

Veterans HEALTH MATTERS

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

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TAKE ONE HOME

INSIDE: A Doctor's Office That's All About You



U.S. Navy Veteran Ed Brown discusses his medication with Clinical Pharmacist Bishoy Ragheb, a diabetes specialist at the Tallahassee VA Outpatient Clinic. The pharmacist is an important member of Mr. Brown's Patient Aligned Care Team.

Read the full story on pages 4-5.



Veterans Health Library

Your source for health information •••••

Information Online that Veterans Can Trust

Veterans have a tool to take charge of their health and health care: the Veterans Health Library (VHL) is an online library of health topics geared toward Veterans. Topics ranging from diseases, conditions and medications, to rehabilitation and “Living with...,” can be found in the Library.

“Our intent was to provide Veterans with a web site where they could go for reliable health information,” said Dr. Rose Mary Pries, VA’s Veterans Health Education and Information Program Manager. “The VHL helps Veterans, their families and their health care teams take a more active and informed approach to managing their health conditions and sharing health care decision making—with information vetted or developed by Veterans Health Administration clinical experts that are specific to Veterans’ unique needs.”

With over 1,500 health information sheets and 150 videos in the VHL, Veterans can learn about topics such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Agent Orange exposure, combat-related cold injury, and traumatic brain injury, just to name a few. These Veteran-specific health topics are not easily found on other health web sites, but are featured in the VHL.

Visit the Veterans Health Library at www.veteranshealthlibrary.org and take charge of your health today.

To Our Readers

Instead of spending hours and hours surfing the Internet for health topics and health care resources, get trustworthy and Veteran-specific information from the Veterans Health Library. Find out more about this on the left side of this page.



You do not need to go to a gym to get physically active. On page 3, read about many opportunities to get moving and have fun at the same time at one or more of Florida’s 161 state parks and 11 national parks. And as a Veteran, you can get discounts on admission. Veterans in Puerto Rico can choose from many natural options to be active, as well.

On pages 4 and 5, read about the satisfaction U.S. Navy Veteran Ed Brown has working with his VA Patient Aligned Care Team. He is grateful for the coordination of care, as well as the ease of communicating with his health care providers through Secure Messaging, a My Health eVet feature topic in the Summer 2014 issue of this newsletter.

It’s that time of year to prepare for flu season. On page 6, read this light-hearted approach about flu facts from the perspective of “bug” viruses that cause this seasonal malady. Learn and plan how you and your family members can prevent getting this season’s flu.

Add to your knowledge of the flu by learning the truth about common flu myths listed on page 7. Also on this page, use the Soda Can Cupcakes recipe to make a delicious low-calorie and portion-controlled dessert for you and your loved ones.

Wishing you and your loved ones a healthy and flu-free fall!

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BEING ACTIVE: IT'S MORE THAN THE GYM

By Shane Suzuki

Who needs a gym when you have Florida (and beyond) in your back yard?

With 161 state parks and 11 national parks covering nearly two million acres, not to mention more than 100 miles of sandy white beaches on both coasts of Florida, Veterans in the Sunshine State have plenty of options to stay active.

Most adults should be targeting about 30 minutes of activity, five days a week to help keep the heart strong, muscles loose and blood flowing. And in the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network which spans a vast 64,153 mile area, Veterans of all abilities and ages can find a way to keep active with so many options close to home including many beautiful areas in South Georgia and the U.S. Virgin Islands.



This can include a walk through Nature Coast State Trail in Northwest Florida, a day kayaking through the mangroves at Oleta River State Park in Miami, or a lazy swim in the warm gulf waters at Stump Pass Beach State Park between Fort Meyers and Tampa.

Moderate exercise is linked to improving memory and fighting depression, along with helping to lose extra weight that is associated with joint pain, diabetes and heart disease. Combined with small changes in diet, Veterans can see improvements in their health and well being in just a few weeks.

Veterans interested in exploring their local parks should bring proof of their military service, as active duty, reservists, national guardsmen and honorably discharged Veterans may receive discounts on admission at parks, national forests and wildlife refuges. Veterans with service-connected disabilities can often receive a free lifetime pass for Florida state and national parks. To explore all of your options, call your local park or visit www.nps.gov, www.floridastateparks.org, www.gastateparks.org and www.nps.gov/viis/index.htm.



VETERANS IN PUERTO RICO have an array of natural options to choose from in their quest to be active. The National Park Service operates one national park, 11 landmarks and more than 326 historic places that are all available for Veterans to explore and walk about. This is in addition to the natural beauty of Puerto Rico's spectacular beaches and the only tropical rain forest in the National Forest System.



In this photo, Veronica De Leon Rosario, Home Telehealth Nurse Coordinator for the VA Caribbean Healthcare System, zip lines in the lush mountains of ToroVerde Adventure Park in Orocovis, PR. ToroVerde is thought to be the largest Eco Adventure Park of its kind in the world.

A Doctor's Office That's All About You

By Susan Wentzell

Remember when you couldn't cash a check after 4 p.m.? Bankers listened to their customers' need for more convenient hours and accessible services. Likewise, today, personalized, patient-focused health care services are what it's all about in doctor's offices and health care settings across the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In this model called PACT, which stands for Patient Aligned Care Team, patients like U.S. Army Veteran Edwin "Ed" Brown are

getting a primary care team that is not only skilled at managing chronic diseases, but also helps Veterans improve their physical, mental, social and spiritual well-being—over their lifetime.

In PACT, each patient is assigned to a team comprised of a Primary Care Manager (PCM), a Registered Nurse care manager and other nursing and administrative professionals. Clinical pharmacists, social workers, nutritionists and mental health staff augment the PACT, providing support.



Veteran Ed Brown is examined by his Primary Care Manager Dr. Elizabeth Fajer at the Tallahassee VA Outpatient Clinic, where he is a patient.

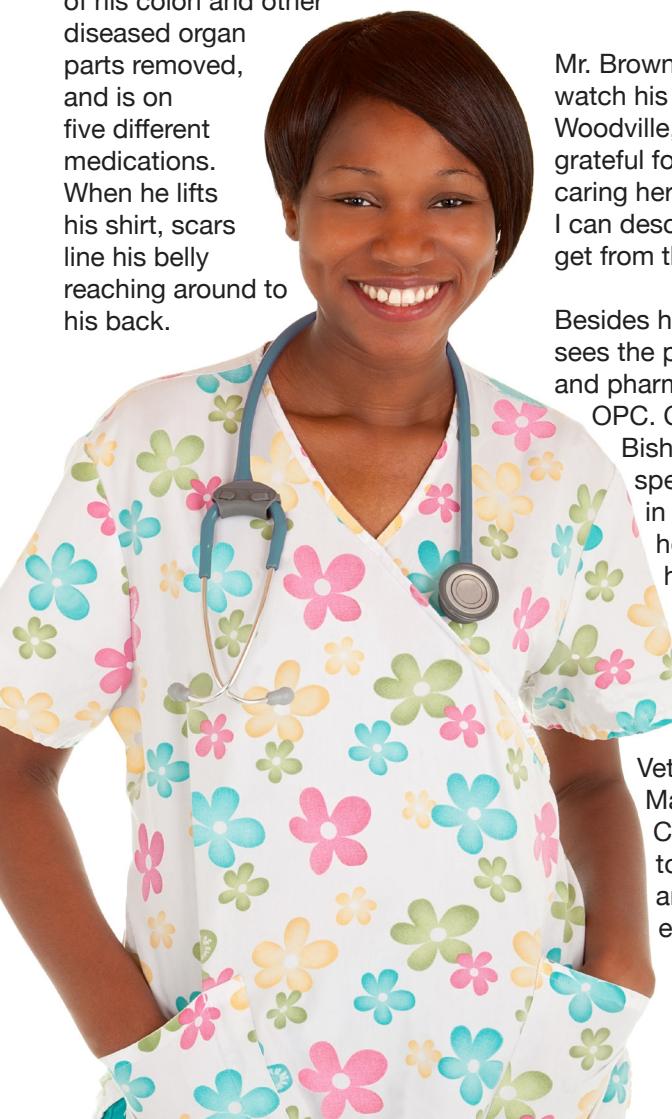


"I would go to doctors outside the VA and wait, wait, wait to be seen or have my questions answered. Now, with Secure Messaging, I communicate directly with Dr. Fajer and my (PACT) team is very responsive."

- U.S. Navy Veteran Ed Brown

A Litany of Health Issues

Mr. Brown has been a patient of Dr. Elizabeth Fajer, his PCM, at the Tallahassee Outpatient Clinic (OPC) in Florida for the past eight years. The 65-year-old has had a litany of issues: high blood pressure, diabetes, neuropathy (a nerve disorder caused by diabetes) and Metastatic Renal Cell Cancer that was diagnosed in 2003 and is currently in remission. He's had a handful of surgeries, had 10 inches of his colon and other diseased organ parts removed, and is on five different medications. When he lifts his shirt, scars line his belly reaching around to his back.



Nursing Assistant Cheryl Chimento provides hands-on MyHealtheVet (MHV) training to Veteran Ed Brown and wife Vivian (far left) at the Tallahassee VA Outpatient Clinic. Mr. Brown regularly uses MHV's Secure Messaging feature to communicate directly with his doctor and VA health care team.

Mr. Brown—and his PACT—watch his health carefully and the Woodville, Fla. resident says he's grateful for that. "They are really caring here. Special is the only way I can describe the people and care I get from the VA," he said.

Besides his PCM, Mr. Brown also sees the podiatrist, optometrist and pharmacist at the Tallahassee OPC. Clinical Pharmacist Bishop Ragheb, a diabetes specialist, plays a vital role in monitoring the Veteran's health and adjusting his insulin, especially important since Mr. Brown has had problems with elevated blood sugars. For specialty care, the Veteran travels to the Malcom Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville, Fla., to see the oncologist and (diabetes) endocrinologist there.

The Health Care Hub

The PACT—the hub of Mr. Brown's health care—coordinates all appointments, providing the Veteran access to care when and where he needs it, and saving him time to manage other priorities in his life. Appointments are organized so Brown can see as many providers as possible in one visit.

Electronic medical records and the online Veteran portal MyHealtheVet (MHV) help make the process seamless. Forget having to make a half dozen calls to chase down test results. Veterans with an upgraded MHV account can see test results on-line as well as view their medical history, appointments, list of medications and clinical notes from Dr. Fajer and specialists.

Brown is a key member of his PACT who participates in his own wellness utilizing telehealth and home-based monitoring through VA-provided equipment. When his diabetes was out of control, he self-monitored his glucose and through Secure Messaging—a service similar to e-mail—he sent his PACT the readings in real time. He also made the diet and life-style changes the team recommended and his health improved.

"The patient's role in managing their own care is so important," Dr. Fajer said. "Mr. Brown is an excellent communicator who keeps us informed and is very involved in his health care."

Confessions OF FLU BUGS



A/ (H1N1)-Type



A/ (H3N2)-Type



B/ Massachusetts-Type

Meet the 2014-2015 flu bugs.

Some of us are type As and others are type Bs — not personality types, but virus types. The three of us have been voted to be the “Most Likely Strains to Succeed” this flu season.

Thank your Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for researching this.

Sad for us, there is also a new vaccine for people who are allergic to eggs.*

Take your best shot at us.

A flu shot (or nasal spray vaccine) is the best weapon to defeat us. All persons age 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine every year during flu season.

Should you be concerned about the flu?

You bet! We can make you feel so bad that you don't have enough energy to get out of bed. Every year during flu season, we play a role in sending 200,000 people to the hospital. Even worse, between 3,000 and 49,000 people die due to us.

While there are different types of flu vaccines available, the Centers for Disease Control specifically states that one vaccine is not recommended over the other. For more information on flu vaccination, prevention and treatment, visit www.publichealth.va.gov/flu, www.cdc.gov/flu or talk to your VA health care provider.



Go ahead, let us spread!

We hang around by the thousands in the air from coughs, sneezes, and even a single breath from people who are infected with us. We are on surfaces that contain droplets of us, too. You spread us when you show up for work sick and pass us off to your coworkers. Then they pass us on to more coworkers and their family and friends. And so on and so on. We thrive on being shared.

sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow. Then wash your hands. Disinfect door handles, phones, railing, light switches and remote controls. Otherwise, we'll hang around to infect others. That's our job.

Is Tamiflu for you?

Not that we want you to, but for your health's sake, ask your health care team about the prescribed antiviral drug, Tamiflu. It lessens flu symptoms and helps you recover sooner. Tamiflu is most effective when started within 24 hours of when the first symptoms appear.

One last thing—we'll infect anyone. You can be young, old, in good health or have a chronic health problem. Even if you are at a low risk of getting serious flu complications, you protect people who are at this risk if you don't pass the flu on to them. So get a flu shot if you don't want us to “bug” you and others!

*Ask your VA health care provider about the availability of this particular flu vaccine.

Gotcha!

If you get the flu, help us pack our bags and leave by resting and drinking lots of fluids. Cover your coughs and sneezes. Use a tissue and throw it away. Or, cough or



FLU Mythbusters

Can I get the flu from a flu shot?

NO. In the past, flu shots contained live viruses which made some people sick. The flu vaccines we use today contain inactive viruses and therefore CANNOT cause flu illness. Side effects from a flu shot are mild, if any. You might feel achy or have redness or soreness where the shot was given. These effects are minor compared to how bad you'll feel if you get the flu.

I heard that the nasal spray flu vaccine has live flu viruses.

Can I get the flu from this?

NO. The viruses in the nasal spray flu vaccine are very weak and cannot cause flu illness. And the parts of the viruses that could make people sick are removed from the vaccine.

Are seasonal flu and “stomach flu” the same illness?

NO. Many people use the term “stomach flu” to describe illnesses with nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. These symptoms can be caused by many different viruses, bacteria or even parasites. Flu is short for influenza which is a respiratory disease. Sometimes, vomiting, diarrhea, and being “sick to your stomach” can be related to the flu, but this is more common in children than adults.

Do antibiotics treat the flu?

NO. The flu is caused by a virus. Antibiotics only fight infections caused by bacteria. Taking an antibiotic for flu or other viruses can lead to antibiotic resistance, a growing health problem.

Do I need a yearly flu shot?

YES. CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine for just about everyone 6 months and older, even when the viruses the vaccine protects against have not changed from the previous season. Why? A person's immune protection from vaccination declines over time, so an annual vaccination is needed to get the “optimal” or best protection against the flu.

Does the VA offer free flu shots?

YES. The VA offers free flu shots to enrolled Veterans at their facilities. Some facilities have drive-thru services and weekend hours. Check with your nearest VA medical center or clinic for exact locations and hours.

Soda Can Cupcakes with Peanut Butter Frosting

Ingredients

1 box yellow cake mix
12 oz. diet Sprite

1 cup fat-free Cool Whip
½ cup reduced-fat peanut butter

Directions

Preheat oven to 350°. In a large bowl, mix cake mix and diet soda with a wire whisk. Stir until most of the lumps are gone. Line a mini cupcake pan with paper liners. Fill each with 1 tablespoon of batter and bake for 18-20 minutes or until an inserted toothpick comes out clean. Cool the cupcakes.

For the frosting, combine Cool Whip and peanut butter in a medium bowl. Mix well. Spread on cupcakes.

Makes 50 servings.

Nutritional Information: 1 Serving Size: 55 calories | 1 gram fat | 10 grams carbs





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Great American Smokeout

Be a Quitter. Join the Great American Smokeout on Nov. 20th. Ask your provider how the VA can help. Learn more at www.publichealth.va.gov/smoking.

VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

www.visn8.va.gov



Find a VA hospital or
clinic near you:

www.va.gov/health/FindCare.asp

