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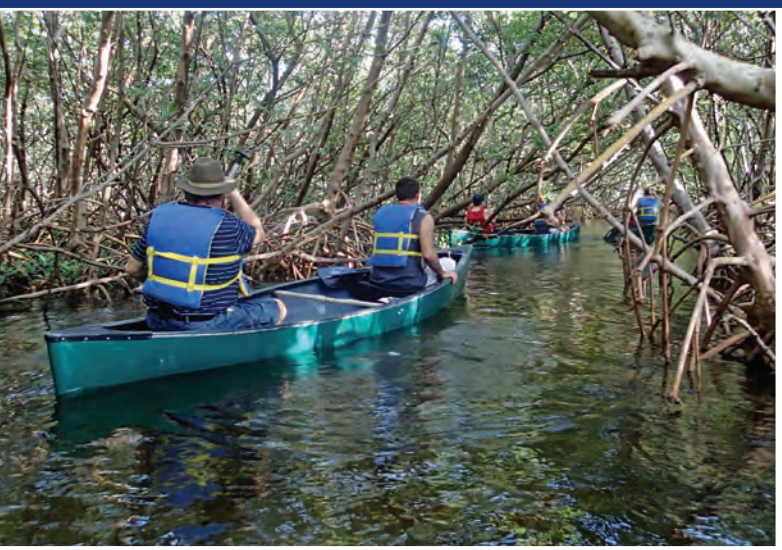
Veterans Health Matters

VISN 8
VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

AWARD WINNING Wellness Magazine for Veterans in Florida, South Georgia & the Caribbean



ON THE COVER:

Just a few of the VA's many Recreation Therapy and Creative Arts services available to Veterans. Story on page 6.

INSIDE THE COVER:

Coping with Arthritis: pages 4-5

TO OUR READERS

Greetings everyone! I am delighted to be the new director of the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network known as VISN 8.

On this page, learn about the many Veterans Health Library resources that can help you stay well and better manage your health. If you aren't familiar with this e-library, its chock full of great information, so be sure to check out the website.

How are you doing on your New Year's resolutions? Using the SMART goal setting method, found on page 3, can help you set realistic health goals you are likely to maintain.

On pages 4 and 5, learn ways to take charge and manage arthritis pain.

Recreation and leisure activities are effective, fun ways to improve your overall health. Learn how you can benefit from VA offerings on page 6.

On page 7, have fun with the Word Find and try the low-calorie Dilled Fish Fillets recipe for a refreshing spring dinner.

Finally, congratulations to Veterans Health Magazine for its well-deserved communication award. We're so pleased the magazine has been nationally recognized as an important tool for helping our Veterans better manage and improve their health. We knew that, of course – but nice that others have noticed too!

Be well!

Miguel LaPuz, M.D., MPA, FACHE
Network Director, VISN 8

www.veteranshealthlibrary.org

My healthevet

Veterans Health Library

Your source for health information

24/7 Access to Health Information

Since 2013, the Veterans Health Library has been offering Veterans, family members, and caregivers 24/7 access to comprehensive, Veteran-focused health information.

The Library is a one-stop source for health information to help Veterans stay well and well-informed.

There are over **1,500 health sheets**, more than **150 videos**, plus **Go-to-Guides with audio, video and interactive quizzes**, and **Flipbooks** that have been approved by VA experts, and include topics specific to Veterans, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), combat-related Traumatic Brain Injury, Agent Orange, and Cold Injury. All health information is available to Veterans, their family and the public, no matter where the Veteran receives care. Information is presented in English and Spanish.

Today, the Veterans Health Library has a fresh, new look and feel that improves the users' experience to make it more responsive to your needs. Come on in…browse around…and see for yourself. Stay Healthy!
www.veteranshealthlibrary.org

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Set SMART Goals to Maintain Healthy Changes

Whether you want to lose weight, make better food choices, quit smoking or reduce stress, adopting a new healthy behavior can be a challenge and sticking to it is even harder. These behavior change techniques will help you to start and maintain healthy changes.

First: Write out Clear Goals

One of the main reasons behavior changes are not maintained is because people often set unrealistic goals (such as losing 20 pounds in a month). In addition, many goals are too vague (such as simply, "losing weight"), leaving people without a specific way to reach their goals.

For most effective goal-setting, make sure your goal is

SMART:

S = Specific:

Straightforward and defined. What are you going to do? Why is it important to you? How are you going to do it?

Not specific: To exercise

Specific: To get in shape by walking

M = Measurable:

Progress is able to be tracked by numbers/other units. How much? How many? How often?

Not measurable: To walk often

Measurable: To walk for 30 minutes, 5 times a week

A = Action-oriented:

Related to behaviors you will DO, not the outcome.

Not Action-Oriented: I will lose 5 pounds by walking for 30 minutes, 5 times a week.

Action-Oriented: I will get up early five days a week to walk.

R = Realistic:

Do-able in terms of time, energy, and mental and physical health. You must be both willing and able to work toward this goal. Ask yourself: Am I willing to work towards this goal? Do I have the skills and resources I need?

Not realistic: To walk for 2 hours every day

Realistic: To walk for 30 minutes at least five days a week

T = Timetable to complete:

When will you accomplish this goal? Next week, 2 months, by the summer?

Not time-based: To walk 5 times a week until I feel fit

Time-based: To walk for 30 minutes, 5 times a week for a month

Once you have defined a SMART goal, write it down! Research shows that people are more likely to accomplish goals when the goals are in writing. After writing a clear goal, take some time to plan out what needs to happen in order to accomplish it.

My Health Choices

Circle your choice below:

Be Involved in Your Health Care

Be Physically Active

Be Tobacco Free

Strive for a Healthy Weight

Get recommended screenings & immunizations

Limit Alcohol

Eat Wisely

Manage Stress

Be Safe

Your Choice

My goal for the next week: (Example: I will take a 15-minute walk, at least 3 times this week, after I get home from work.)

Things that might get in my way: (Examples: bad weather, pain, work overtime.)

What I can do to overcome these things: (Examples: walk indoors or at an inside mall, listen to soothing music while I walk.)

I believe that I can reach my goal: (Circle the number that matches how confident you feel.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not At All Sure				Somewhat Sure				Very Sure	

Coping with ARTHRITIS

ABOUT 35% of Veterans have **ARTHRITIS.**

This compares to about 27% of adults in the general U.S. population.*

Some people call it "Old Arthur," but you don't have to be old to have arthritis. The term arthritis refers to over 100 disorders that affect joints or areas around joints. Osteoarthritis is the most common type and is also called "wear-and-tear" arthritis. With this, cartilage in joints, especially the knees, hips, and spine, gets worn out. Chips and cracks form in the cartilage, too. These allow the ends of the bones to rub together. Growths called bone spurs also form.

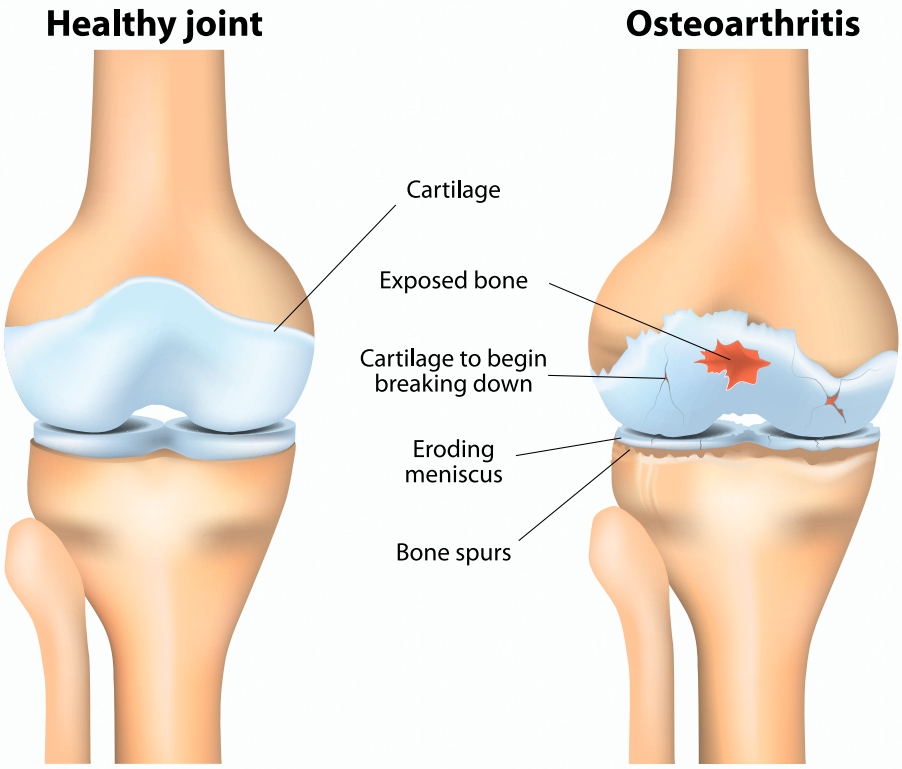
Arthritis is common among Veterans. Traumatic and overuse injuries during active duty are risk factors for developing arthritis.

Other risk factors are lifting heavy equipment, carrying heavy backpacks, and being overweight. In fact, in Veterans, arthritis is highest in those who are significantly overweight.

If you have arthritis, you already feel the common symptoms of joint pain and stiffness. Other symptoms are loss of motion in joints and tenderness and swelling around joints. Knobby growths can occur on finger joints.

Discuss your arthritis signs and symptoms with your VA health care team for a proper diagnosis. Work with your team on a treatment program that meets your needs.

If you are overweight, lose weight. VA's *MOVE!*® program can help you set realistic goals and show you ways to achieve them. Discuss your *MOVE!*® program options and other weight loss treatments with your health care team. www.move.va.gov



According to the Arthritis Foundation, nutrients in certain foods may help improve pain, morning stiffness and physical function by reducing inflammation. These include omega-3 fatty acids in salmon, tuna, trout, walnuts and flaxseeds. Certain antioxidants and plant chemicals are also helpful. Get these from extra virgin olive oil, fruits and vegetables. Good vegetable choices are broccoli, Brussels sprouts, onions, garlic and leeks.**

Before you take dietary supplements promoted for arthritis relief, talk to your health care team. Glucosamine may help some people with arthritis, but may not be suitable for people who take blood thinner medicine, are diabetic, or are allergic to shell fish (unless it is shell-fish free).

Preventing falls is very important to avoid further injury to your joints. A CDC study of adults 45 years and older shows that adults with arthritis were more likely to fall and have a fall injury compared with adults that did not have arthritis.*** Reduce your risk of falling in your home by using canes and walkers, if needed, installing grab bars in bathing areas and keeping indoor and outdoor areas well lit. Proper exercises and/or physical therapy also reduce your risk of falls by improving your walking speed, balance, and lower body strength. Talk to your VA health care team about how much and what types of activities are right for you. See Exercise, Exercise, Exercise in the next column.

Although your health care team can prescribe or recommend treatments to help you manage your arthritis, living well with the disease is up to you. Research shows that people with osteoarthritis who take part in their own care report less pain and make fewer doctor visits. They also enjoy a better quality of life. ****

EXERCISE, EXERCISE, EXERCISE.

It is difficult to want to exercise when your joints hurt, but without proper movement, muscles around your joints weaken and joint pain worsens. Physical activity can also improve your mobility, mood, and quality of life. And being physically active may delay the onset of disability, a common problem for people with arthritis.

Do low-impact aerobic physical activities.

These improve heart and lung function, help control weight, and improve overall function. Examples are walking, biking, swimming, and water aerobics. These moderate forms of activity do not put too much stress on your joints.

Do activities that strengthen muscles.

Strong muscles help support and protect joints affected by arthritis. Examples are lifting dumbbells, using stretch (resistance) bands and sit ups.

Do exercises that improve balance.

Maintaining your balance helps lower your risk of falls. Examples are tai chi, walking backward, and doing heel and toe walking.

Do range-of-motion exercises.

These help reduce stiffness and maintain or increase proper joint movement and flexibility.

Sources

* *CDC using data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System for years 2011-2013*
** *Arthritis Foundation, Eat Right for Your Type of Arthritis*
*** *CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, United States, 2012*
**** *NIHSenior health*

Helping Veterans Heal & Thrive:
RECREATION THERAPY

By Barbara Parker
Chief, Recreation Therapy,
Bay Pines VA Healthcare System

Staying active is an important part of our health and overall wellness. Recreational and leisure activities are good for our heart, weight, blood pressure and cholesterol. They also help us sleep better, improve our mood and just make us feel better overall.

Unfortunately, illness and/or disability often decrease our interest or ability to take part in physical and other activities we have done in the past.

So, what can be done? Recreation Therapy (RT) staff at VA facilities help Veterans learn new ways to do activities they enjoy like golf, swimming, sailing, skiing, archery, basketball, painting and writing – just to name a few. They can also learn new sports and activities like quad rugby, field events, nine ball, table tennis, hand cycling, therapeutic horseback riding, wheelchair slalom, jewelry making or participating in health-wellness discussion groups, drumming circles and so much more.

The VA is the "founder" of Recreation Therapy in the federal system. Annual national events include the Veterans Creative Arts Festival, Veterans Golden Age Games, Veterans Wheelchair Games and the Disabled Winter Sports Clinic. By participating in these events, Veterans have the opportunity to experience life from a whole new perspective and apply the skills and knowledge gained in the treatment setting—not to mention the great sense of comradery they build with their fellow Veterans.

Pictured: PGA Hope and Fairways for Warriors brought adaptive golf skills to more than 100 of Orlandos disabled Veterans in 2015. Golf, modified for disabled Veterans, is just one of the sports and activities that can help with rehabilitation goals and get individuals reengaged in life.

The path to taking part in these national events as well as participating in activities at the local level all starts with the RT department at a VA medical center. RT staff will evaluate a Veteran and for those eligible and when appropriate, they will develop a treatment plan from a wide range of recreation and leisure activities, fitness and wellness programs, creative arts (such as music therapy), and community-based programs to help Veterans improve their social, emotional and physical abilities.

Many of the sports and activities listed on this page are offered at facilities in the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network. To learn more about what programs could help with your rehabilitation goals or might help you reengage in life, ask your Primary Care provider or other VA health care team professional for a referral. You can also get information on programs by contacting the RT department directly or by visiting the facility's website. Get started at www.visn8.va.gov.

WORD FIND

S	T	N	E	V	E	Y	A	T	R
L	Y	B	G	U	R	P	R	E	I
E	R	T	A	A	C	A	C	T	A
I	E	N	M	I	V	R	H	G	H
S	D	I	E	B	E	E	E	N	C
U	A	A	S	A	F	H	R	I	L
R	R	P	T	L	I	T	Y	I	E
E	M	I	O	L	T	I	E	K	E
S	O	G	N	I	L	I	A	S	H
N	C	R	E	A	T	I	V	E	W

Find these words associated with VA Recreation Therapy services

ARCHERY	GAMES	RUGBY
ART	GOLF	SAILING
BALL	LEISURE	SKIING
COMRADERY	PAINT	THERAPY
CREATIVE	RECREATION	WHEELCHAIR
EVENTS		

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By E-Mail:
VISN8CommunicationOffice@va.gov

By Phone:
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GET Veterans Health Matters FIRST!

FEATURED Recipe!

Dilled Fish Fillets

Ingredients

1 pound haddock or cod fillets (fresh or frozen)

1 tablespoon lemon juice

1/8 teaspoon dried dill weed

1/8 teaspoon salt

1 dash black pepper (optional)

Directions

Microwave Method:

1. If frozen, thaw fish in refrigerator overnight or thaw in microwave oven. Then, separate into 4 fillets or pieces. Cut fresh fish into pieces.
2. Place fish in a glass-baking dish. Cover with wax paper.
3. Cook at "medium" power in the microwave for 3 minutes. Remove cover, turn fish over, and sprinkle with lemon juice and seasonings.
4. Cover and continue cooking at "medium" power for 3 minutes or until fish flakes with a fork.

Skillet method:

1. Separate into four fillets or pieces.
2. Place fish in heated fry pan. Sprinkle with lemon juice and seasonings.
3. Cover and cook over moderate heat until fish flakes when tested with a fork, about 5 minutes.

Nutritional Information: Serves 4. Per serving; 82 calories; 1 g total fat; 1 g saturated fat; 289 mg sodium; 17 g protein; 1 g carbohydrate; 0 g dietary fiber

Source: Shopping for Food and Making Meals in Minutes Using the Dietary Guidelines, USDA

VISN 8
VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

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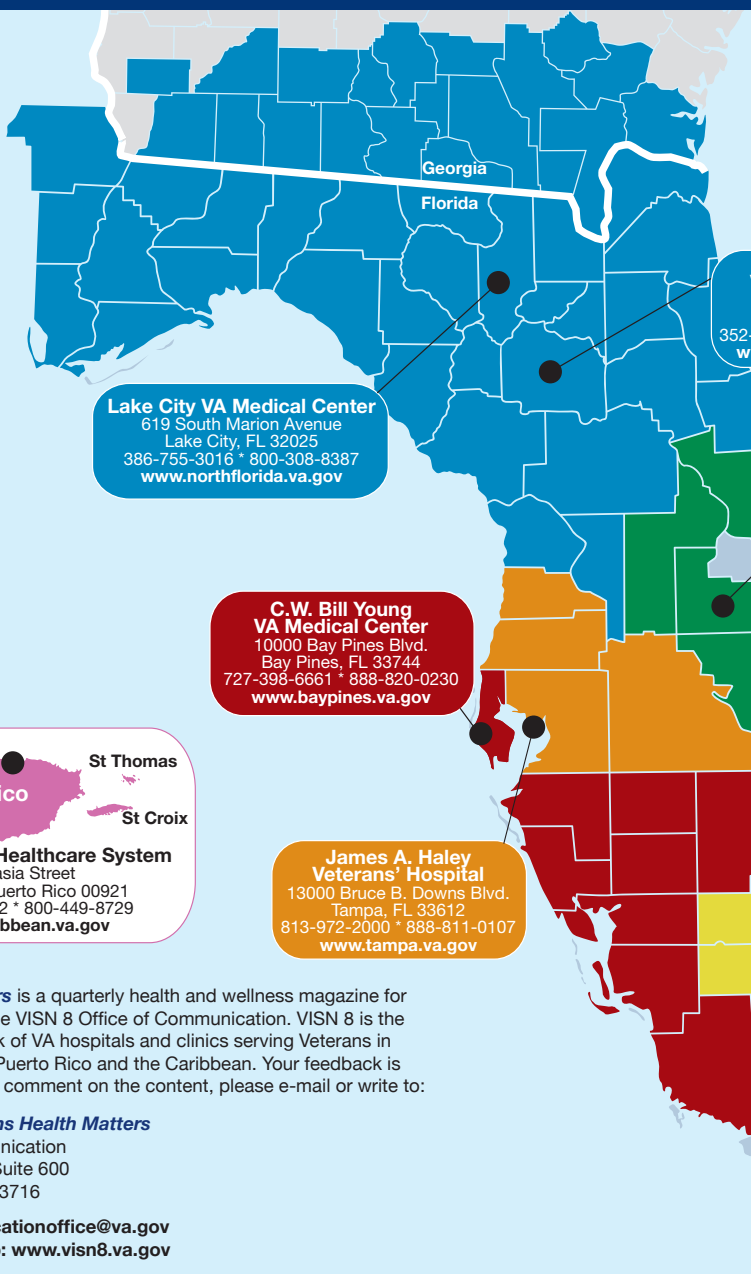
HEALTH MATTERS WINS NATIONAL AWARD

We're pleased to share that *Veterans Health Matters* was the recipient of a 2015 Veterans Health Administration Communication Award. The award recognizes excellence in VA publications that serve our nation's Veterans.

VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

www.visn8.va.gov

at all Medical Centers



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www.va.gov/health/FindCare.asp

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Miami, FL 33125
305-575-7000 * 888-276-1785
www.miami.va.gov

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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 or write to:

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