limit your alcohol.** For most adults, this means aiming for no more than one drink per day for women and two drinks per day for men. Adults ages 65 and older should have no more than one drink a day and no more than seven drinks per week.
- **Say goodbye to tobacco.** If you smoke, quitting is one of the best things you can do for your heart health.
- **Find your calm.** Explore ways to reduce stress like yoga, meditation, or spending more time enjoying nature.
- **Keep blood pressure in check.** Work with your health provider to manage your blood pressure, which may include medication.
- **Manage blood sugar.** If you have prediabetes or diabetes, work closely with your VA health care team to manage your blood sugar levels.

Creating new habits and making lifestyle changes can be a challenge. However, with small, gradual changes, you can experience big rewards that last a lifetime. Scan the QR code below to access a wide range of resources from your Veterans Health Library.



Eat Smart, Live Well:

VA's Approach to Healthy Weight Management

Aiming for a healthy weight, making wise food choices, and staying active can have a big impact on your overall well-being, helping you enjoy life to the fullest. Incorporating these healthy habits into your daily life can boost energy levels, improve mobility, and reduce the risk of illness. The good news? It's never too late to start, and the VA is here to help!

With the support of your VA health care team, the MOVE! Program, and the Healthy Teaching Kitchen (HTK), you can learn about what's best for you and your lifestyle. Even small, gradual changes can become long-lasting healthy habits.

For instance, cutting back on sugary drinks and adding more snacks with fruits and vegetables can make a difference in your daily life. You can do more of the activities you love and enjoy more moments with the people you love.



What is MOVE!?

VA's MOVE! Weight Management Program is designed to support you in building a healthier lifestyle and managing your weight. But MOVE! goes beyond numbers on a scale—it's about empowering you to build the skills and confidence to improve your overall health and well-being.

This program includes valuable tools, such as guided workbooks, food and activity logs, and a gallery of videos focusing on healthy behavior, nutrition, and physical activity for all ages.

You can start your wellness journey by taking the MOVE! questionnaire. This tool provides you with a personalized health report you can share with your VA health care team. You can also download the VA MOVE! Coach app to easily access these tools on the go.

If you're looking for some motivation to get started, click on MOVE! Stories for videos of fellow Veterans sharing their inspirational health journeys and transformations. Visit www.move.va.gov to learn more.

Cooking with VA's Healthy Teaching Kitchen

Choosing nutritious foods is one of the most important steps you can take to improve your health. Learning to cook is a valuable way to ensure you have healthier options throughout your day. The Healthy Teaching Kitchen program equips Veterans with essential nutrition knowledge, hands-on cooking skills, and practical experience to build confidence in preparing healthy meals at home. Classes include nutrition education, meal balancing, grocery shopping, meal planning, cooking skills, and more.

These classes are taught in person at your local VA facility and online via the VA Video Connect (VVC) platform. Visit www.nutrition.va.gov and click on 'The Healthy Teaching Kitchen' for more information.



Watch the Video!

Check out the video "Eat Smart, Live Well: VA's Approach to Healthy Weight Management" by scanning this QR code.

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!

VIDEO	L	K	H	G	D	S	A	F	R	E	Q
ILLNESS	C	E	O	H	P	U	A	G	I	N	G
AGING	O	Z	O	E	D	I	V	D	L	E	W
HEART	N	B	Y	A	M	V	X	E	L	H	E
CONNECT	N	U	T	R	I	T	I	O	N	C	Y
NUTRITION	E	I	O	T	S	F	J	C	E	T	J
HABITS	C	L	A	B	N	C	K	W	S	I	P
KITCHEN	T	D	F	H	A	B	I	T	S	K	L
SNACK	U	Y	G	G	C	P	U	I	A	T	M
BUILD	I	P	H	W	K	E	L	S	D	L	Q

Kale with Walnuts & Raisins

INGREDIENTS

- 1/4 cup walnuts, chopped
- 2 tablespoons of your choice of vegetable oil
- 2 cloves garlic (minced)
- 2 cups kale (stems removed and the leaves chopped or torn)
- 1/2 cup raisins



DIRECTIONS

1. Heat oven to 350 °F.
2. On a baking sheet, toast the walnuts for about 5 minutes.
3. Heat oil in frying pan on medium heat.
4. Add garlic and kale to frying pan and cook for 4 minutes.
5. Add raisins and nuts and cook for 1 minute more.

Nutritional information:

(4 servings) Per serving: 183 calories, 12 g total fat, 3 g saturated fat, 38 g carbohydrates, 4 g fiber, 3 g protein, 0 mg sodium.

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Fill out your information (please print below) and put in a stamped envelope with this address:

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
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



If you are a Veteran in crisis or you're concerned about one you love, contact the Veterans Crisis Line for support. You do not have to be enrolled in VA health care to call.

VA Sunshine Healthcare Network



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.

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

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

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

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

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

Orlando VA Healthcare System
 13800 Veterans Way
 Orlando, FL 32827
 407-631-1000 • 800-922-7521
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

VA Caribbean Healthcare System
 10 Casia Street
 San Juan, Puerto Rico 00921
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www.va.gov/caribbean-health-care

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