



**VISN 8**  
VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

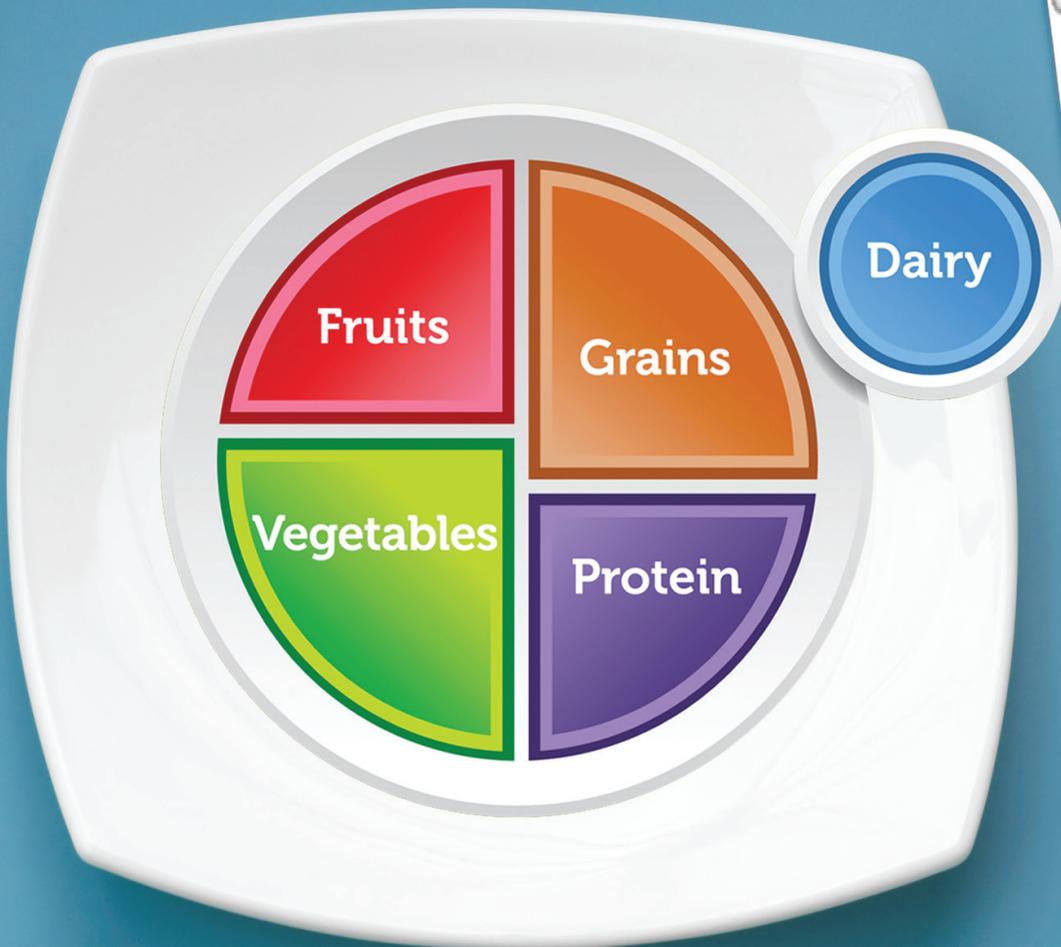
# Veterans HEALTH MATTERS

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

SPRING 2013 | [WWW.VISN8.VA.GOV](http://WWW.VISN8.VA.GOV)

TAKE ONE HOME

## Food *is* Good Medicine



## Managing Editor

*Susan Wentzell*

## Editorial Board

*Mary Kay Hollingsworth*

VISN 8 Communication Manager

*Susan Wentzell*

VISN 8 Deputy Communication Manager

*Jason Dangel*

Public Affairs Officer, Bay Pines VAHCS

*Michelle Winslow*

VISN 8 Program Manager, Health Promotion &

Disease Prevention (HPDP), and Co-Chair,

VISN 8 Preventive Care Committee

*Diana Akins*

Bay Pines VA Healthcare System (VAHCS)

Acting Veterans Health Education Coordinator &

Co-Chair, VISN 8 Veterans Health

Coordinators Workgroup

*Charlene Molloy*

ARNP, HPDP Program Manager,

North Florida/South Georgia

Veterans Health System (NF/SGVHS)

*Heather Frebe*

Public Affairs Officer, NF/SGVHS

*Maureen Cortese*

HPDP Program Manager,

Orlando VA Medical Center

*Shane Suzuki*

Public Affairs Officer, Miami VAHS

*David P. Folds, III*

HPDP Program Manager,

James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital

# To Our Readers

Your mother is probably going to say, "I told you so." Eating all your veggies not only helps kids grow big and strong, but is good medicine for people of all ages. This issue is dedicated to all things healthful. Start by participating in the May 15 VA2K "Walk, Run and Roll" event to benefit homeless Veterans. (Below) And, mark your calendars for the 33rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games in Tampa, July 13 – 18.



On Page 4, learn how a diet rich in vegetables, fruits and balanced portions of protein, whole grains and dairy is a smart medicine for good health. Then, go to Page 5 to learn about Paula Bickford, PhD., and her blueberry studies. Bickford, a researcher at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa, says that eating one cup a day can help improve brain function, curb obesity and fight some diseases, among them high blood pressure.

By the way, do you know what those blood pressure numbers mean? You will after reading the graph on Page 6. And, take note of the hand-washing checklist on Page 6. It's just another smart way to stay healthy.

Page 7 gives your mind a mini challenge with a Veggie Word Search game, then a reward – a tasty guacamole recipe by one of our wonderful Veterans.

*Nevin M. Weaver*

Nevin M. Weaver, FACHE  
VISN 8 Network Director



Join us on May 15, 2013, for a VA2K "Walk, Run and Roll" event being held at VA hospitals throughout VISN 8 to benefit homeless Veterans and to promote health and wellness. The event is open to the public and there is no registration fee. Check with your local VA Health Promotion Disease Prevention Manager for details on the VA2K event closest to you. Also check the Events Calendar on your local VA hospital's web site or go to [www.visn8.va.gov](http://www.visn8.va.gov) for links to all VISN 8 facilities.



## National Veterans Wheelchair Games Coming to Tampa in July

More than 500 Veterans from across the U.S., Puerto Rico and Great Britain are expected to compete in the 33rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games, taking place July 13 to 18 in Tampa, Fla. The world's largest annual wheelchair sports event, the 2013 Games are being co-hosted by the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital and the Paralyzed Veterans of America's Florida Gulf Coast Chapter. The public is invited to attend any of the sports competitions throughout the week of the Games, and admission is free. Athlete registration is open through April 15, 2013. Also, thousands of volunteers are needed and can be as young as 14 to participate. Visit the James A. Haley website at [www.tampa.va.gov](http://www.tampa.va.gov) or [www.wheelchairgames.va.gov](http://www.wheelchairgames.va.gov) to learn more.

# ASK ME 3: Good Questions for Your Good Health

Every time you talk to your health care team, use **Ask Me 3** to find out what you need to know and do to take better care of your health.

- 
- 1 What is my main problem?
  - 2 What do I need to do?
  - 3 Why is it important for me to do this?

This tool helps you take an active role in your health care, better communicate with your health care team and remind team members to discuss your care in terms you can understand. It also lowers your chances for medical errors.

## When Should You Ask Questions?

- When you see your doctor, nurse, pharmacist or any member of your health care team.
- When you prepare for a medical test or procedure.
- When you are prescribed medicine as well as when you receive it.

## What If I Ask and Still Don't Understand?

- Tell your health care team member if you still don't know what to do.
- You might say, "This is new to me. Will you please explain that to me again."

## Who Should Use Ask Me 3?

These questions can help you and everyone who find health information unclear and want to take care of their health. You may feel nervous or embarrassed to ask questions. This is normal, but your health care team wants you to ask questions to help you:

- Know all you can about your health conditions.
- Learn what to do to keep your health conditions under control.
- Discuss your needs in a timely manner.

When you use **Ask Me 3**, you are prepared to find out what to do to take care of your health.

*"I use **Secure Messaging** and highly recommend it. It's the easiest way to get your question or issue directly to your Primary Care provider. It completely eliminates the VA phone system: no busy signals, no re-dialing, no phone transfers, no long voice menus, and no phone transcription repeats/errors by the message taker. It also gets you a fast response directly from the correct provider and they will **Secure Message** the answer directly to you or call you if they have a question or other issue."*

- Don Percy, U.S. Air Force Retired (1962-1992)



My Health, My Care: 24/7 <sup>Online</sup> Access to VA

**Veterans:** Ask Your VA Health Care Provider about upgrading your **MyHealthVet (MHV)** account to get **SECURE MESSAGING**. For more information, visit [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov).



# is Good Medicine

*“Let Food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food.”*  
Hippocrates, the father of modern medicine, proclaimed a simple, yet profound idea that food could be used as a tool by the healer and that the wrong foods could make us ill.

Scientific evidence has long proven this concept to be true. Unfortunately, the temptations (and overeating) of soda, cake, candy, snack chips, chocolate and other high calorie foods often steer us towards serious health problems. Obesity, heart disease, high blood pressure and cancer are only a few illnesses linked to poor diet. Keeping your body in good health now is easier than trying to undo the damage later.

## Make a Change

Teams of nutrition and medical experts at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration have made it easy. The newest icon is a literal plate and glass that emphasizes the fruit, vegetables, grains, protein and dairy food groups. It supports the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and offers tools to help us maintain healthful habits.

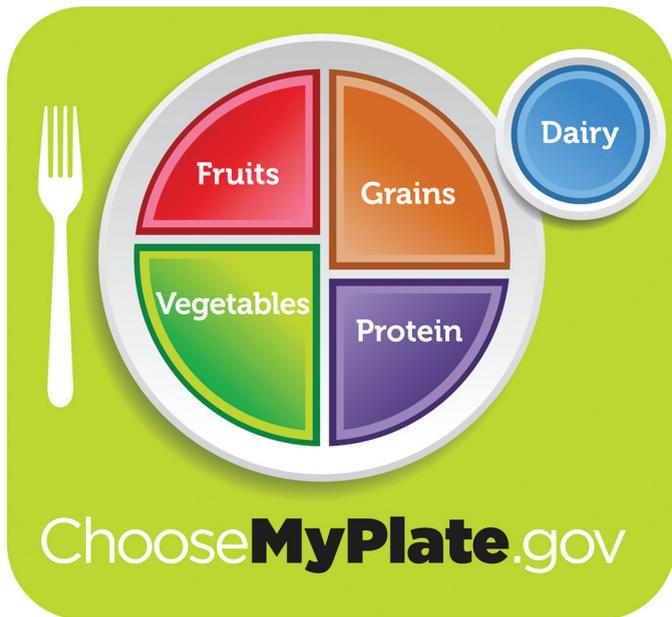
**(See MyPlate on page 5.)**



## Keep it Simple

- Start with fruits and vegetables—a lot of them. Half of your meals should include these colorful goodies from nature. It’s okay to eat them raw or cooked, fresh, canned or frozen. Just make sure you choose a variety of fruits and dark green, red and orange vegetables. Grains come in two types, whole and refined. At least half of the grains you eat should be whole. Look for whole-wheat and whole-grain breads, cereals, pastas, and crackers. Examples are whole-wheat bread, bran flakes, oatmeal and brown rice.
- If you eat canned fruit, consider buying those in light syrup or in their own juice rather than heavy syrup. Also, watch for hidden salt (sodium) in canned vegetables. Buy those with no or low salt.
- Milk still does a body good, especially when it’s fat-free or low fat. Calcium-containing milk products such as nonfat and low-fat cheeses and yogurt also count. Butter and sour cream aren’t on the list.
- Protein in meats, poultry, fish, legumes (beans and peas), eggs and tofu, for example, are also essential. The USDA says that most adults get more than enough protein, without trying. The recommended amount is 10–35% of daily calories. This is why only one fourth of the “MyPlate” icon is for protein foods. It’s also advised to have a few servings of fish per week.
- Other things to consume in moderation include healthy fats from nuts, avocados, olives and olive oil.
- Drink lots of water. Water, of course, should be your beverage of choice.





## “MyPlate”

### Offers an Easy Guide to Plan & Eat Healthy Meals

This colorful plate and glass icon shows you proper portions of healthy good choices – fruits, vegetables, grains, protein and dairy. Notice that half the plate is for fruits and vegetables.

And there’s much more! At the website [www.supertracker.usda.gov](http://www.supertracker.usda.gov), you can find recipes, games, calorie counters, and get a custom eating and physical activity plan to meet your individual needs.

### “My Plate” encourages you to do the following:

- **Balance calories you eat with physical activity you do.**
  - Enjoy your food, but eat less.
  - Avoid oversized portions.
- **Increase Healthy Foods**
  - Make at least half your plate fruits and vegetables.
  - Switch to fat-free or low-fat (1%) milk.
  - Make at least half your grains whole.
  - Vary your protein food choices.
  - Drink water instead of sugary drinks.
- **Limit Unhealthy Foods**
  - Eat fewer foods that are high in solid (saturated) fats. Avoid foods with trans fat.
  - Choose foods with little or no added sugars.
  - Read labels to compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen meals—and choose foods with the lower numbers.

## Blueberries: ‘Super Food’ May Extend Your Healthy Life

*Paula Bickford (aka “Dr. Blueberry”)*



Researchers and scientists are finding that blueberries, labeled a “Super Food,” have components that offer significant health benefits. Studies have shown that blueberries help improve brain function and may even slow the aging process. They also have been shown to fight heart disease, cancer and obesity.

Paula C. Bickford, PhD., is a researcher at the James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital in Tampa and is a professor of neurosurgery and brain repair at the University of South Florida. Nicknamed “Dr. Blueberry” due to her extensive research on the health benefits of blueberries, Dr. Bickford’s clinical studies indicate that blueberries can improve brain and heart health.

In simple terms, she says blueberries make the cells in our bodies work at a higher, more efficient level. As a result, our skin looks better, eye health is improved, bone loss is reduced, and memory and brain function is clearer, according to Dr. Bickford.

This tasty fruit can also help in the battle with high blood pressure because it improves blood vessel functioning. Blood sugars are more stable after eating blueberries and insulin works more efficiently which helps with diabetes, Dr. Bickford says. In clinical studies, blueberries help reduce sore and aching muscles after physical activity making exercise more desirable.

How many blueberries do you need to eat to produce health benefits? According to Dr. Bickford, a cup of the fruit daily, fresh or frozen, is sufficient.

For more information about healthier eating, ask your provider or talk to the health promotion disease prevention program manager at the facility where you receive your VA health care.



# Know Your Blood Pressure Numbers

What the Numbers Mean\*

\*Source: American Heart Association

Systolic	less than 120	120-139	140-159	160 +
	<b>Normal</b>	<b>Prehypertension</b>	<b>Stage 1 Hypertension</b>	<b>Stage 2 Hypertension</b>
Diastolic	less than 80	80-89	90-99	100 +

You cannot depend on symptoms to tell you when your blood pressure is high. It is important to know your numbers because, left untreated, high blood pressure puts you at risk for heart disease, stroke, kidney damage, and blindness.

Talk to your health care team about how to prevent, treat, and test your blood pressure at home. Working together with your team, you can keep it under control.



## Avoid Infection: Wash Hands Often

You can't see them. But germs that can make you sick are lurking everywhere. Your best defense is to keep your hands clean. You don't need fancy bacteria-killing concoctions. Soap and warm water is enough. (Alcohol-based hand sanitizers also work when you don't have water.)

1. *Lather up really well. Don't forget the backs of your hands, between your fingers, under your nails and your wrists.*
2. *Count to 15. Or sing, "Happy Birthday" twice.*
3. *Rinse well and dry with a clean towel.*
4. *Finally, grab a second towel to turn off the water, and open any doors.*
5. *Avoid touching your eyes or mouth.*

### Repeat Hand Washing:

- Before cooking and eating
- After using the bathroom
- After touching animals
- After cleaning around the house
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After working or playing outside

# VEGGIE Word Search

Find and circle words in the grid.  
Words can be horizontally, vertically  
and diagonally in all directions.



**Avocado**  
**Beets**  
**Broccoli**  
**Cabbage**  
**Carrots**  
**Healthy**  
**Peppers**  
**Spinach**  
**Tomato**

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



## Guacamole

By Del Glavic, U.S. Army Veteran

### Ingredients

- 1 ripe avocado
- 1/2 onion, grated
- 1 small tomato, diced
- 2 tsp lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp cilantro, chopped
- 1 dash hot sauce
- 1/2 tsp jalapeno or chili pepper, chopped

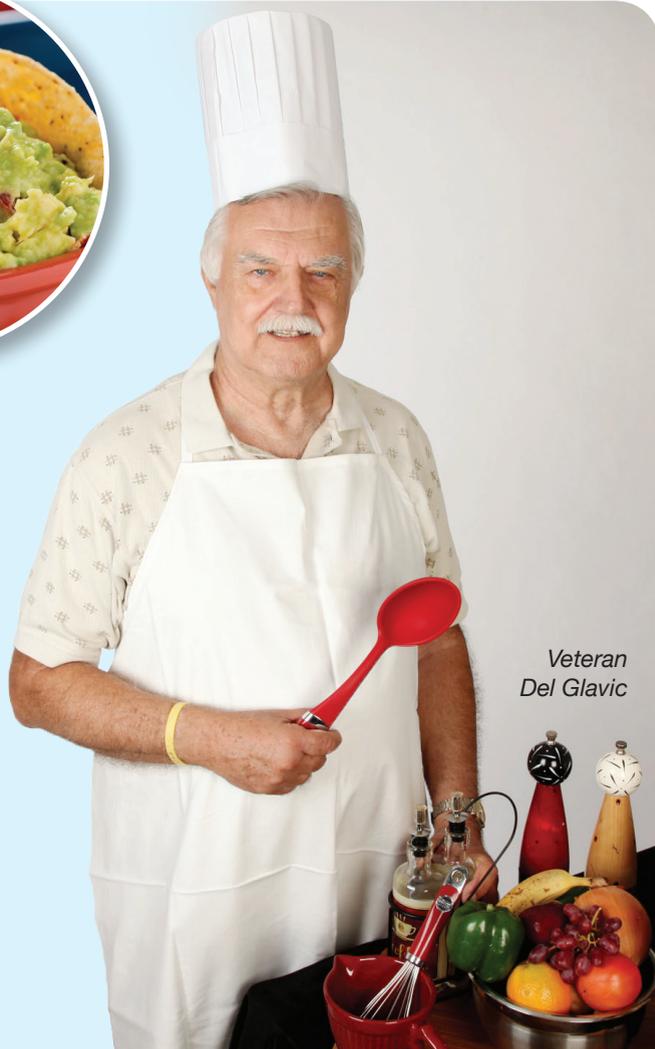


### Directions

In a large bowl, mash the avocado until soft but lumpy. Stir in onions, chopped tomato, lemon juice, cilantro, hot sauce, and pepper to taste. Chill for at least an hour. Serve cold. Serve with baked tortilla chips or fajita wraps.

### Avocado Nutrition!

- Avocados are a good source of fiber, potassium, and Vitamins C, K, folate and B6. They are delicious, nutrition-packed fruit—however, eat them in moderation. There are 160 calories in just a half avocado and you need to be aware of the fat content. An avocado has 15 grams of heart-healthy, unsaturated fat and two grams of saturated fat.
- One whole avocado contains more than one-third the daily value of Vitamin C and over half the day's requirements of Vitamin K.
- Consider adding avocado or avocado oil to your salads. For the recipe above, you can serve them with heart-healthy baked chips or whole grain wraps or tortillas.



Veteran  
Del Glavic



Defining  
**EXCELLENCE**  
in the 21st Century

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

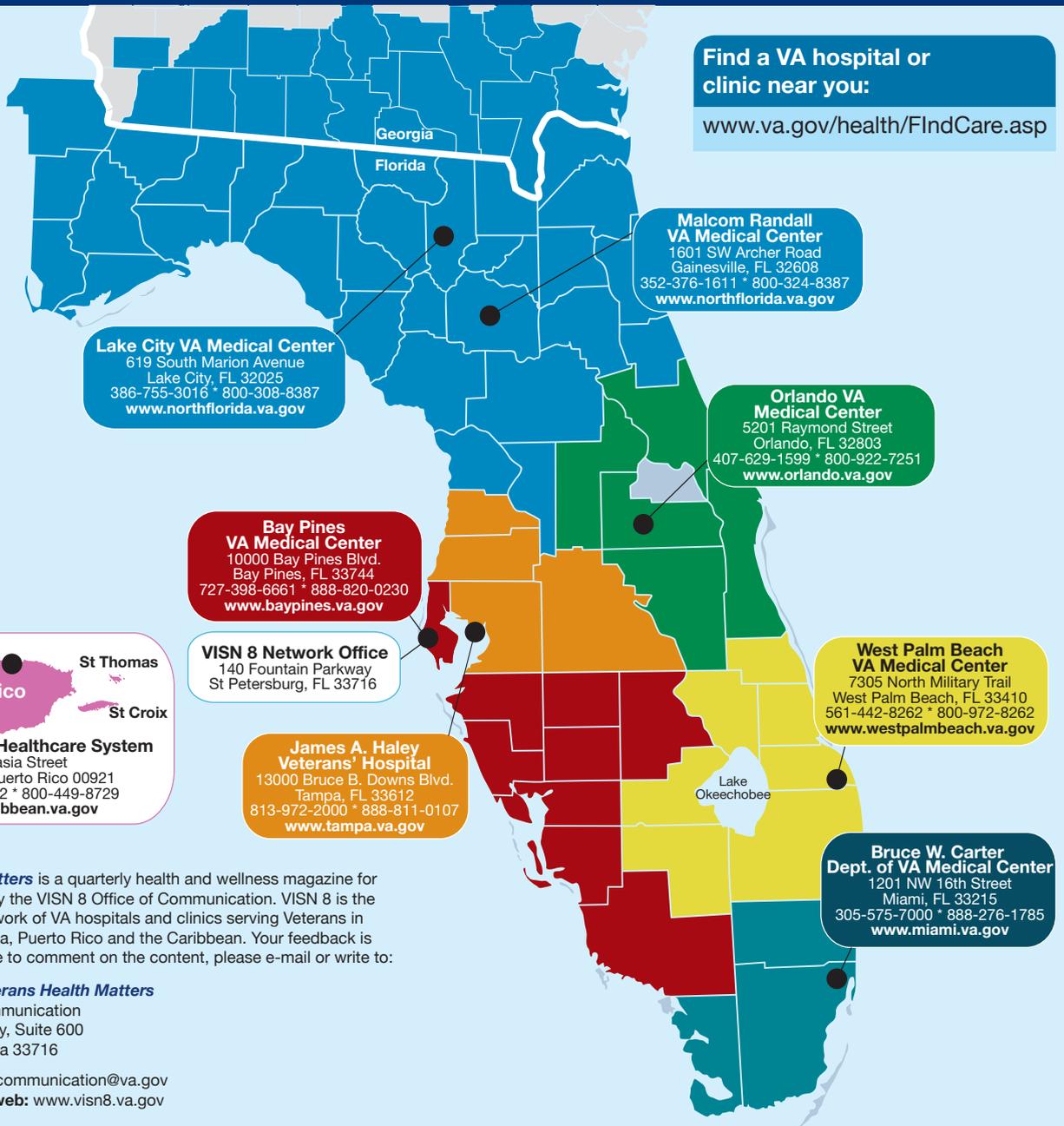
To enroll or renew your VA health benefits, call 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday thru Friday between 8AM and 8PM (Eastern Time). You can also go on-line at [www.va.gov/healthbenefits](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits). Click "VA Health Care - Apply Now"

For medical care and clinic appointments, call your local VA health care facility.

## VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

[www.visn8.va.gov](http://www.visn8.va.gov)

at all  
Medical Centers



**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:

Managing Editor **Veterans Health Matters**  
VISN 8 Office of Communication  
140 Fountain Parkway, Suite 600  
St. Petersburg, Florida 33716

e-mail: [visn8officeofcommunication@va.gov](mailto:visn8officeofcommunication@va.gov)  
Visit VISN 8 on the web: [www.visn8.va.gov](http://www.visn8.va.gov)