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VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8)

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VETERANS Health MATTERS

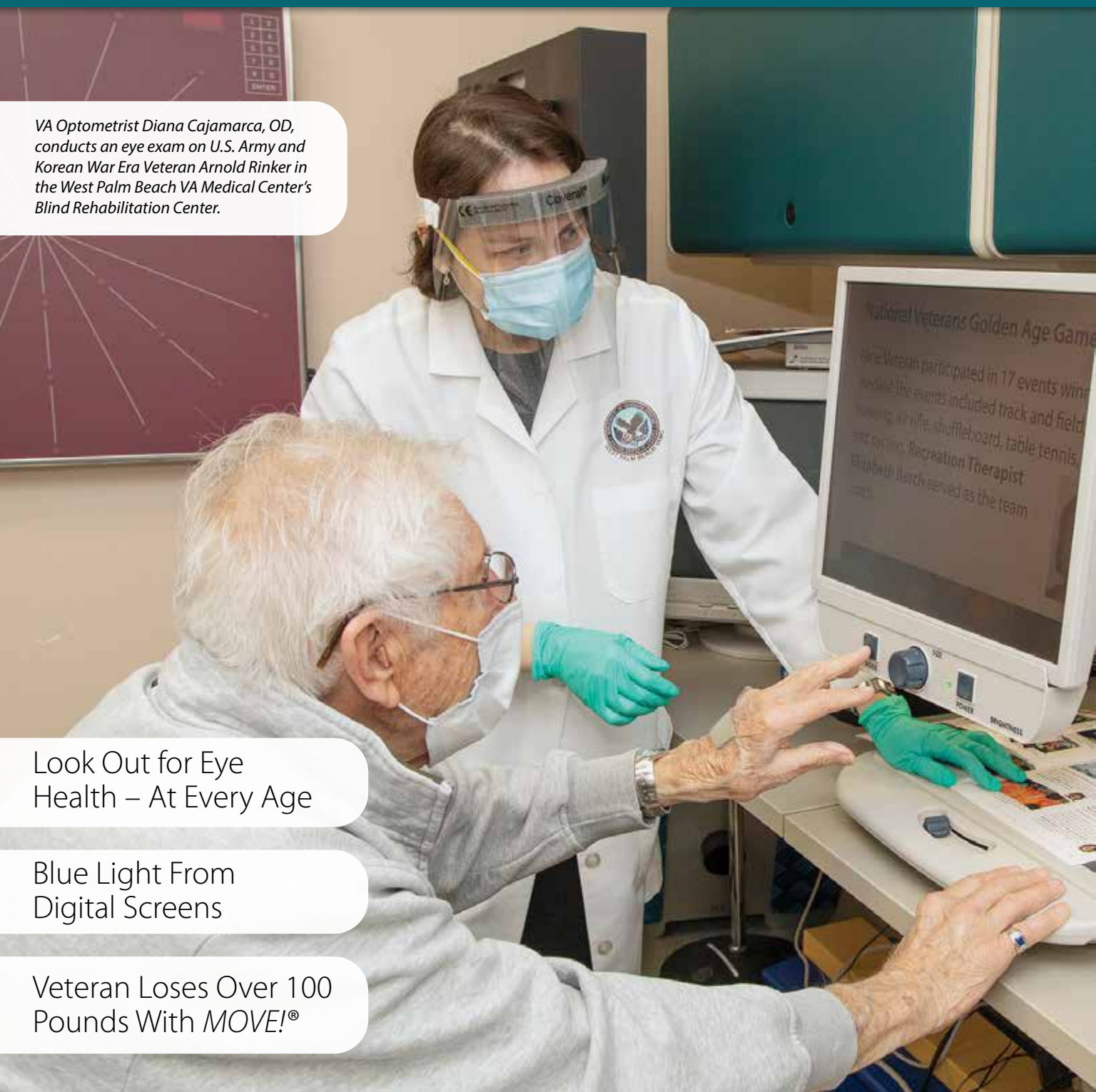
Award Winning Wellness Magazine for **VISN 8** Veterans
in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico & the U.S. Virgin Islands

VA Optometrist Diana Cajamarca, OD,
conducts an eye exam on U.S. Army and
Korean War Era Veteran Arnold Rinker in
the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center's
Blind Rehabilitation Center.

Look Out for Eye
Health – At Every Age

Blue Light From
Digital Screens

Veteran Loses Over 100
Pounds With **MOVE!**®



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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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To Our Readers



Vision is one of the most precious senses you have. It helps guide you through your life's journey. So, it's important to 'keep an eye' on your eye health. On pages four and five, learn to recognize symptoms of common eye conditions that can happen, starting at age 40. Finding eye problems early is vital for preventing permanent vision problems. And find out if too much screen time may be affecting your eye health on page six.

Looking for inspiration to help you lose weight? Read on page three how one Veteran was able to 'take her life back' by taking part in VA's *MOVE!*® Weight Management Program.

Get ready for some brain training on page seven with a word scramble puzzle. Our recipe, also on page seven, features a healthy vegetable omelet that we hope you enjoy.

Be well and stay safe!

Miguel H. LaPuz, M.D., MBA
Network Director, VISN 8

Eye Exams Matter

Eye exams are important for maintaining good eye health. These exams help to detect many eye diseases and conditions. Early treatment is critical in helping to prevent permanent vision loss or blindness later on.

The risks for eye diseases often increase with age. Having a comprehensive eye exam at age 40 may help to find early signs of eye disease or changes in vision.

For those who are older than 60 years, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommend a dilated eye exam every two years. For people who have diabetes, a dilated eye exam is recommended once a year.



If you notice any decrease in vision, eye pain, double vision, floaters (tiny specks that 'float' before your eyes) or circles around lights, you may need to visit an eye doctor as soon as possible. Ask your VA provider when eye exams are recommended for you, based on your symptoms, age, and family history of eye disease.

Taking Her Life Back

U.S. Navy Veteran loses over 100 pounds with MOVE!® Program

By Andrea N. Madrazo, Public Affairs Specialist, Orlando VA Healthcare System



Not being able to adventure with her grandson was the last straw and would forever change Sharyle Robert's life.

The U.S. Navy Veteran says, "My grandson told me I could not go to the beach with him because I walk funny. That cut close to the bone, that hurt." It was in that moment that Sharyle no longer allowed her weight to make decisions for her.

As close-minded as one could be, she attended the first MOVE!® class. She sat closest to the door and was ready to sprint out at any second. This all changed when she met MOVE!® Instructors Teresita Janiola and Becky Shelley. Sharyle explains, "Those two ladies saved my life. Since I met them, I said 'I am staying' and went full force into the program!"

Breaking from what she knew best – fast food and ice cream stops – she deserted her cycle of depression. She transformed herself into the 117-pound lighter woman she is today. When asked what the biggest factor to her weight loss was, she says, "My calorie book. It goes everywhere with me!" The book acted as her bible. This held her accountable to not only lose weight, but to help maintain her weight loss.

"MOVE!® is not about a diet, it is a life-altering decision. It is what you do for life. The class guides Veterans to fit what is best in their lifestyle. Take it from someone who knows best. The old me was stuck in the house, definitely depressed and depended on my walker. I did not want to get up and move. Now, I can walk and breathe so much better. I can now walk freely," says Sharyle.

Leaving behind limitations, Sharyle now tries new things and has found a new hobby of arts and crafts. She emphasizes, "You will add days to your life. You will be happier. You can do it!" Moving from purchasing men's clothing, to being able to wear a dress again and feel like a woman, has made all the difference in her life. She can now fit into the clothes she has longed to wear.

Today, Sharyle can go anywhere with her grandson. As a reminder, she keeps a photo close by of the two of them at the beach for the first time.



U.S. Navy Veteran Sharyle Robert lost nearly 120 pounds using VA's MOVE!® Program at the Orlando VA Medical Center. MOVE!® is a weight management, health promotion program. It is designed to improve the lives of Veterans. MOVE!'s® core ideas—encouraging healthy eating behavior, increasing physical activity, and promoting even small weight losses—are easy to follow and based on the latest research.

Sharyle's 3 Tips to Lose & Sustain Weight Loss:

- Weigh yourself everyday – Hold yourself accountable.
- Drink water – Stay hydrated.
- Carry healthy snacks – Throw your favorite fruit in your bag.

To learn more about MOVE!® visit www.move.va.gov.

Look Out for Eye Health



What to look for at every age

By Diana Cajamarca, O.D., Low Vision Optometrist
Blind Rehabilitation Center, West Palm Beach VA Medical Center

Vision is one of the most precious senses that guides us through the various chapters of our lives. There are several eye conditions that may be present at birth. Others are acquired during the first years of life and into young adulthood. But it's important to recognize some of the more common conditions that can happen, starting at age 40 and beyond. Getting early treatment can help prevent vision loss or blindness later on.



VA Optometrist Diana Cajamarca, OD, conducts an eye exam on U.S. Army and Korean War Era Veteran Arnold Rinker in the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center's Blind Rehab Center. VA photo by Joanne Deithorn.

AGE 40+

PRESBYOPIA

Symptoms typically begin at age 40. You may experience blurry vision up close when trying to read small print. You will probably notice that you hold these items farther away in order to see them clearly. Reading glasses can often eliminate the blur.

AGE 50+

DRY EYE CONDITION

This very common condition may be more likely to occur in females who are 50 years and older. It may be due to allergies, medicines, autoimmune conditions, and contact lenses. Nearly five million Americans have dry eye condition, according to the National Eye Institute. You can feel a gritty, scratchy sensation in your eyes. You may also have stinging or burning, red eyes, light sensitivity, and/or blurry vision.

AGE-RELATED MACULAR DEGENERATION

AMD is a leading cause of vision loss for people age 50 and older. Those over age 60 are more likely to have AMD. The risk is also higher for Caucasian people, those with a family history, and smokers. It does not cause complete vision loss. But losing central vision will make it hard to do some daily activities. You will have problems recognizing faces, driving a vehicle, and doing close up tasks that need sharp vision.



AGE 60+ (or sooner)

GLAUCOMA

There are several types. All can cause vision loss and blindness by damaging the optic nerve. Persons at higher risk include those over the age of 60, African American or Hispanic ethnicity and over age 40, and those with a family history of glaucoma. Symptoms can begin quietly. They start with your side vision, and only become noticeable at an advanced stage of the disease.

AGE 70+

CATARACTS

The onset typically begins at age 70. More than half of all Americans age 80 or older either have cataracts or have had surgery to get rid of them. If cataracts are not treated, they will cause blindness. Symptoms include blurry vision, colors that seem faded, sensitivity to light, trouble seeing at night, or double vision in one eye.

AGE VARIES

DIABETIC RETINOPATHY

This can cause vision loss and blindness in people who have diabetes – type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes, and gestational diabetes. Retinopathy affects blood vessels in the retina. Your risk increases the longer you have diabetes, especially with uncontrolled and high blood sugar levels. More than two in five Americans with diabetes have some stage of diabetic retinopathy. It starts with blurry or foggy, hazy vision. With diabetes, there are more eye diseases to be concerned about:

- Cataracts - Having diabetes makes you 2 to 5 times more likely to develop cataracts, and at a younger age.
- Glaucoma - Having diabetes nearly doubles your risk for glaucoma.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Stay on track with getting periodic and recommended eye and vision exams. They are an important part of your preventive health care. Early diagnosis and treatment of eye and vision problems can help prevent vision loss. If you have diabetes, a comprehensive dilated eye exam is recommended at least once a year. Talk to your VA provider about when to schedule your next eye exam.



Watch the Video!

Check out the video, "Look Out for Eye Health" at www.visn8.va.gov/VISN8/news/publications.asp.

Blue Light From Digital Screens

Smartphones, computers, and tablets – digital devices are everywhere. We are spending more time with screens than ever, in our personal lives and our work lives. Should you be concerned about doing harm to your eyes? Or affecting your sleep?

When you stare at a screen for long periods of time, you are exposed to blue light from the digital device. Blue light is a part of the color spectrum. Being exposed to too much of this kind of light, like any light, can affect your body's natural sleep-wake cycle. Here's how:

Melatonin 101

Melatonin is a sleep hormone produced in the brain. It is released when natural light dims in the evening. Melatonin helps regulate the sleep-wake cycle.

Having more melatonin present is a signal for your body and brain that it's time to sleep. But the light from too much screen time, especially close to bedtime, slows down the production of melatonin. Having less of this hormone can make it harder for your body to fall asleep.



What About Eye Damage?

Typically, the total amount of light from consumer digital devices (eg., smartphones, computer screens) is not large enough to damage the eye. But spending too much time looking at screens makes your eyes work harder compared to reading print material. This leads to eye strain. It happens because people blink less when staring at digital screens. Blinking helps moisten the eyes. People also view the screen at less than ideal distances or use devices with poor contrast between the text and the background.

To help relieve eye strain, try this: Every 20 minutes of looking at a screen, look at an object 20 feet away for 20 seconds.

The Bottom Line:

Eye strain from digital screens is caused by how we use them, not simply the blue light coming from the screens. Current research suggests that blue light, specifically, does not cause eye damage. But the negative effects of pre-bedtime digital screen time on your sleep quality are real.

It makes sense to limit your exposure to light from digital screens one to two hours before bed. It also helps to set devices to night or dark mode in the evening to lower screen brightness. Also, consider making your bed a 'no phone' zone to help reduce the urge to reach for the phone while in bed.

Word Scramble

Can you unscramble these words that appear in this issue of *Veterans Health Matters*?

TDADLIE _____

SATREFOL _____

EBLU _____

HABERTE _____

VOME _____

CCBALEAOUNT _____

YEE MXAE _____

LGMUAACO _____

AATRCCAT _____

NELNTIOMA _____

Broccoli & Cheddar Omelet

Ingredients

- 2 cups frozen broccoli
- 2 large eggs
- 1/2 cup liquid egg whites
- 1/4 cup reduced fat shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped onion
- Pinch of salt and pepper
- Vegetable cooking spray



Directions

1. Cook broccoli according to package directions.
2. Add eggs and egg whites to a small bowl and mix together with a whisk or fork.
3. Spray a medium pan with cooking spray and heat over medium high heat.
4. Add egg mixture to the pan. Do not stir. Cook eggs until firm.
5. Add broccoli, cheese, onion, salt, and pepper over the top. Turn down the heat to low and turn one side of the omelet over the other. Cook for another 1-2 minutes.

Options: Use other vegetables like bell peppers or spinach. Try some salsa or jalapenos for some extra heat.

Nutritional information: (2 servings). Per serving: 228 calories, 11 g total fat, 5 g saturated fat, 7 g carbohydrates, 3 g dietary fiber, 23 g protein, and 483 mg sodium.

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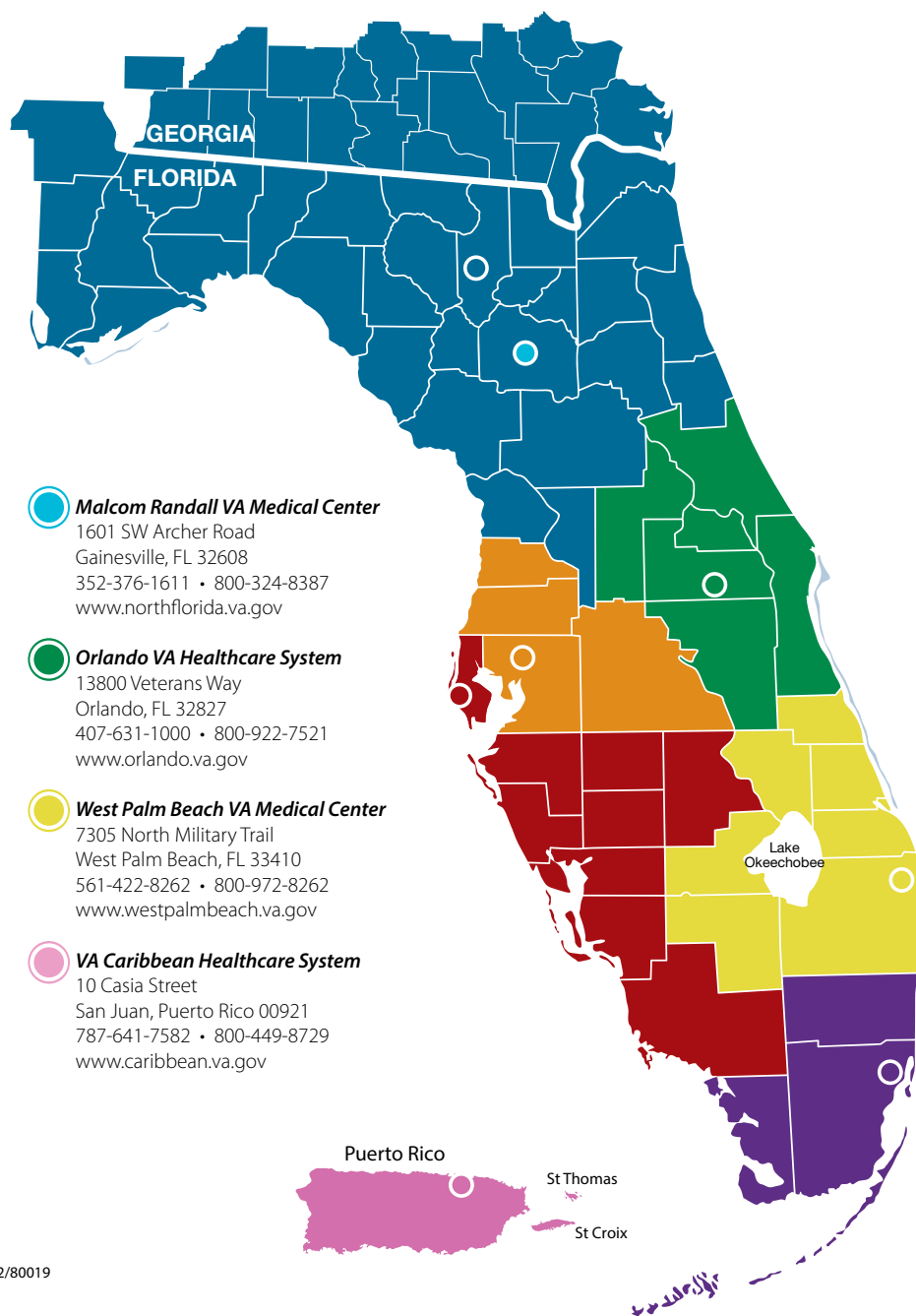
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