

Veterans HEALTH MATTERS

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

SUMMER 2014 | WWW.VISN8.VA.GOV

TAKE ONE HOME



How Are We Doing?

Complete the Reader
Questionnaire on page 5



INSIDE:
Veteran Manages
Diabetes from Home

To Our Readers

VISN 8 offers yet another way to get care when you need it. On the right of this page, learn about Telcare, a medical advice line to call when your VA clinic is closed.



Caring for a chronic health problem like diabetes takes effort, but is well worth it. On page 3, read how U.S. Army Veteran Judy Briggs took control of her diabetes and improved her health with help and support from her Home Telehealth Coordinator and her Patient Aligned Care Team or PACT.

Explore, on page 4, if Home Telehealth could help you manage a chronic disease from home. Also on page 4, discover the benefits of Secure Messaging and what you need to do to sign up for this convenient way to communicate with your health care team.

Find a list of websites in the left column on page 5 that link you to the latest issue of the Veterans Health Matters Newsletter (before printed copies get delivered to your VA facility) as well as past newsletter issues and the VISN 8 Annual Report. On pages 5 and 6, we invite you to answer questions about the Health Matters Wellness Magazines and the annual Health & Wellness Calendars you receive. Follow the instructions to send the questionnaire back to us. We look forward to your responses in order to better serve you.

Learn the importance of cancelling an appointment and the many ways to do this on the right column of page 6 and the top of page 7. Also on page 7, find a recipe for a light and healthy summer dish to try!

Take charge of your health and safety this summer for yourself and the people you love.

Joleen Clark, MBA, FACHE
VISN 8 Network Director

Just a Phone Call Away

Did you know that you can get VA health care advice when the VA clinic you are assigned to is closed? It's easy. Call **Telcare**, a medical advice line that is staffed by Registered Nurses and administrative staff who can answer medical questions and can provide advice and information. Telcare uses approved health care protocols and is accredited by URAC, a national health care accreditation agency.



When Should You Call Telcare?

- **When you have a health issue and need advice.** A Registered Nurse can provide medical advice and information to assist you. **Important:** Always call 9-1-1 for medical emergencies.
- **When you have a question on an appointment, including ***cancelling it.*** You will need to schedule or reschedule an appointment during daytime business hours.
- **When you need to communicate with your VA health care team.** Telcare can help coordinate your care, acting as a bridge between you and your health care provider.
- **For help with prescriptions.** For refills, call your facility's auto-refill line. A list of contacts is at www.visn8.va.gov/VISN_8_Telcare.asp
- **When there's a disaster or an issue that may impact the facility you're assigned to.** Veterans and VA employees can get updated information on facility closures, appointment cancellations and pharmacy refills.

*** VA Caribbean patients can call VISN 8 Telcare for medical advice only. To cancel appointments, call (877) 737-8820.*

For more information on Telcare services, visit www.visn8.va.gov/VISN_8_Telcare.asp

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VETERAN TAKES CONTROL OF HER DIABETES

and Her Life

By Susan Wentzell

For U.S. Army Veteran Judy Briggs, it was all about taking control of her disease—and her life. In September 2013, the 58-year-old Holiday, Fla. resident had uncontrolled diabetes, smoked, and had gained extra weight—all issues that collectively made

a chronic health problem even worse.

Physician Assistant Elizabeth DeBella, Judy's primary care provider was concerned. "When Judy first came to us in November 2012, her Hgb A1c (blood sugar) was 12.0," which is very high, according to DeBella. However, through timely intervention by the diabetes clinic, primary care visits and telephone support from her Patient Aligned Care Team (called PACT) at the New Port Richey Outpatient Clinic where she is a patient, Judy's blood sugar level gradually lowered to 9 by September 2013, DeBella said.

But there was more work to do. By January 2014, Judy's sugar levels dropped to 6 and her diabetes was under good control. Along the way, she had lost weight and stopped smoking. Overall a lot healthier, Veteran Judy no longer fit the criteria for attending the endocrinology clinic she had been referred to for management of her diabetes, DeBella said.

In fact, according to the team, the involvement of Home Telehealth Care

"Judy herself was the driving force for her improved health with guidance, encouragement and support provided by her Home Telehealth coordinator and PACT."

Coordinator Caroline Sanchez was an important part of Briggs' success. Sanchez worked closely with Judy, educating her on lifestyle changes such as how to improve her diet, exercise, handle stress and more.

And the program was a perfect fit for Briggs, who had transportation issues getting to the clinic, a 25-minute drive from her home.

Using a messaging device supplied by the VA, Briggs' glucose levels and other vitals were recorded and transmitted daily directly from her home to Sanchez, who monitored the information while continuing to coach, counsel and encourage her patient. As she made diet and other lifestyle changes, her blood sugar levels corrected and her diabetes medication was reduced. Seemingly before her eyes, Briggs' saw her health dramatically improve. Presently, her Hgb A1c is 5.8.

"I wanted to get healthy and Caroline's encouragement was so important. She kept me on track and is my greatest cheerleader. It really helped motivate me," Briggs said.

My HealthVet's Secure Messaging feature has also played a major role in Briggs' journey. She communicates directly with her health care team by secure e-mail, getting questions answered and issues addressed, thereby avoiding unnecessary trips to the clinic. With her health so improved and home monitoring of her issues continuing, Briggs most recent communication with her provider and PACT is primarily through phone calls and secure messages.

"I've been in medicine 30 years now and I was skeptical when this program started. What do you mean I'm not seeing my patients as often? What do you mean talk to them from home? But I've seen the successes. Our patients are healthier. Our ER visits and hospital admissions have dropped. Best of all, Veterans love the program because it's patient-driven.

It gives them the opportunity to say, hey, I did this," DeBella said.



U.S. Army Veteran Judy Briggs monitors her health from home.



Is Home Telehealth Right For Me?



Veteran Judy Briggs meets with her Home Telehealth Coordinator Caroline Sanchez.

If you or a loved one is a Veteran with a chronic health condition receiving VA health care services, ask your VA provider for an assessment to determine if Home Telehealth may be right for you.

For Veterans who have a health problem like diabetes, chronic heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), depression or post-traumatic stress disorder, getting treatment can be complex and inconvenient requiring multiple visits to their VA hospital or clinic.

For some, especially older Veterans, conditions like these can make it difficult for them to remain living independently and make it necessary for them to go into a facility where their symptoms and vital signs (pulse, weight, blood pressure, temperature, etc.), can be checked frequently. Having this information enables health care providers to change medications or other treatments and prevent serious health problems from developing.

Home Telehealth services make it possible for some Veterans with chronic health conditions to manage them from home using a regular or cellular telephone, an internet connection, and messaging devices supplied by the VA to regularly communicate information to their health care teams. A Care Coordinator (usually a nurse or social worker) is assigned to the Veteran to provide education, training and encouragement. Most Veterans enrolled in Home Telehealth report high levels of satisfaction and say the equipment is easy to learn and operate.

What are the **BENEFITS OF SECURE MESSAGING** and **HOW DO I SIGN UP?**

Have a question about a prescription? Or, maybe you just want to ask your doctor a simple question? VA offers Secure Messaging--a way to communicate directly with your VA health care team without waiting on the phone or having to fight traffic to get to your local VA health care facility.

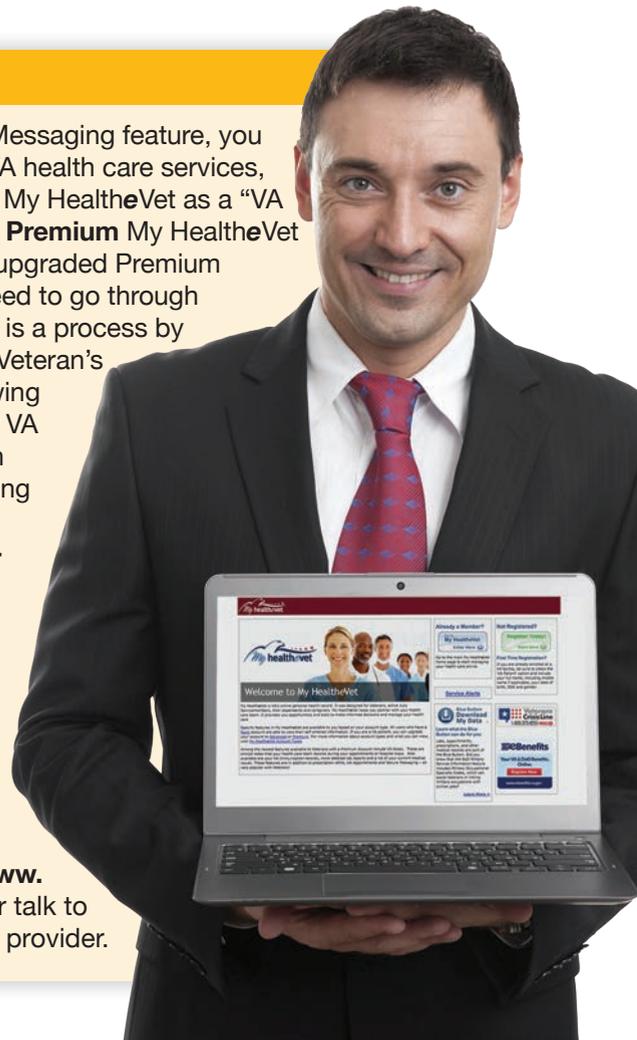
Secure Messaging isn't a replacement for an in-person visit, nor should it be used in emergencies. But some exchanges between you and your VA health care team may not need an appointment, so why not just send a Secure Message? Similar to e-mail, you can use Secure Messaging to ask about your VA appointments, medications, and your lab results or to have routine questions answered. You can even set your preferences to notify your personal email when a message is waiting for you in your My HealthVet inbox.

OPT IN!

To use the Secure Messaging feature, you must be receiving VA health care services, have **registered** on My HealthVet as a "VA Patient" and have a **Premium My HealthVet** account. To get an upgraded Premium account, you will need to go through authentication. This is a process by which VA verifies a Veteran's identity before allowing access to his or her VA health record. Learn more about upgrading your My HealthVet account through **In-Person or Online Authentication**.

Once you get your Premium account, remember to opt into the Secure Messaging feature!

To get started, visit MyHealthVet at www.myhealth.va.gov or talk to your VA health care provider.



Get Veterans Health Matters FIRST!



Did you know you can read **Veterans Health Matters** online before it's even delivered to your VA health care facility? That's right! Just visit www.visn8.va.gov and click on the VISN 8 Publications link or go directly to www.visn8.va.gov/VISN8/news/Publications.asp.

There you will find the latest **Veterans Health Matters** issue as well as issues dating back to 2011. You'll also be able to read the **VISN 8 Annual Report** which outlines the year's highlights at the VA hospitals and clinics throughout Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. You'll also be able to view our latest award-winning Healthy Living Calendar.

Please note that presently, the VISN 8 Publications website is not optimized for mobile phone users. Therefore, these online publications are best viewed on a laptop, notebook or personal computer.

If you'd like to receive a print copy of Veterans Health Matters through U.S. mail, send us a note at visn8officeofcommunication@va.gov or call us at (727) 575-8072.

★ Your Opinion Matters! ★

Answer these questions to let us know what you think of your **Veterans Health Matters** magazine and our annual **Health & Wellness Calendar**.

1. Please rate your overall impression of **Veterans Health Matters**:

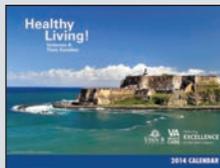
- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor

2. How would you classify yourself as a reader of **Veterans Health Matters**:

- I read it cover to cover
- I read most of the articles
- I glance through it
- I see it at my VA healthcare facility, but don't bother to read it
- I never see it at all at my VA healthcare facility

3. Please rate your overall impression of the annual **VISN 8 Health & Wellness Calendar**:

- Excellent
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- No opinion: I don't see or pick one up at my VA healthcare facility



4. As a result of reading **Veterans Health Matters** and receiving the annual **Wellness Calendar**, I have: (check all that apply)

- Received valuable information that has helped me better manage my health
- Called my VA health care provider for an appointment or for more information
- Become better informed on healthy living in general
- Registered on My HealthVet (www.myhealth.va.gov)
- Checked out www.visn8.va.gov or my VA medical center's website



Your feedback will help us serve you better!

Return by September 1, 2014.

5. How would you like to receive **Veterans Health Matters**: (check all that apply)

- At my VA healthcare facility
- US mail
- Online at www.visn8.va.gov/news/online_newsroom.asp
- By e-mail

6. What is your age group?

- 18-34 45-64
- 35-44 65 or above

7. Are you (check all that apply):

- Male Female
- Veteran
- Non-Veteran (family member or friend of a Veteran)

8. Please list your suggestions for improving **Veterans Health Matters** and/or the **Wellness Calendar**, including any topics or features that would make these publications more useful to you.



Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

★ Your Opinion Matters! ★

Please complete the questionnaire.

After you're done, cut, fold, seal, and mail by

September 1, 2014.

NO POSTAGE NECESSARY.

THANK YOU IN ADVANCE!

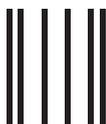


Step 1: Cut on dotted line.

Step 2: Fold this panel down along this ↓ solid line.

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When You Can't Make Your Appointment

We know things come up, but when you can't make your VA appointment, it's important you contact the local VA facility where you receive care to cancel or reschedule it.

If you have **Secure Messaging** through My HealthVet, you can also cancel or change your appointment by sending a Secure Message to your VA health care team. Also, after business hours (4 p.m. to 8 a.m., and 24/7 on weekends and holidays), you can contact the VISN 8 Telcare medical advice line with a cancellation request. Telcare can be reached at 1-877-741-3400 or visit www.visn8.va.gov/VISN_8_Telcare.asp.



Why is cancelling an appointment so **IMPORTANT?**

If you call to cancel or reschedule your appointment at least 24 hours in advance, another Veteran can be given that time slot. This helps us provide timely service to all our Veterans and makes better use of our resources such as ensuring our health care providers make the most efficient, effective use of their services.



Chicken Salad

Ingredients

3 ¼ cups chicken breast, cooked, cubed, and skinless
¼ cup celery, chopped
1 Tbsp. lemon juice
½ tsp. onion powder
3 Tbsp. low-fat mayonnaise

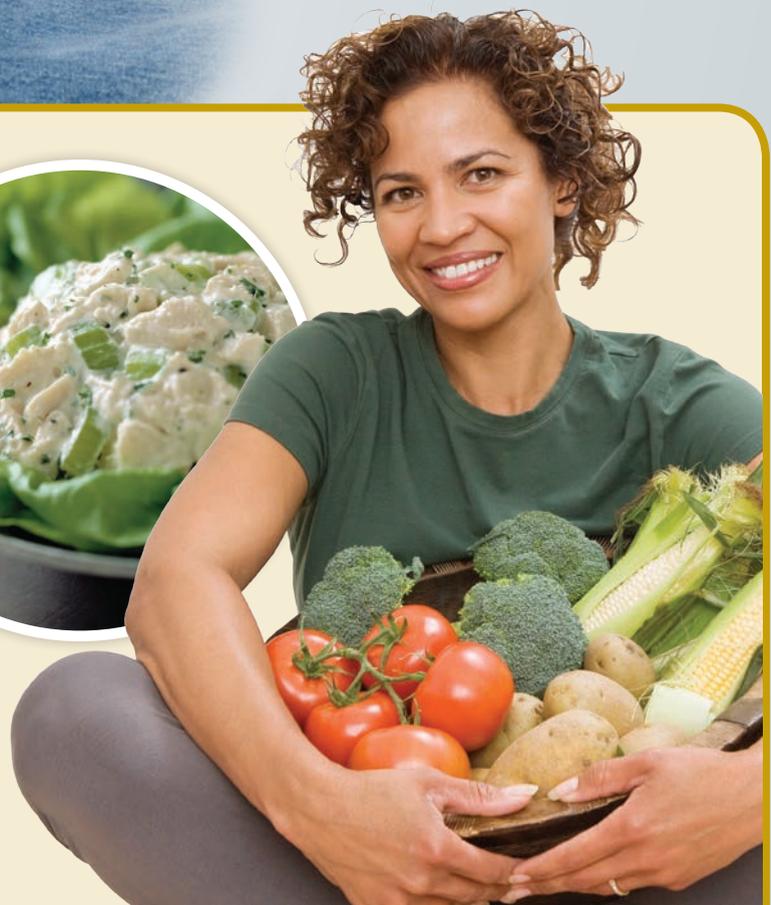
Directions

Bake chicken, cut into cubes, and refrigerate. In a large bowl, combine rest of ingredients. Add chicken. Mix well.

Serves 5.

Nutritional Information:

Calories: 176 | Fat: 2.5g | 6 g total fat (2 g saturated fat) | 120 mg sodium | 2 g carbohydrate | 0 g fiber | 27 g protein





Defining
EXCELLENCE
in the 21st Century

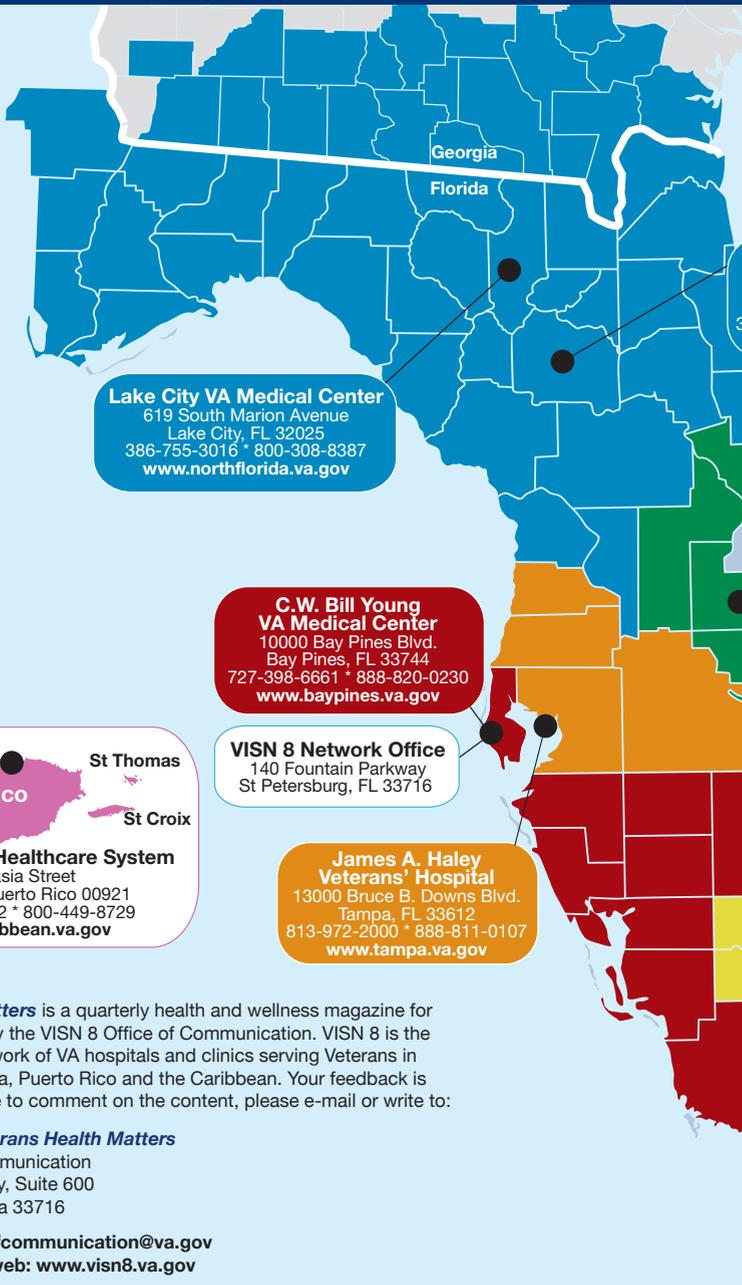
VISN 8 Office of Communication
140 Fountain Parkway, Ste 600
St Petersburg, FL 33716



Are your health habits making you younger or older? Take the My Healthliving Assessment and find out! Visit MyHealthVet today at www.myhealth.va.gov.

VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

www.visn8.va.gov



Find a VA hospital or clinic near you:
www.va.gov/health/FindCare.asp

Lake City VA Medical Center
619 South Marion Avenue
Lake City, FL 32025
386-755-3016 * 800-308-8387
www.northflorida.va.gov

Malcom Randall VA Medical Center
1601 SW Archer Road
Gainesville, FL 32608
352-376-1611 * 800-324-8387
www.northflorida.va.gov

Orlando VA Medical Center
5201 Raymond Street
Orlando, FL 32803
407-629-1599 * 800-922-7521
www.orlando.va.gov

C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center
10000 Bay Pines Blvd.
Bay Pines, FL 33744
727-398-6661 * 888-820-0230
www.baypines.va.gov

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James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital
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Tampa, FL 33612
813-972-2000 * 888-811-0107
www.tampa.va.gov

VA Caribbean Healthcare System
10 Casia Street
San Juan, Puerto Rico 00921
787-641-7582 * 800-449-8729
www.caribbean.va.gov

West Palm Beach VA Medical Center
7305 North Military Trail
West Palm Beach, FL 33410
561-442-8262 * 800-972-8262
www.westpalmbeach.va.gov

Bruce W. Carter Dept. of VA Medical Center
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www.miami.va.gov

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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