



VISN 8
VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

Veterans HEALTH MATTERS

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

WINTER 2014 | WWW.VISN8.VA.GOV

TAKE ONE HOME



Inside

WOMEN POWER:

A GUIDE TO YOUR HEALTH

'MUST HAVE' MEDICAL SCREENINGS FOR WOMEN

The feature on pages 4-5 of this issue of Health Matters is specifically focused on the health and wellness of our Women Veterans. Here is some important information on two important screenings every woman needs.



Breast Cancer. The decision to start regular screening every two years with mammography for average risk women age 40 to 49 years should be an individual decision and take a woman's values into account including thoughts about specific benefits and risks.

Cervical Cancer. The Veterans Health Administration recommends screening for cervical cancer with cytology (Pap test) every three years for women ages 21-65 who have a cervix. For women ages 30-65 who want to lengthen the screening interval to every five years, screening with a combination of Pap testing and human papillomavirus (HPV) testing is suggested.

Resources: To learn which screening tests you may need and steps you can take for good health, visit the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Website at www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/prevention/lifestyle/healthy-women.html

Women over age 50, please go to www.ahrq.gov/patients-consumers/prevention/lifestyle/women-over-50.html

To Our Readers

You may have read differing opinions on when women should start getting mammograms and how often to get them. The left side of this page lists VA's current screening guidelines for breast cancer, as well as for cervical cancer. Getting regular screenings helps detect these problems early when they are more likely to be treated with success. Resources for additional health screenings are also provided.



After years in the planning stages, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) is now a reality. Instead of reading the 974-page document, you can find out what you need to know about it and how it affects Veterans on page 3.

Women, use the information in the article on pages 4-5 as a guide to take care of your health from head-to-toe. The focus is on healthy activities and specific nutrients you need to function at your best, now and as you age. The better you take care of yourself, the more you'll be able to be there to take care of loved ones.

At one time or another, most of us have experienced a painful headache. On page 6, learn the differences between migraine and tension headaches and when it's important to call the doctor.

On page 7, both women and men can learn eight ways to deal with stress that often occurs with hectic holidays. Also on this page, get Deborah Galtere's recipe for Banana Sweet Potato Casserole. It is much lower in fat and calories than sweet potato pie, but is just as tasty.

Wishing you a safe and wonderful holiday season and a happy, healthy 2014.

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The Affordable Care Act & Veterans

HOW IT AFFECTS YOU

What is the Affordable Care Act?

The Affordable Care Act, also known as the health care law, was created to expand access to coverage, control health care costs and improve health care quality and care coordination. The health care law does not change VA health benefits or Veterans' out-of-pocket costs.

Three things you should know:

1. VA wants all Veterans to receive health care that improves their health and well-being.
2. If you are enrolled in VA health care, you don't need to take additional steps to meet the health care law coverage standards. The health care law does not change VA health benefits or Veterans' out-of-pocket costs.
3. If you are not enrolled in VA health care, you can apply at any time by calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or go on-line at www.va.gov/healthbenefits.

Marketplace: An Option for Veterans Not Eligible for VA Health Care

If you're not eligible for VA care, the Marketplace is a new way to shop for and purchase private health insurance (for example, health coverage other than VA health care programs) that fits your budget and meets your needs. People who purchase insurance through the Marketplace may be able to lower the costs of health insurance coverage by paying lower monthly premiums. Open enrollment began October 1, 2013. For more information, visit www.va.gov/health/aca.

Family Members and the 'Marketplace'

VA offers health care benefits for certain family members of Veterans through programs such as the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) and the Spina Bifida program. However, family members who are not enrolled in a VA health care program can also use the Marketplace to get coverage. They may get lower costs on monthly premiums or out-of-pocket costs. They could be eligible for free or low-cost coverage through Medicaid or the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP).

For more information visit www.healthcare.gov.

Additional Health Care Law Information

We understand you may have questions about the health care law and how it might affect you and your family. We compiled basic information about the law to help you make informed decisions about your health care. Let us know if you have questions at 1-877-222-VETS (8387) or visit www.va.gov/health/aca. After all, ensuring you receive quality health care is not just our obligation, it's also our privilege.



Woman Power: *A Guide to Your Health*

Make your health a priority so you have the energy to accomplish all the things you want and need to do now and as you age. Choose activities and nutrients that empower good health from head-to-toe.

Heart and Circulation Health

Brisk walking and other aerobic activities help keep your heart muscle strong. Physical activity also helps control other risk factors for heart disease and stroke – high blood pressure, diabetes, unhealthy blood cholesterol levels, and being overweight. Get regular screenings for these conditions as advised by your VA health care team. If you smoke, consider being tobacco free. The VA can help.

Helpful Nutrients:

- Omega-3-fatty acids* – Unsaturated oils like olive, canola, sunflower oils; also found in fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, herring, lake trout, sardines and albacore tuna
- Plant sterols and stanols in coconut oil, olive oil, almonds, oranges and apples along with other foods fortified with these
- Soluble fiber in oat bran, oatmeal, kidney and other beans
- Antioxidants in red grapes and grape juice

Bone Health

One out of every two women will have an osteoporosis-related fracture in her lifetime. Weight-bearing exercises, such as walking, strengthen your bones while the use of weights and resistance bands strengthen muscles around bones. Increase flexibility with stretching exercises, yoga, or Tai chi. Discuss, with your VA health care team, when to get bone mineral density tests and ways to lower your risk for falls.

Helpful Nutrients:

- Calcium* in nonfat and low-fat milks and yogurt, dark leafy greens, and calcium-fortified cereals, juices, tofu and soy foods
- Vitamin-D* in fortified milks and cereals, as well as from sunshine on your skin

Joint Health

Women have osteoarthritis more than men. Weight loss can help prevent and treat this condition. Every extra pound of weight adds three times more pressure on knees, and six times more pressure to hips. Strive for a healthy weight, protect your joints from overuse and injury, and do exercises as advised by your VA health care team.

Helpful Nutrients:

Omega-3-fatty acids* – Unsaturated oils like olive, canola, sunflower oils. Also found in fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, herring, lake trout, sardines and albacore tuna.



*Ask Your VA health care team about dietary supplements that provide these nutrients.

Brain Health

Aerobic exercise increases blood circulation to the brain and promotes the growth of new brain cells. Continue to learn new things to enhance connections between brain nerve cells. Learn a new language or hobby. Take a dance class. Do crossword or Sudoku puzzles. And stay socially connected with others.

Helpful Nutrients:

- Omega-3-fatty acids* – Unsaturated oils like olive, canola, sunflower oils; also found in fatty fish like salmon, mackerel, herring, lake trout, sardines and albacore tuna
- Ask your VA health care team about foods containing antioxidants; among those studied, the USDA ranked the following as having high antioxidant concentrations: beans (red, pinto, kidney), blueberries, cranberries
- Visit this Website to see 20 common foods with antioxidants: www.webmd.com/food-recipes/20-common-foods-most-antioxidants

Breast Health

Get regular screenings (see page 2). Consider the following steps to lower your risk for breast cancer. Strive for a healthy weight and avoid or limit the consumption of alcohol to one drink a day. A recent study by the American Cancer Society found that walking an hour a day lowered the risk of breast cancer in post menopausal women by 14 percent. The more active you are, the lower the risk.

Helpful Nutrients:

Follow a calorie-controlled diet that includes a variety of fruits and vegetables and whole-grain breads and cereals.

Digestive Health

Gastrointestinal distress, twice as common in women as in men, may be due to natural hormonal changes. Adequate water intake, physical activity, maintaining a healthy weight and eating 20 to 35 grams of dietary fiber per day may help reduce your risks.

Helpful Nutrients:

- Probiotics* in foods such as kefir and yogurt with live or active cultures of healthy bacteria, such as lactobacillus acidophilus
- Prebiotics* promote the growth of probiotics in the gut and are found in high-fiber foods, such as whole grains, fruits, vegetables and soybeans
- Ask your VA health care team about foods high in fiber. This Website has a list of healthy, high fiber foods: www.mayoclinic.com/health/high-fiber-foods/NU00582

Urinary Tract Health

For women, the lifetime risk of developing a urinary tract infection (UTI) is very high. Prevention methods include drinking at least eight glasses of water a day, emptying your bladder as soon as you feel the urge and avoiding alcohol and caffeine. Antibiotics are the best way to treat a UTI so contact your VA health care team if you suspect you have one.

Helpful Nutrients:

Substances in cranberries may help prevent UTIs by keeping bacteria from sticking to the urinary tract walls.

*Ask Your VA health care team about dietary supplements that provide these nutrients.

Understanding Headache Pain:

What Are Migraine and Tension Headaches?

Although there are several types of headaches, migraine and tension headaches affect the most people. When you have a headache, it isn't your brain that's hurting. Your head aches because nerves in the bones, blood vessels, and muscles of your head are irritated. These irritated nerves send pain signals to the brain, which identifies where you hurt and judges how bad the pain is.

What Causes Your Headache?

The actual headache process is not yet understood. Very rarely are headaches a sign of a serious medical problem. Headache pain may be caused by abnormal interaction between the brain and the nerves and blood vessels in the head. Environmental stresses or certain foods and drinks may trigger headache pain.

What Is Referred Pain?

Referred pain has its source in one place but is felt in another. For example, pain behind the eyes may actually be caused by tense muscles in the neck and shoulders. This means that the place that hurts may not be the part of the body that needs treatment.

Is It a Migraine?

Migraine is a throbbing pain felt on one or both sides of the head. You may feel nauseated. This headache may also be associated with changes in sight or sensation (aura). The pain may last for 4 to 72 hours. Afterward, you may feel shaky for a day or so.

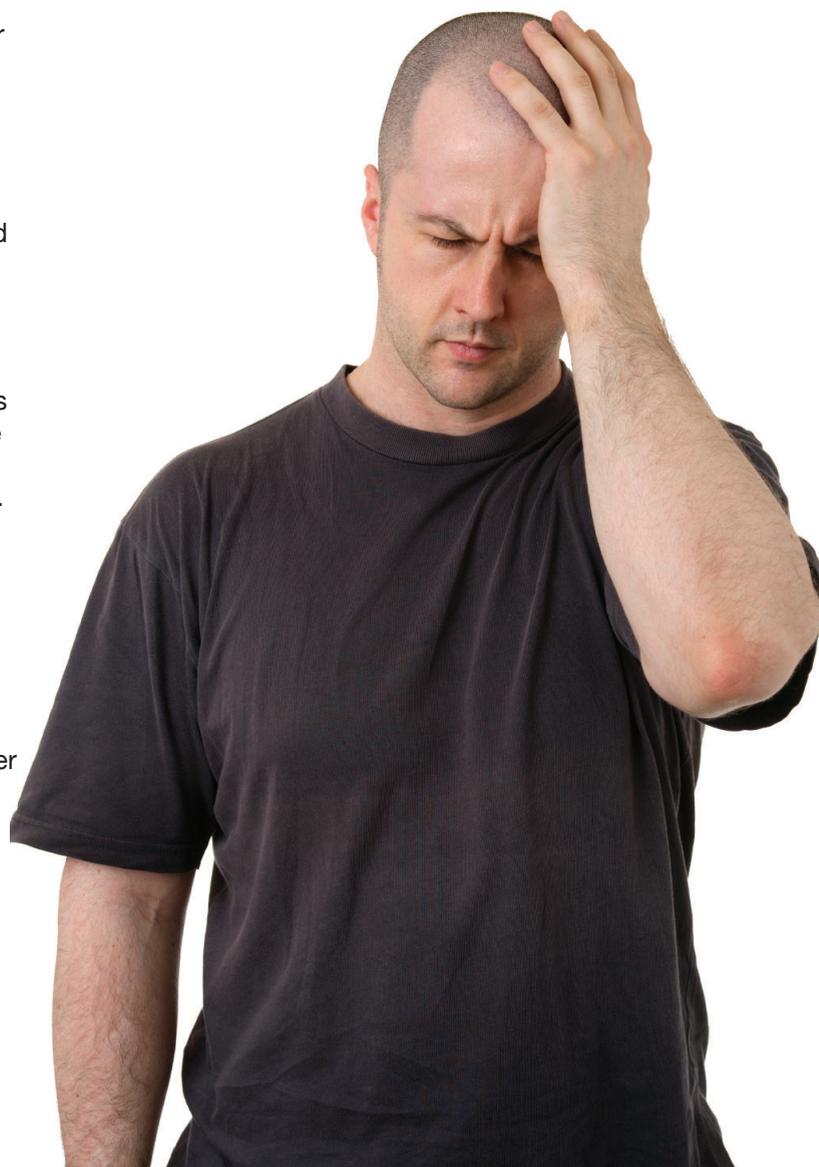
Is It a Tension Headache?

This type of headache is usually a dull ache or a sensation of pressure on both sides of the head. It may be associated with pain or tension in the neck and shoulders. The pain may not have a definite beginning or end. It may come and go, or seem never to go away.

When to Call the Doctor

Call your doctor for headaches that occur along with any of these symptoms:

- Sudden, severe headache that is different from your usual pain
- High fever along with a stiff neck
- Ongoing numbness or muscle weakness
- Loss of vision that persists for several hours or outlasts the headache
- Pain following a head injury
- Convulsions, or a change in mental awareness



Treatment

Talk with your VA healthcare provider about a treatment plan that may help relieve pain and prevent future headaches.

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Easy Tips for Managing Stress During the Holidays (or anytime!)

1. **Physical Activity** – Start small. Stretch. Park further away from the store. Take the stairs.
2. **Deep Breathing** – Take slow, deep breaths. Watch your belly rise and fall as you breathe. What do you notice?
3. **Mindfulness** – Life is happening right NOW. Notice one thing around you—the colors, sounds, smells, temperature, taste—without judgment, as you might notice a leaf floating down a stream.
4. **Visualization** – Imagine a perfectly safe place; it doesn't have to be real. Notice everything about this place. Stay as long as you wish and return often.
5. **Muscle relaxation** – Relax each muscle group in your body. You might start with your toes and work your way up or start with your head and work your way down. It's okay if your mind starts to drift; just gently return your focus to relaxing.
6. **Help someone else** – Reaching out to others can help you focus away from your own stress and leave you feeling good.
7. **Take time** – Stop, think and then act. Take a walk. Breathe. Sleep on it.
8. **Create a gratitude list** – List the things you are thankful for, big or small, and continue to add to that list.

- Dr. Elizabeth Jenkins,
Health Behavior Coordinator,
James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital

Banana Sweet Potato Casserole

Ingredients

2 cups sweet potatoes, mashed
1 cup (3 medium) ripe bananas, mashed
1/3 cup fat-free sour cream
3/4 tsp curry powder
1/2 tsp salt
1/4 cup egg substitute

Directions

In a large bowl, combine all ingredients then beat with a mixer until light and fluffy. Spray a 1-quart casserole dish with nonstick cooking spray. Pour mixture into a casserole dish. Bake at 350°F for 20 minutes or until puffed and light brown.

Serves 6. Serving size is 1/2 cup.

Nutritional Information:

Total fat – 0g; Carbs – 27g; Fiber – 4g
Protein – 3g; Calories – 120



Recipe by Deborah Galtere

Deborah Galtere is the wife of Glen Galtere, a U.S. Marine Corps Veteran who served from 1946 to 1951. Glen, a disabled Veteran, is a survivor of 'Chosin Reservoir,' a decisive, hard-fought battle that occurred during the Korean War.





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The VA offers free flu shots to Veterans enrolled at their facilities, Check with your nearest VA medical center or clinic for exact locations and hours.

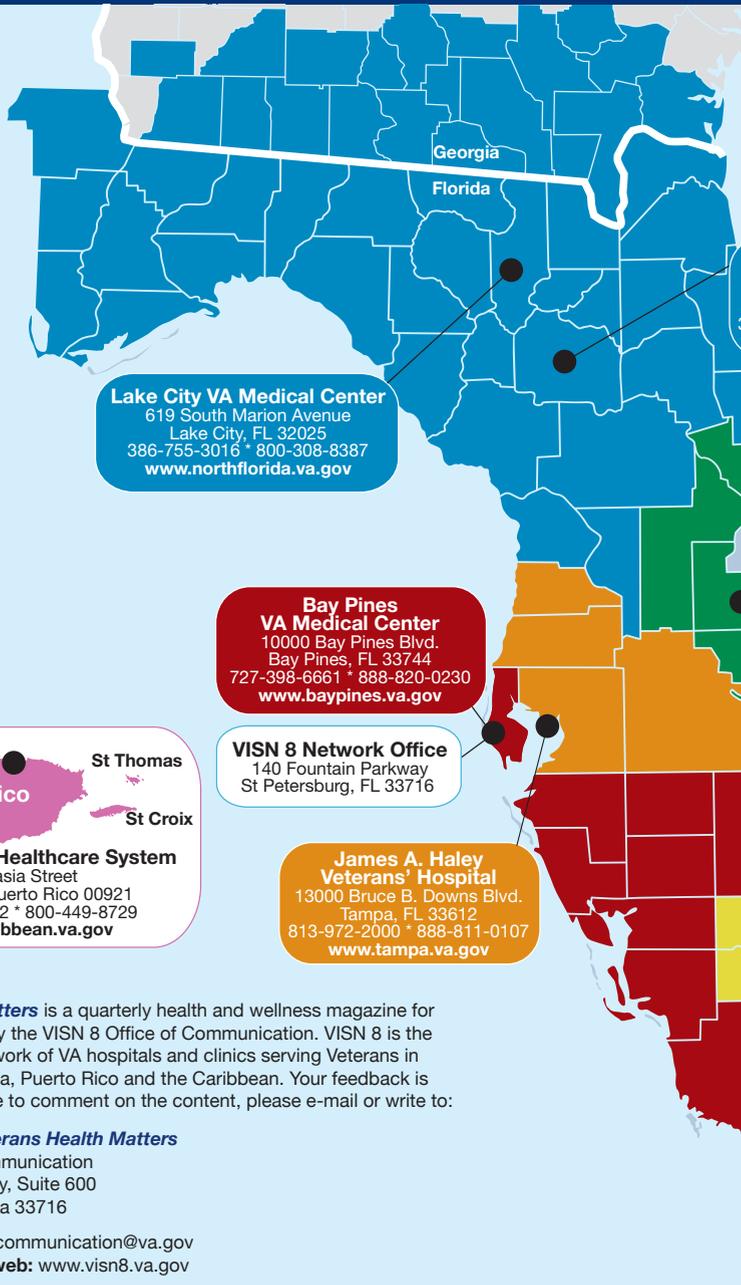


VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

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at all
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www.va.gov/health/FindCare.asp

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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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