TAKE THIS ISSUE HOME!

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

SUMMER 2022

VETERANS Health MATTERS

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

How to Prepare for Virtual Appointments

Walking for Wellness

Creative Competition

Scan this QR code to see a digital version of this magazine.

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

MANAGING EDITOR
Jason W. Dangel

EDITORIAL BOARD
Mary Kay Rutan
VISN 8 Communication Manager

Jason W. Dangel
VISN 8 Deputy Manager, Office of Communication & Stakeholder Relations

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

Melanie Thomas
Public Affairs Officer, North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System

Edwin Aviles-Alvarado
Veteran Health Education Coordinator
VA Caribbean Healthcare System

Zoe Stagg
Public Affairs Specialist, James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital and Clinics

Lee Newball
Veterans Health Education Coordinator, Orlando VA Healthcare System

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: visn8communicationoffice@va.gov
Visit VISN 8 on the web: www.visn8.va.gov

ON THE COVER: Veteran receives virtual care in Miami from an off-site VA provider using VA Video Connect.

To Our Readers

Through live video, VA's Video Connect offers Veterans and their caregivers a convenient way to have virtual appointments with VA providers. For many Veterans, this means no need to leave home to drive to an appointment or wait in a waiting room. On pages four and five, learn how you can get the most out of VA's Video Connect, including helpful tips on preparing for virtual appointments.

Playing recreational games with some friendly competition can help drive patient recovery. Read about the first summer fun tournament held at James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital polytrauma unit on page 3.

If you are looking for another way to be more active, consider adding more walking to your day. On page six, find out which benefits of walking are a good fit for your health and wellness goals.

Finally, on page seven, try out the recipe using this favorite summertime fruit and have some fun with the word search puzzle.

Be well and stay safe!

Edward J. Cutolo, Jr., MD
Acting Network Director, VISN 8

App Spotlight: VA Health Chat

You can receive care from VA without stepping foot into a facility or having to make a phone call. The VA Health Chat App provides easy, online access to chat by text or video with VA staff. Choose to chat when you have a health care need or question, want to schedule an appointment, and more!

Within VISN 8, VA Health Chat is available Monday – Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This service is operated by the VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center. Veterans can also call 1-877-741-3400 to receive care 24/7/365.

You can download VA Health Chat today by visiting the Google Play and Apple App stores. Learn more at **www.mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-chat**.

Creative Competition

Bringing summer fun to Tampa VA's Polytrauma Unit

By Zoe Stagg, Public Affairs Specialist, James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital

While summer usually heats up the weather, what's hot for patients at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital polytrauma unit? The competition.

U.S. Navy Veteran Larry Sclaght throws for the target in the cornhole tournament.

Seasonal favorites like cornhole tournaments and NERF target practice are part of the weekend inpatient plans. With the weekend break in other therapies, some patients were restless and bored. The polytrauma nursing staff worked closely with Physical and Recreation Therapy to gather equipment and best practices and created the first summer fun tournament. It was such a hit, patients wanted more.

While it seems like fun and games, the play has serious benefits. "It gives the patients an opportunity to connect and work together to achieve a common goal," says Patrick McCarthy, Polytrauma Staff Nurse. "It also motivates patients to work on their strengths and weaknesses with a challenge they find interesting. Motivation is one of the keys to a patient's recovery, and we've found that having fun and competition is a natural way to encourage it."

U.S. Navy Veteran Larry Sclaght and U.S. Army Col. Susanna Steggles, from the winning team in the cornhole tournament, proudly display their medals.

One of the competitors, U.S. Army Col. Susanna Steggles, proved a natural and led her team to first place—her first time ever playing cornhole. "She was suspiciously good," laughs McCarthy. The activity was also a hit with the champion. Steggles enthused, "We had something fun to do!" She likes to keep moving during her recovery, and the variety of weekend recreation keeps it fun. "My teammate and I worked together," she says, and for the work, they got to wear their medals all week.

McCarthy really enjoys watching the camaraderie develop. "Seeing patients cheering each other on is the best. When someone wins a medal, they smile the entire day and display their medals everywhere they go. Patients talk about it all week."

What's next? There are lots of ideas, including an escape room and a wheelchair hockey tournament. Is Steggles up for the upcoming scavenger hunt? She smiles. "I think so!"

How to Prepare for Virtual Appointments

Getting the most from using VA Video Connect

Through live video, VA Video Connect (VVC) offers Veterans and their caregivers a convenient way to meet with VA health care providers. These secure virtual appointments can take place from anywhere, using any computer, tablet, or mobile device that has an internet connection. With VVC, there is no need for Veterans to leave home to drive to a VA medical center or clinic or wait in the waiting room.

Using VVC for virtual appointments offers many of the same interactions that take place during in-person appointments. For example, you can learn or demonstrate how you check your blood sugar or blood pressure. If you are recovering from an injury, you can show your range of motion or level of pain. Or you can connect with other Veterans during a group video visit led by a VA therapist.

Getting Set Up

Once you have scheduled a VVC appointment with a VA provider, follow these steps to set up and prepare for your video appointment:

1. Visit the VVC Connect page.

Go to **mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect**. Take some time to review the many helpful resources about using VVC. These include video demonstrations and tips for troubleshooting issues you may encounter when you use VVC. You will also find User Guides and answers to Frequently Asked Questions.

2. Choose your device.

For personal computers, Android, and Windows mobile devices: No app download is needed. VA Video Connect will open automatically when you select the link you received in an email after you made your appointment.

For Apple mobile devices: Download the free VA Video Connect app from the Apple App Store.

3. Test your device.

On the VVC Connect page, select "Visit the VA Video Connect test site" link to test your microphone, speakers, and camera. If you would like to practice using the VVC app before your appointment, ask your VA care team to set up a practice session.

To test on your mobile device, text 'V' to 83293 or 323-621-3589. Standard text messaging rates may apply.

4. Join your appointment.

Ten minutes before your appointment, go to the appointment email you received after you made your appointment. Select the appointment link to join your virtual appointment.

If you sign in to your appointment before your provider, stay in the virtual waiting room until they arrive.

Dance/Movement Therapist Brittni Cleland conducts a virtual therapy session with Army Soldier Bradley Moore. Cleland conducted the session from James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa while Moore participated from his home in Georgia.

VVC Help

When you need help with VVC, call the Office of Connected Care Help Desk, 24/7. The toll-free number is 866-651-3180. They can help with:

- Getting started with VVC
- Conducting test calls
- Troubleshooting technical problems you may have
- Testing your device before your virtual appointment

You can also view a step-by-step, instructional video at **youtu.be/HqhVlt4az-Q**.

Quick Tips

- Family members and caregivers can join your virtual visit from other locations. Ask your VA provider or the VVC Help Desk how to do this.
- Avoid data charges. Veterans who are customers of AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile/Sprint, and SafeLink by Tracfone can avoid data charges when using VVC. Some specific limitations may apply. Visit **mobile.va.gov/cellular-data-program** for more details.
- Regularly update your VVC app. For the best video experience during your next virtual appointment, download the latest version of the app at **mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect**.

Before Your Visit

- Find a well-lit, private space. Turn off music and TVs, which can make hearing more difficult.
- Clean the camera lens on your device. Use headphones or earbuds if possible.
- Place your device on something sturdy and close to eye level when sitting. Holding the device in your hand can cause motion, which can blur the video picture.
- Sit near your Wi-Fi router (or window if using a cellular connection).
- Check that your battery is charged enough if using a wireless device or charge it the night before.
- Prepare a list of questions you want to ask your provider. Review your medication list to make sure it is up to date.

Is VVC Right for You?

Talk to your health care team about using VA Video Connect, especially if you live far from your VA facility or lack time to regularly attend in-person appointments.

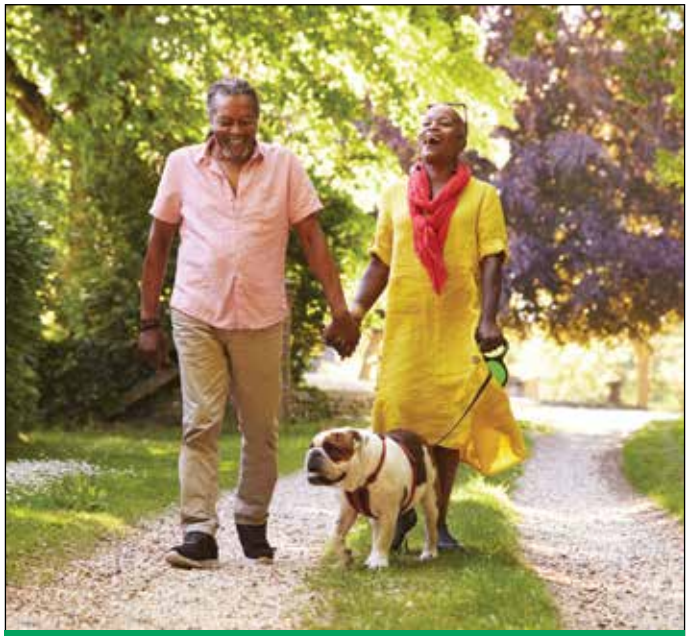
Watch the Video!
Check out the video, "How to Prepare for Virtual Appointments" at **visn8.va.gov/visn8/news/publications.asp**.

Walk for Wellness

Live Whole Health.
va.gov/wholehealth

Walking is a terrific way to be more active.

Walking is an aerobic activity. It works your heart and lungs, which move oxygen to muscles so you can move your body. The health benefits of walking are almost endless, for your physical, mental, and emotional health and well-being. For persons who get around in a wheelchair, going "wheeling" can provide many of the same benefits.



Benefits of Walking

- Lowers risk for and helps manage high blood pressure, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, some cancers, and more
- Helps reach and keep a healthy weight by burning calories
- Strengthens bones and muscles to improve balance and help prevent falls
- Improves sleep quality by balancing the body's sleep-wake cycle
- Reduces stress and improves mood by producing "feel good" brain chemicals
- Reduces risk and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Improves brain health and reduces risk of Alzheimer's disease
- Offers ways to connect with friends and family and enjoy the outdoors

Think Safety

- Wear sturdy shoes with good support.
- When possible, walk with others and take a phone and ID with you. Let someone know your walking route. If it is dark, wear a reflective vest, and be aware of your surroundings.
- Always walk facing oncoming traffic. When possible, stay on the sidewalk or path.
- Find local stores or malls to walk around if you prefer to walk indoors.
- Talk to your provider if you have concerns about a health condition and the best ways to get started with your walking routine.

No matter what your age is or how fast or far you walk, your body and mind will thank you when you add more walking to your day.

Word Search

Find these words from the stories in this issue of *Veterans Health Matters*. Remember to also look up, down, and backwards. Good luck!

AEROBIC
CONNECT
DEVICE
MOTIVATES
POLYTRAUMA
SAFETY
SECURE
STRENGTHEN
VVC
VIDEO
VIRTUAL
WALK

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

Peach, Feta & Walnut Salad

INGREDIENTS

3 cups sliced firm peaches or nectarines

1/4 cup thinly sliced red onion

6 cups fresh arugula or spinach

1/2 cup reduced-fat feta or blue cheese cubes

1/4 cup coarsely chopped walnuts

Salad Dressing

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

1-1/2 tablespoons olive oil

1 dash black pepper

DIRECTIONS

1. Place ingredients for the salad dressing in a small bowl and whisk together. Or put them in a small jar with a lid and shake well.
2. Add remaining ingredients to a large bowl and toss with salad dressing. Enjoy!

Nutritional information (made with feta cheese):
(4 servings). Per serving: 221 calories, 15 g total fat, 4 g saturated fat, 18 g carbohydrates, 3 g dietary fiber, 6 g protein, and 223 mg sodium.

Free Veterans Health Matters *Subscription*

To request your free copy of Veterans Health Matters and how you would like to receive your subscription, visit www.healthylife.com/SubscribeVHM.

You can also request your free subscription using the following methods: by U.S. mail, email, or phone.

By Mail:

Fill out your information (please print below) and put in a stamped envelope with this address:

American Institute for Preventive Medicine
c/o VISN 8 – VHM
30445 Northwestern Hwy., Ste. 350
Farmington Hills, MI 48334

(Please print)

First Name | Middle Initial

Last Name

Address

City

State | Zip

By Email:

VISN8VHM@healthylife.com
Be sure to include the above information.

By Phone:

(800) 345-2476 – press 5 for English or press 6 for Spanish

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

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

Hurricane Season Is Here!

Download the VISN 8 hurricane preparedness guide:
www.visn8.va.gov/hurricane_tips.asp

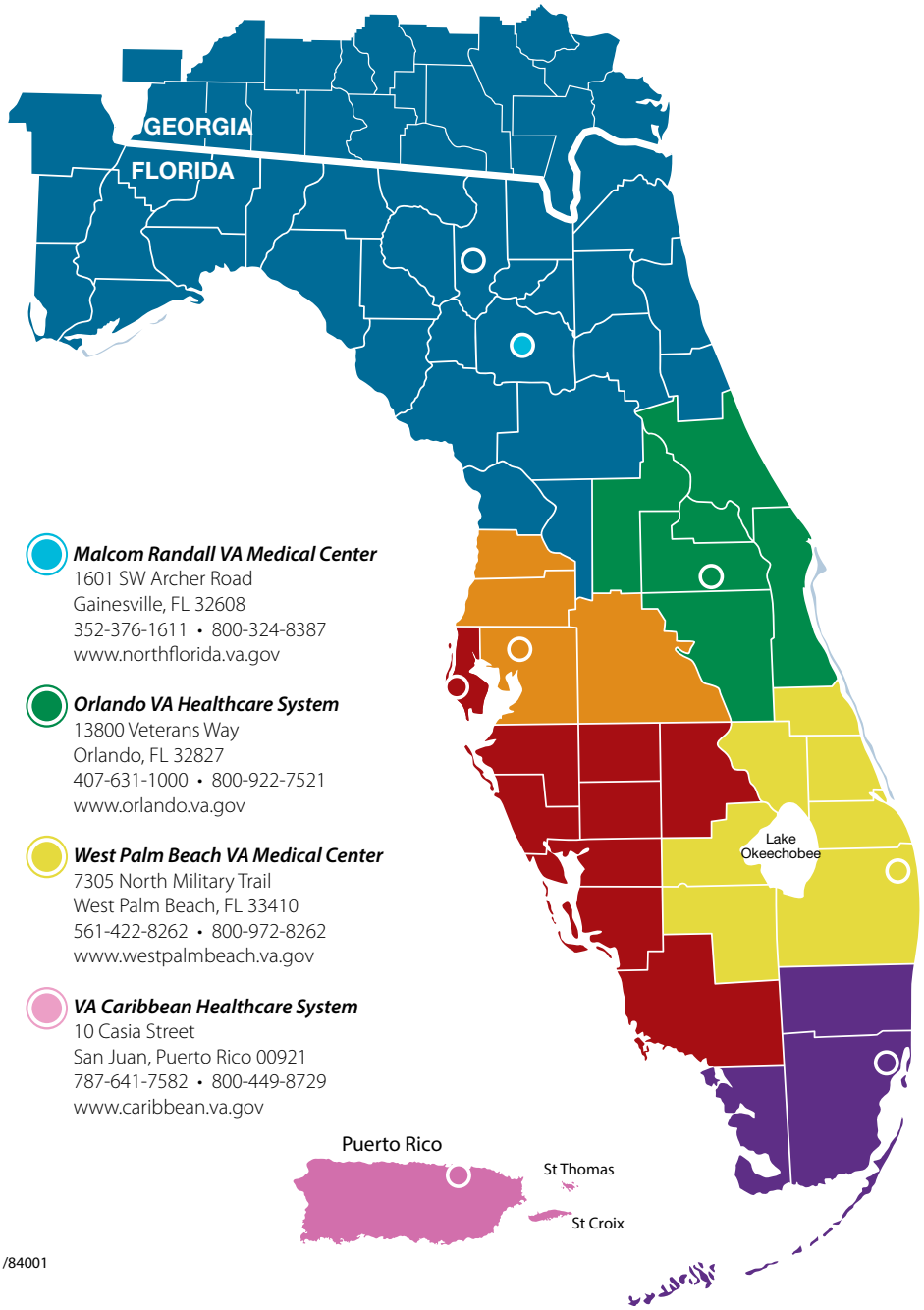
VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

www.visn8.va.gov

at all Medical Centers

VA Health Connect
The Right Care, Right Now
1-877-741-3400
24/7/365 Virtual Urgent Care

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



Bruce W. Carter Dept. of VA Medical Center
1201 NW 16th Street
Miami, FL 33125
305-575-7000 • 888-276-1785
www.miami.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

James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital
13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33612
813-972-2000 • 888-716-7787
www.tampa.va.gov

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 Healthcare System
13800 Veterans Way
Orlando, FL 32827
407-631-1000 • 800-922-7521
www.orlando.va.gov

West Palm Beach VA Medical Center
7305 North Military Trail
West Palm Beach, FL 33410
561-422-8262 • 800-972-8262
www.westpalmbeach.va.gov

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

GPO U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE 2022/623-061/84001