

Veterans HEALTH MATTERS

WELLNESS MAGAZINE FOR VETERANS IN FLORIDA, SOUTH GEORGIA & THE CARIBBEAN

FALL 2012 | WWW.VISN8.VA.GOV

TAKE ONE HOME



**Busting
FLU
MYTHS**

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To Our Readers

Starting to develop a spare tire? As the area around your abdomen grows, so does your risk of prediabetes. Prediabetes is a serious medical condition that can lead to heart disease and stroke. Page 3 offers a list of risk factors and prevention tips.

Less invasive and more convenient health care options are now available to Veterans thanks to advances in diagnostic equipment. Also, a new filmless communication system allows radiologists in different cities to read images from anywhere in the VISN 8 network of hospitals and clinics. The story on pages 4 and 5 describes the many benefits of these improvements to patients and care providers.

You've likely heard this a million times. Vaccination is the best way to prevent flu. Still need convincing? Read our Q&A: Flu Fact and Fiction on page 6. Then, then turn to page 7 to find out about another series of vaccines that can prevent HPV, the human papillomavirus.

Take charge of your health this season for yourself and the people who love you.



Nevin M. Weaver, FACHE
VISN 8 Network Director



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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Tampa to Host 33rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games

The 33rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games will be held in Tampa July 13 to 18, 2013. The largest event of its kind in the world, the Games are expected to draw more than 500 Veterans from across the U.S., Puerto Rico and Great Britain. This is only the second time the Games have been held in Florida; Miami hosted the event in 1991.

The Games are co-sponsored by the VA and the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA). With the theme "Seize the Day in Tampa Bay," the 33rd Games will be hosted by the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital along with the PVA's Florida Gulf Coast Chapter.

The Games are open to Veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition. The event showcases the abilities and determination of Veterans and represents a unique combination of competition, rehabilitation and fun.

Veterans compete in 17 competitive events. These events are made possible through the generous support of national host sponsors, civic and veteran service organizations. Thousands of volunteers will be needed for the event. For more information about the Games, including Volunteer and Sponsorship information, please visit www.wheelchairgames.va.gov.



PREDIABETES: Know Your Risks

Diabetes is a disease in which the body is unable to change glucose (sugar) to energy. Over time, high levels of glucose in the blood can damage the eyes, nerves, kidneys and blood vessels. Twenty six million people in the United States have diabetes and as many as 55 million have prediabetes. Prediabetes is when glucose levels are higher than normal but not high enough to be diagnosed as diabetes. Prediabetes often ends in type 2 diabetes within five to 10 years unless changes are made. Like diabetes, prediabetes is a serious medical condition. It places a person at greater risk for developing heart disease or having a stroke.

Who's at risk for developing prediabetes?

Prediabetes can occur in people of all ages and races. Certain factors may increase your risk for developing prediabetes and diabetes.

- **Overweight:** Being overweight is a primary risk factor for prediabetes.
- **Family history:** The risk increases if a parent or sibling has type 2 diabetes.
- **Race:** Prediabetes is more common in African American, Native Americans, Latinos and Asian American/Pacific Islanders.
- **Physical activity:** Being inactive limits the muscles' ability to use insulin. This increases the blood glucose level in the blood.
- **Age:** Your risk increases if you are over age 45 and overweight.
- **Gestational diabetes:** A woman who has had diabetes while pregnant, or had a baby weighing more than nine pounds, has a 20 to 50 percent chance of developing prediabetes.



Can I delay or reduce my risk for developing diabetes?

Research shows you can lower your risk for developing prediabetes and diabetes by doing the following:

Losing weight: Losing five to seven percent of your body weight can reduce risk of developing diabetes. Eating smaller portions and selecting foods that are lower in calories and fat can help you lose weight.

If You Weigh	Losing 5 to 7% is
150 pounds	8 to 11 pounds
175 pounds	9 to 13 pounds
200 pounds	10 to 14 pounds
225 pounds	12 to 16 pounds
250 pounds	13 to 18 pounds
300 pounds	15 to 21 pounds

Physical activity: Including 150 minutes of moderate activity a week may help with weight loss and reduces your risks for diabetes, certain cancers and heart disease.

Examples of Moderate Activity

Structured/Sport	Household/Everyday Activities
Water aerobics	Walking the dog at a brisk pace
Brisk walking	Mowing the lawn with a push-mower
Swimming	Washing and waxing the car
Bike riding	Washing and scrubbing the floors
Basketball, soccer, volleyball	Walking the stairs
Jazzercise or dancing	Raking the leaves
Exercise equipment (treadmill, elliptical, stationary bike)	Heavy gardening



MOVE! is a weight loss program offered in all VA medical centers. The program offers information and support to help you achieve your weight loss goals. Talk with your VA health care team during your next appointment to find out more information about MOVE! in your facility and visit www.move.va.gov to learn more.

Imaging Advances Improve Health Care for Veterans

By Susan Wentzell

Neika Garrison describes the pain she had been walking around with for more than a month: “It felt like an elephant was sitting on my chest.” But the 57-year-old Air Force Veteran says she continued to ignore the pressure in her chest. “I thought maybe it was my asthma medicine.”

When the pain got steadily worse, Ms. Garrison called her VA primary care provider, Dr. Saji Packal, MD, at the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville, Fla. “Dr. Packal and her nurse David Clegg told me to come to the Chest Pain clinic in the hospital’s Emergency Room as soon as possible. I’m sure glad I did—I believe they saved my life.”

Ms. Garrison, an Orange Park, Fla. resident, spent a fitful night in the Malcom Randall ER undergoing diagnostic tests ordered by her doctor. The following day, she had an additional, high tech test—a Cardiac CT (computed tomography) scan. A Cardiac CT is a quick, painless test that doctors use to look for heart and other problems.

During a cardiology CT scan, an x-ray machine—which looks like a giant donut—rotates around the body taking clear, detailed pictures of each part of a patient’s heart at ultra fast speeds. A computer puts the images together to make a three dimensional (3D) picture of the entire heart.

A Painless, Stress-Free Experience

“I had a bad night in the ER the day before and my nerves were jangled. But the test was quick and noninvasive. From start to finish, it took only about 10 minutes and the CT technician, James (Mash), allayed all my fears. He was so reassuring, so kind, and so professional—he went above and beyond to make my experience stress free,” she says.

Thankfully, the CT scan, along with the other battery of tests, ruled out any damage to her heart, and with an accurate diagnosis, the problem was successfully treated and her symptoms subsided. “She had what appeared to be chest pain related to her medication,” which was subsequently adjusted, according to Dr. Packal.

Today, advances in diagnostic imaging, like CT scans, MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging), PET (Positron Emission Tomography) scans and other fused techniques are having a major impact on how disease is diagnosed and treated. And a smarter way to manage these images means earlier diagnosis and treatment—especially for Veterans who receive their health care at VA hospitals and clinics in Florida, South Georgia and the Caribbean, the network of hospitals known as VISN 8.



Air Force Veteran Neika Garrison.
Photo provided by Veteran.



The 320-Slice CT scanner at the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville, Fla., can do a high-quality, 3D scan of the pulsing heart or other organ in less time than a heartbeat. Advances in imaging have dramatically reduced the need for exploratory surgery. VA photo by Greg Westlye

“The ability to **image an entire organ** and show how it’s working means faster, more **accurate diagnosis**, better patient outcomes and ultimately, **lower health care costs.**”



Dr. David Wymer, director of radiology, Malcom Randall VA Medical Center, Gainesville, Fla. VA photo by Greg Westlye

The Malcom Randall VAMC obtained a 320-Slice CT scanner in November 2011. At a cost of about \$1.5 million, it can do a high-quality, 3D scan of the pulsing heart or other organ in less time than a heartbeat, according to Dr. David Wymer, Chief of Diagnostic Imaging. He says there are less than 90 such scanners installed at hospitals across the country, including the VA.

In fact, advanced imaging has, in many cases, replaced exploratory surgery. Dr. Wymer compares the CT diagnostic technique with a more conventional procedure to evaluate the heart.

“A cardiac catheterization procedure takes two hours—plus time off from work, sedation, and surgical risk. The cardiac CT is noninvasive and takes two minutes.”

A CT scan is quick and noninvasive, but is it safe? “We keep the radiation exposure of our patients at the lowest possible level. We are fortunate to have highly advanced imaging equipment that allows us to use low exposure imaging and software on our machines that lowers the dosage by another 20 to 30 percent,” Dr. Wymer says.

Being able to do the test doesn’t equate to being able to read the test, according to Dr. Wymer. Typically, radiologists evaluate the film from an X-ray, CT, PET or any other health care image and report the findings to the patient’s physician(s).

“Having the ability to perform the study with the advanced technology equipment is of little use if physicians trained in interpreting the procedures are not available. Fortunately, at the North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System, we have subspecialty, fellowship-trained cardiologists and radiologists to analyze our cardiac and body images.”

PACS: A Smarter Way to Manage Imaging

Today, VISN 8 is one of only two VA networks and one of only a few private hospital systems in the country to have a system-wide, multi-hospital PACS—Picture Archiving and Communication System. PACS is a filmless information system that enables radiologists in different locations to analyze and discuss images from any hospital in the System without ever having to leave their local workstation. PACS is directly tied to VA’s Vista system, which manages the many documents and images in a patient’s electronic health record.

PACS was initially acquired as an independent system at each VA medical center in VISN 8. Now, PACS functions as a single system for the entire network with the capability for radiologists to read images for multiple facilities. The benefits include quicker turn-around-times, enhanced patient safety, and lower costs, according to Dr. Wymer.



“We can now analyze images from anywhere at any time. If a test was done in Orlando and Miami has the best GI radiologist, we can reach out to that specialist immediately. It’s also useful for our patients who travel and get their care at different VA facilities. They won’t have to repeat the test,” he says.

Another benefit is the ability to remotely read emergency CTs which is helpful if a radiologist is ill or when one hospital has too many studies to handle. “The capability to share images and expertise makes VA absolutely unique,” Dr. Wymer notes.

Improved patient care at the hospital level is another plus to PACS as radiologists from different imaging modalities consult with specialists and a patient’s primary care physician to develop a treatment plan for a patient. Such is the case at Malcom Randall which merged Radiology and Nuclear Medicine into a combined clinical service. Staff there recently developed combined interpretation sessions where Cardiology, Radiology and Nuclear Medicine physicians all come together to discuss each cardiac case and ideally, provide the very best analysis.

Of the synergy achieved by the merger, Dr. Wymer says, “By doing this, we can come up with the very best clinical decisions for our Veterans, and that’s what we’re all about.”

Q & A: FLU

FACT AND FICTION

Vaccination is the surest way to protect against getting the flu. The flu can become more than just a feverish, achy condition that lasts a few days. Hundreds of thousands of people in the U.S. are hospitalized every year with complications from influenza. Be sure to get your flu shot every year to protect yourself and help keep the flu from spreading to others.

Based on recent research studies, the flu vaccine can be tolerated by people with egg allergies, without severe reactions. Check with your VA health care provider if you have a severe allergy to eggs. The flu vaccine contains egg protein.



Who should get a flu shot?

All people age six months and older who want to reduce their risk of getting sick should get a flu shot. Those more at risk of illness and complications from the flu include:

- People with chronic health conditions such as asthma, diabetes and heart disease
- People older than age 50
- Pregnant women and women trying to become pregnant
- Caregivers of infants or a family member with health problems
- Health care personnel

Can my family and I get our flu shots from VA?

Veterans enrolled in VA health care and VA staff may get a flu shot at their nearest VA health care facility. If you are not enrolled in VA health care, check your eligibility online. *VA doesn't vaccinate family members of Veterans.* If they would like to get a flu shot, check the flu shot locator on Flu.gov.

How long does it take before I am protected?

After you get the flu shot, it takes about two weeks for your body to make enough antibodies to protect you against flu.

Is the Flu vaccine effective against all types of flu and cold viruses?

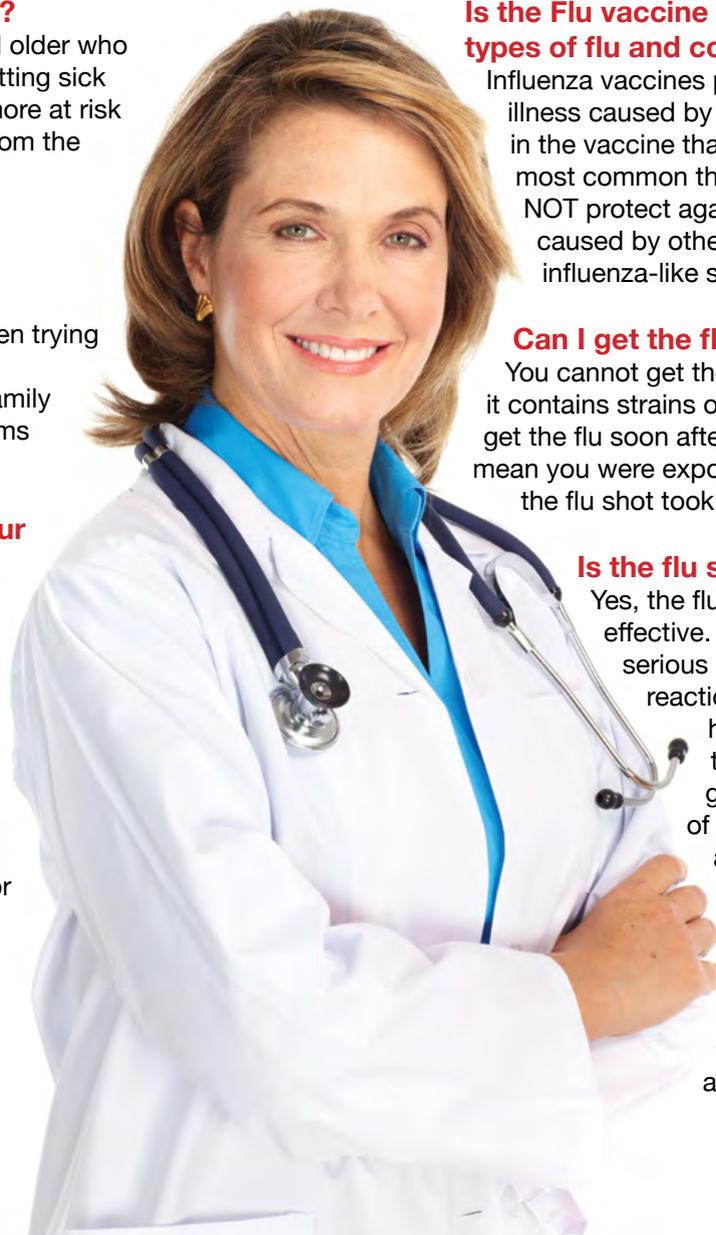
Influenza vaccines protect against infection and illness caused by the three influenza viruses in the vaccine that research indicates will be most common this season. Flu vaccines will NOT protect against infection and illness caused by other viruses that can also cause influenza-like symptoms.

Can I get the flu from a flu shot?

You cannot get the flu from a flu shot because it contains strains of non-living flu viruses. If you get the flu soon after getting a flu shot this could mean you were exposed to the flu virus before the flu shot took effect.

Is the flu shot safe?

Yes, the flu shot is both safe and effective. Most people have no serious side effects or allergic reaction to it. Some people may have redness or swelling on their arm where the shot was given. A very small number of people may get minor body aches, headache, or a low-grade fever that lasts a day or two. The Institute of Medicine reviewed more than 1,000 research articles and concluded that few health problems are associated with vaccines.



Know the facts: HPV.

What is HPV?

HPV (Human Papilloma Virus) is present in about 70 percent of women during their reproductive years.

How would I know if I have HPV?

You may not have any symptoms. The incubation period can be more than 20 years after exposure, so it's difficult to determine when the exposure occurred.

What are the symptoms of HPV?

- Genital warts that usually resolve on their own with time
- Rarely reported, warts in the throat
- Cancer of the cervix, vagina, vulva, penis, anus, or oropharynx (base of tongue/tonsils)

How can I prevent HPV?

HPV is passed through genital contact-vaginal, anal, or oral sex.

- Limit sexual partners
- Using condoms may lower the risk of HPV but HPV can infect areas that are not covered by the condom; therefore, condoms may not protect fully against the transmission of HPV.
- Strongly consider the series of three HPV vaccinations beginning at age nine years for both boys and girls and indicated through age 26.



"A healthy life style to keep the immune system strong can decrease (the likelihood of) getting HPV. This includes getting adequate sleep, healthy eating, exercise, stress management and not smoking."

-Dr. Andrew Muskus, MD

Fellow of the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG)
GYN Surgical Department, North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System

Is there a test to detect HPV?

- Regular pelvic exams and pap smears is important to detect HPV. Talk with your VA provider to see if you should be screened for HPV.

- Charlene Molloy, Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioner, Board Certified Health Promotion Disease Prevention Program Manager, NF/SGVHS

Pumpkin Bread

Servings: 15 | Calories per serving: 173

Ingredients

2 ½-3 cups sugar	3 ½ cups flour	2 tsp cinnamon
2 tsp nutmeg	½ tsp salt	2 tsp baking soda
1 cup canola oil	2/3 cup water	2 eggs, beaten
1 can (15 oz.) pumpkin puree	6-12 oz semisweet chocolate chips (optional)	

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Lightly grease three 8x4 inch loaf pans or two 12-compartment muffin pans. (You can also use cupcake liners, avoiding the grease altogether.)
3. In a large bowl, mix sugar, flour, spices, salt and baking soda.
4. In a medium bowl, combine oil, water, pumpkin puree and eggs.
5. Add the liquid mixture to the flour mixture and combine. Make sure there are no unblended pockets at the bottom of the bowl.
6. Add chocolate chips and stir.

For loaves: Divide batter equally among the pans and bake for 45 to 50 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.

For muffins: Each cup should be two-thirds full. Bake for 40 minutes.

Let cool completely before cutting and storing.

This recipe follows heart-healthy guidelines developed by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute.





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Get Your 2013 Calendar!

VISN 8's 2013 Healthy Living Calendars will be available after October 1, 2012. Pick up a copy during your next visit or ask your VA Provider about getting one.



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at all
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