How to Prepare for Virtual Appointments

Walking for Wellness

Creative Competition

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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.

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.

One of the competitors, U.S. Army Col. Susanna Stegges, 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. Stegges 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 Stegges up for the upcoming scavenger hunt? She smiles. “I think so!”

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

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

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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.

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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

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.

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### 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

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### 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.

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