

SUMMER  
2017

# VETERANS Health

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

## INSIDE:

Staying Healthy At Any Age

## MATTERS

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



**Pictured: THEN & NOW** - World War II Veteran Buddy Callaway, 91, gazes at a younger version of himself when he was an 18-year-old U.S. Army soldier. Mr. Callaway participated in the invasion of Normandy and other World War II key battles. In 2016, he received the Legion of Honour Medal, France's highest order of merit. The St. Petersburg, Fla. resident gets his VA health care at the C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center. *VA photo illustration by Tim Westmorland.*

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# To Our Readers



Making positive lifestyle choices is important for health at every stage of life. Whether you are a Veteran in your 20s, 40s, or are a more mature adult, there are many things you can do to stay healthy and enjoy life to the fullest. Learn more on pages 4 and 5 about how you can achieve good health at any age. Plus, review the health screenings and exams recommended below, then discuss with your VA health care team to see if you need a check-up.

Having healthy bones and preventing falls are two important ways you can keep your health into your Golden Years. Read about ways to protect your valuable bones and reduce your risk of falling on pages 3 and 6.

Finally, finding ways to eat more nutrient-rich meals can go a long way in promoting health, at any age! Check out the recipe on page 7 that includes some of the most healthful "super foods" known. And while you are there, enjoy the picture puzzle, too.

Be well!  
**Timothy W. Liezert, FACHE**  
 Acting Director, VISN 8

## Health Screenings Should You Get Checked This Year?

Review these recommendations from [www.prevention.va.gov/index.asp](http://www.prevention.va.gov/index.asp). Then, talk with your health care provider.

Screening Test or Exam		
Men & Women	High Cholesterol	Age 20 and older: Talk with your provider.
	Colon Cancer	Age 50 and older: Talk with your provider.
	Depression	Every year
	Hepatitis B and C	Talk with your provider.
	High blood pressure	Every 2 years
	HIV infection	Once
	Overweight/Obesity	Every year
Women	Sexually Transmitted Infections	Every year for women (age 18-24). If older (man or woman), talk with your provider.
	Breast Cancer	Age 40 and older: talk with your provider.
	Cervical Cancer	Age 21-29: Every 3 years Age 30-65: Every 3 to 5 years
Men	Osteoporosis	Age 65 and older: Once. If younger, talk with your provider.
	Prostate Cancer	Talk with your provider.
	Abdominal Aortic Aneurysm	Age 65-75: Talk with your provider.

*Also, talk with your VA provider about screenings for PTSD, substance use, military sexual trauma and diabetes.*

# Strong Bones for a Healthy Life

Your bones do a lot for you. They support and protect your muscles, tissues, and organs. They store minerals, such as calcium and phosphorous, that keep you strong and able. As we get older, our bones become less dense and more prone to fractures. When your bones break due to diseases like osteoporosis, that can create a domino effect leading to a host of other health issues down the road. It's never too late, or too early, to start improving your bone health. With the right diet and exercise, you can reduce your risk for fractures.

## Who's at risk for osteoporosis?

Although women are more at risk for osteoporosis, men may still experience bone fractures as they get older. All ethnic backgrounds are at risk, but white women and Asian women have the greatest risk. These other health issues also increase your chances for osteoporosis:

- Low body weight
- Cigarette smoking
- Drinking alcohol
- Certain medicines that cause bone loss

If you're 65 or older, talk to your doctor about getting a bone density test. That can help detect any issues early on so you can take steps to avoid future fractures.



## Eat a calcium and vitamin D-rich diet

We lose calcium constantly through our urine, sweat, and feces. Our body must constantly replace what it loses. You need vitamin D to help your body absorb the calcium. So, eat foods that are good sources of both calcium and vitamin D.

*Some good calcium sources include:*

- Low-fat dairy products
- Calcium-fortified fruit juice
- Leafy greens, such as collard, kale, and mustard greens
- Almonds

*Some good vitamin D sources include:*

- Milk with vitamin D
- Egg yolks
- Saltwater fish

You may need to take nutritional supplements to get enough daily calcium and vitamin D.



## Do strength-bearing exercises

As much as eating a good diet is important for avoiding bone loss, it is also important to get enough exercise. Healthy bones need weight-bearing exercises. Try walking, climbing stairs, lifting weights, and dancing.

For more information on how much calcium you need for your age, and other bone-health questions, go to [www.niams.nih.gov/health\\_info/bone/bone\\_health/bone\\_health\\_for\\_life.asp](http://www.niams.nih.gov/health_info/bone/bone_health/bone_health_for_life.asp).

# Staying Healthy at Any Age

*Our bodies change as we get older. Not all the changes are bad, but it's important to know what to expect as you age. As an adult, you move through three distinct changes of life: from young adult to middle-aged adult to mature adult.*



## 20s-30s (Young adult)

People at this age usually have relatively good health. But, lifestyle choices you make in your 20s and 30s can impact your health later in life. Start with avoiding tobacco products and limiting how much alcohol you drink.

After age 30, it can become harder to maintain your weight. Following a healthy lifestyle can help. Eat lots of fruits, vegetables, some whole grains and lean meats, and small portions of healthy fats. Move frequently throughout your day. Aim for 30 minutes of aerobic exercise daily. You can break this down into 10-minute sessions three

times a day. You should also aim for two to three days of strength training each week.

Your stress levels might be higher in your 20s and 30s than any other time of your life. That's because many people make big life decisions during this time. Try doing yoga, relaxation exercises, and meditation to help relieve any stress. Get seven to nine hours of sleep each night.

**GOOD NEWS:** Surveys find that many people consider their 30s to be the "happiest" decade with very few health problems.

### **Things to do at this life stage:**

- Have annual exams and get your vaccinations (annual flu shot, T-Dap every 10 years, etc.)
- Know your numbers: blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood glucose level
- Maintain a healthy weight and stay active
- Live a healthy lifestyle: avoid tobacco products, eat right, get regular exercise and good sleep, and reduce stress.



## 40s-50s (Middle-aged adult)

When people hit their 40s and 50s, they may start to feel their age. But, you can lessen any aches, pains, and stiffness by following a healthy lifestyle. In your 50s, your skin will start to retain less water. Be sure to stay well hydrated.

Don't neglect your annual doctor visits and screenings. At this age, people are more likely to develop various chronic diseases and cancers. But when detected early, many issues can be easily treated.

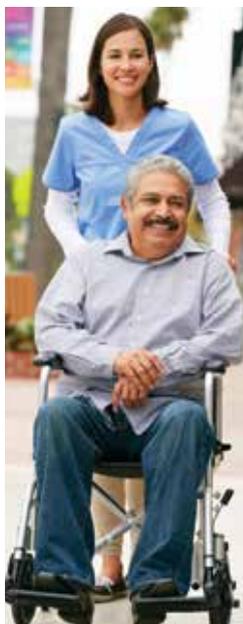
Bone loss starts happening during middle age. You may lose more lean tissue, too. Eat enough calcium and vitamin D-rich foods, as well as lean meat. And do strength-bearing exercises, like lifting weights, to maintain muscle mass and keep your bones strong and dense.

Many women start menopause during this period, and it can last up to 10 years. Stay active and eat a highly nutritious diet to manage symptoms, such as trouble sleeping and hot flashes. Men can experience low testosterone during this time. Talk to your Primary Care Provider or Patient Aligned Care Team if you feel you have low energy, a lower sex drive, or depression.

**GOOD NEWS:** People at this age have better vocabulary, memory, and problem-solving skills than those in their 20s. Their immune systems are more "experienced," so they are less likely to get colds than younger people.

### Things to do at this life stage:

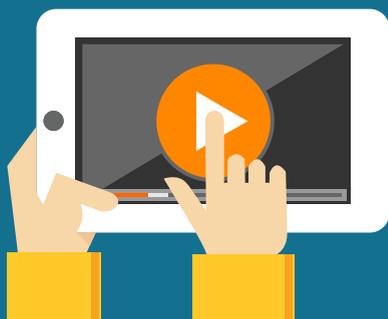
- Have annual exams and get your vaccinations (flu, T-Dap, etc.)
- Know your numbers: blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and blood glucose level
- Schedule your colonoscopy, mammogram, prostate exam, etc.
- Maintain a healthy weight and stay active
- Live a healthy lifestyle: avoid tobacco products, eat right, get regular exercise and good sleep, and reduce stress.



### Watch the Video!

#### Meet Veteran Tom!

Watch a quick and fun video about how Tom makes good health decisions throughout the different stages of his life. Go to [www.visn8.va.gov/VISN8/news/publications.asp](http://www.visn8.va.gov/VISN8/news/publications.asp).



## 60s and older (Mature adult)

Just because you've hit 60 doesn't mean you'll start having poor health. If you've taken care of yourself over the years, you should still enjoy good health for some time. As the years go by, you will start to notice some decline in your bodily functions.

By the time you're 60, you will need three times the amount of light to read than when you were 20. You're also at a greater risk for bone fractures and osteoporosis, especially if you're a woman. The more you move your body, the stronger your bones will be. You may have difficulty remembering some things. But, if you forget how to do routine tasks or the names of familiar people, talk to your doctor about getting tested for Alzheimer's or dementia.

**GOOD NEWS:** People over 60 report higher sexual satisfaction than when they were in their 40s.



### Things to do at this life stage:

- Have regular exams and get all recommended health screenings
- Maintain a healthy lifestyle: eat right, move more, and stay connected with loved ones
- Manage your blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- Get a bone density test if 65 or older
- Get vaccines for preventing pneumonia and shingles.

# Preventing Falls

## Why It's So Important



**By Tatjana Bulat, MD, CMD**  
Director, VISN 8 Patient Safety Center of Inquiry

One out of three adults age 65 and older falls each year, but very few talk to their healthcare providers about it.

Those who fall may feel there is nothing their doctor can do to help. Some may think that falling is a normal part of getting older. But falls can lead to injuries; the most serious ones are fractures (especially hip fractures) and traumatic brain injuries.

The truth is, falls don't "just happen" and they are not a normal part of aging. Risk factors may include muscle weakness (especially in the legs), problems with balance, and walking. These factors may be due to medical problems or medications, drops in blood pressure on standing, slowing down of reflexes, foot problems, inappropriate footwear, poor vision, and many others. Poor lighting, lack of grab bars, uneven or slippery floors, etc., can also create tripping hazards.



*"Falls can lead to injuries; the most serious ones are fractures (especially hip fracture) and traumatic brain injuries."*



### **What can you do to prevent falls?**

First, exercise! Try exercises that improve balance like tai-chi, yoga, or even dancing. Do exercises that strengthen your legs like getting up and down from a chair and walking daily.

Second, have your medications reviewed by your doctor, including over-the-counter drugs. There are many medications that affect balance or could make you dizzy, such as sedatives, sleeping pills, blood pressure medications, and antidepressants.

Third, have your vision checked and update your glasses. If you need new bifocal glasses, be extra careful. Your risk of falling increases in the first few weeks until your brain adjusts to the new glasses.

Remember to remove any falling hazards at home. Clear your floor of obstacles. Remove small rugs or tape them down. Use non-slip mats in the bathroom and shower. Have grab bars installed next to your toilet and inside your shower. Make sure your home has adequate lighting. Older people often need more light than younger people to see clearly.



Those with osteoporosis (weakening of bones that happens with aging) are at highest risk for fractures. Discuss screening and/or potential treatment with your doctor. Eat a healthy diet, take vitamin D and calcium supplements, and do weight-bearing exercises. If you have osteoporosis, some medications can help build bone strength.

# FEATURED Recipe!

## Berry Good Parfait

### Ingredients

- 1 cup non-fat, Greek yogurt
- 2 honey graham crackers, crushed
- 1/2 cup blueberries
- 1/2 cup raspberries and/or blackberries
- Optional: 1 tsp. of honey, drizzled



### Directions

Spoon about half the yogurt into the bottom of a glass. Add a layer of half the crushed graham crackers on top. Pile about half the blueberries and raspberries on top of that. Repeat layering. Add drizzle of honey at the top.

**Nutritional Information:** Serves 1. Per serving: 267 calories, 2 g total fat, 0.2 g saturated fat, 38 g carbohydrates, 6 g dietary fiber, 26 g protein, and 174 mg sodium.

## FUN ACTIVITY

### Can You Find the 10 Differences?



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### Be Hurricane Prepared

Hurricane Season is June 1 to November 30. Never underestimate the value of being prepared! Learn more about hurricanes and what you can do to prepare: [www.visn8.va.gov/VISN8/hurricane\\_tips.asp](http://www.visn8.va.gov/VISN8/hurricane_tips.asp)

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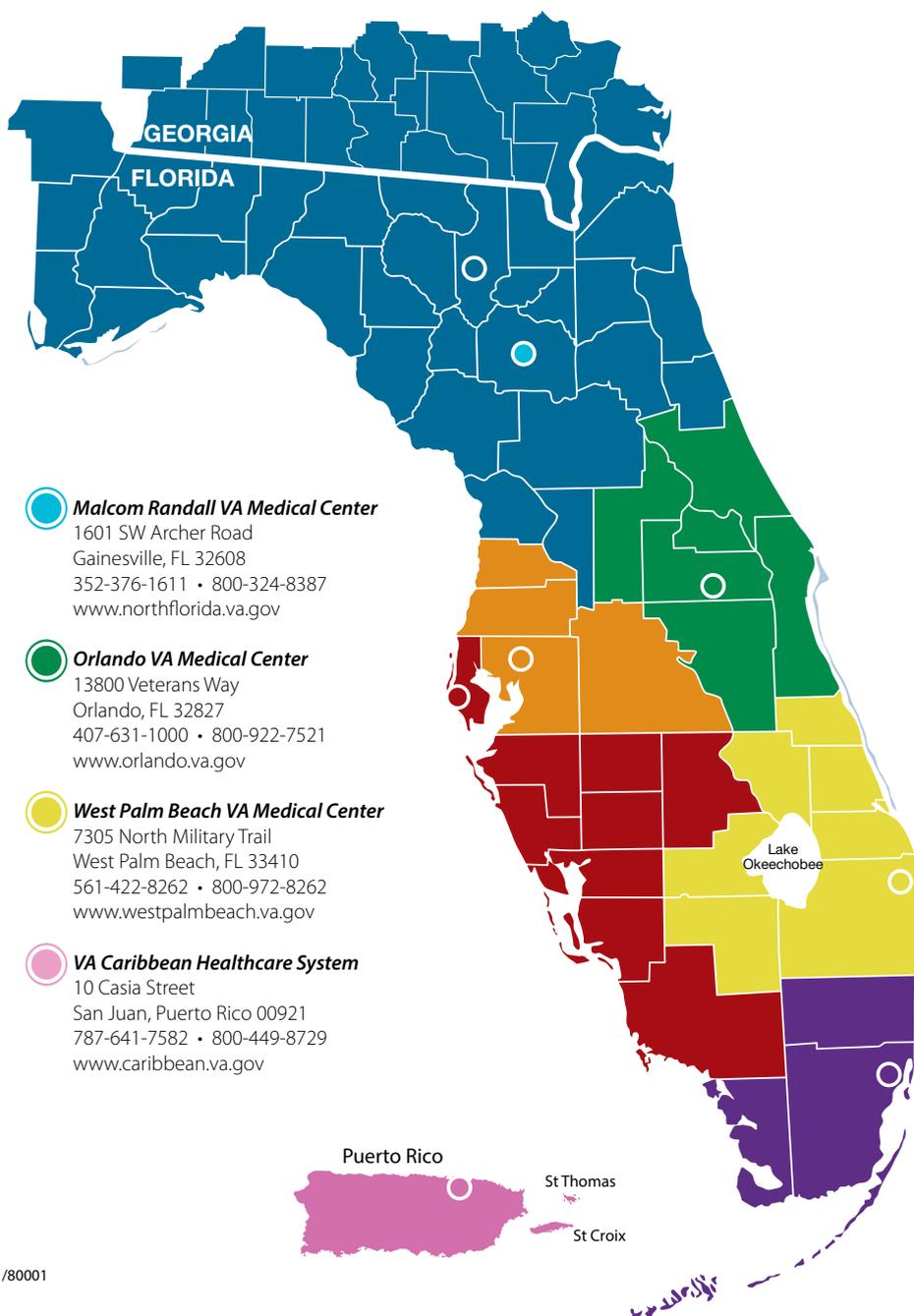
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