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# VETERANS Health MATTERS

SPRING 2024

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



Your VA Appointments:  
Making the Most Out of Them

Heart-Healthy Living

Advantages of Upgrading to  
My HealtheVet Premium



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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 to:

**visn8communicationoffice@va.gov**  
**Visit VISN 8 on the web: [www.visn8.va.gov](http://www.visn8.va.gov)**

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# To Our Readers



We encourage all Veterans to take an active role in their care to help achieve what matters most and to live life fully. That includes getting the most out of your VA care appointments. Good communication with your VA health care team is key. Read about helpful ways to do this on pages four and five. Then, on page six, learn how to take full advantage of your My HealthVet account for more ways to communicate securely with your VA care team and to be involved in your care.

Heart disease is the number one cause of death for both women and men, including Veterans. Take heart! You have the power to reduce your risk with lifestyle changes, and better manage existing heart conditions with heart-healthy habits. Also, women have some unique risk factors to manage, along with different warning signs of a heart attack. Learn more about heart-healthy living on page three.

Finally, on page seven, work your brain in the word scramble puzzle and learn how to make a lighter version of a favorite dish using a "secret" ingredient.

Be well and stay safe!

**David B. Isaacks, FACHE**  
**Network Director, VISN 8**

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## VA App Highlight: VA Online Scheduling

VA Online Scheduling offers a secure, online way for you to request and self-schedule appointments at VA facilities and Community Care facilities. You can also view details about upcoming appointments and download appointment data to your personal calendar. The appointments you can schedule online depend on your facility, the type of care you need, and other factors.

Please note that the VA Online Scheduling app should not be used for emergencies.

If you feel you are experiencing a medical or psychiatric emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room. To learn more and to get started with VA Online Scheduling visit **[www.mobile.va.gov/app/va-online-scheduling](http://www.mobile.va.gov/app/va-online-scheduling)**.



# Heart-Healthy Living

Heart disease is the number one cause of death for both women and men in the United States, including Veterans. All Veterans may have additional risk factors, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Also, women have some life stages that can put them at increased risk, such as pregnancy and menopause.

Veterans have the power to lower their risk by staying heart healthy. Maintaining heart healthy habits can also aid in managing heart disease. This is good news for all Veterans, men and women, who want to stay healthy and protect their hearts.

## Know Your Numbers

Some risk factors are out of your control, such as your age and family history. But there are many risk factors you can improve with lifestyle changes. To have a conversation with your health care provider about your heart health, it is a good idea to know your heart health numbers. These include:

- Blood cholesterol
- Blood pressure
- Blood sugar
- Body Mass Index



## Lifestyle Changes Matter

Your VA health care team can connect you with VA services and resources to support your heart health. They can diagnose and treat heart disease, and help you reduce your risk. The best way to prevent heart disease is to build and maintain a heart healthy lifestyle. This includes taking steps to:

- Strive for a healthy weight. Even losing a small amount of weight can make a difference for you.
- Be physically active on most days. All forms of movement count.
- Avoid or limit alcohol (one drink a day for women and two a day for men).
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet that limits saturated fats, added sugars, sodium (salt), and alcohol.
- Quit tobacco, if you use it. It's worth it to keep trying to quit.
- Learn to manage stress and relax. Consider learning some mindful awareness techniques, such as breathing exercises, meditation, and body scan.
- Get 7-8 hours of quality sleep every night.
- Manage blood pressure, which may include taking prescribed medicine.
- Control blood sugar if you have prediabetes or diabetes.

## Women Take Heart

The warning signs of a heart attack can be different in women versus men. They can be more subtle or confusing. Along with chest pain or discomfort, women may also have:

- Irregular heartbeat
- Cold sweats
- Extreme fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Pain in the jaw, arm, hand, shoulder, or back
- Dizziness or fainting
- Vomiting or nausea

## Learn More

[www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov](http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov)

[www.womenshealth.va.gov](http://www.womenshealth.va.gov)

# Your VA Appointments

## *Making the Most Out of Them*

Taking an active role in your care is important for meeting your health goals and achieving what matters most to you. You are the most important member of your health care team.

As a Veteran, you know that teamwork often gets the job done the best. Together, you and your health care team plan and make decisions about your health care that work best for you.

Communication is key to having a healthy and productive relationship with your health care team. This includes asking questions and making sure you understand the answers when you have a health care appointment.



### Make a Plan

#### **Before Your Visit:**

- Write down or record the questions and concerns you want to ask about. Include any symptoms or how you have been feeling since your last visit.
- Make a list of other health care providers you see, or copies of records and tests from other providers.
- Make a list of your allergies and all the medicines and supplements you take, including the dose and the number of times a day you take it. Or, put everything in a bag to bring with you.
- Write down any known health problems in your family.

#### **During Your Visit:**

- Share questions and explain symptoms and concerns at the beginning of the visit.
- Discuss your allergies and medicines.
- Discuss past illnesses, hospital stays, surgeries, and other health issues.
- Share health goals, preferences, lifestyle, and what matters most to you. Work together to create a care plan.
- If treatment is recommended, ask about options. If a test is recommended, ask how it is done and how to prepare for it.
- Consider bringing someone with you to take notes.

#### **After Your Visit:**

- Get additional information about your diagnosis, recommended medical tests, and treatment or care options from the Veterans Health Library ([www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov](http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov)) and My HealthVet ([www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)).
- If you don't understand the instructions or if your symptoms get worse after you get home, call your provider or send them a secure message.
- Call or use secure messaging to find out test results and what you should do about the results.



## QuestionBuilder App

This free app from the Agency for Healthcare and Quality can be a helpful tool to use when preparing for a health care visit. It is designed to help create and organize your questions to have handy during your visit. You can also take photos of your medicines or health problems, like a skin rash, to show your provider. This app is available at the Apple App Store and Google Play Store. Scan this QR code or click this link to learn more:



[www.ahrq.gov/questions/question-builder/online.html](http://www.ahrq.gov/questions/question-builder/online.html)

## Having a Virtual Visit?

Here are some more tips when preparing for a virtual care appointment using your digital device:

- Use a well-lit, private space and turn off music and TVs.
- Clean the camera lens of your device and use headphones or earbuds, if possible.
- To avoid a blurry video picture, place your device on a sturdy, flat surface and close to eye level.
- Check that your battery is charged.
- Sit near a window if using a cellular or near your Wi-Fi router.

## Your Patient Advocate

If you need help getting care or getting your problems taken care of, you can talk to the Patient Advocate at your VA medical center. The Patient Advocacy Program is for all Veterans and their families who receive care at VA health care facilities.



## Learn More

Don't be afraid to speak up! For more information on how to get the most out of your health care appointments, visit the Veterans Health Library at [www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov](http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.va.gov).

# Five Advantages of Upgrading to My HealthVet Premium



A My HealthVet Premium account gives you more tools and information for managing your health care. Along with the features available to Basic and Advanced users, Premium accounts allow you to access more VA health records and information, communicate with your care team and VA staff, and manage your health care appointments.

My HealthVet Premium accounts are free, and getting a Premium account is a simple process. Use the step-by-step guide on the My HealthVet website to upgrade your account to the Premium level.

 **Watch the Video!**  
Check out the video, "Taking Full Advantage of My HealthVet" at [visn8.va.gov/visn8/news/publications.asp](https://visn8.va.gov/visn8/news/publications.asp).



## 5 Reasons to Get a My HealthVet Premium Account

### 1. Access More of Your Health Records

You can view key portions of your VA electronic health records, use the VA Blue Button feature to access your VA Health Summary, and view VA Medical Images and Reports.

### 2. Secure Messages

You can send secure messages to members of your VA care team and other VA staff. You can ask non-urgent health-related questions, give updates on your condition, request referrals and medication renewals, and check on your appointments.

### 3. Manage Your VA Appointments

You can view and cancel upcoming appointments, request new ones, join video appointments, and look up appointments from the past two years.

### 4. View Your Military Service Information

You can use the VA Blue Button feature to view your U.S. Department of Defense Military Service Information. This includes service and deployment dates, military occupational specialty codes, and pay and retirement information.

### 5. Protect Your Account With More Security

With a Premium account, you will have updated security features for protecting your personal health information.

### Learn More

Scan this code to learn more about how to upgrade your My HealthVet account to Premium:



[www.myhealth.va.gov/upgrading-your-my-healthvet-account-through-in-person-or-online-authentication](https://www.myhealth.va.gov/upgrading-your-my-healthvet-account-through-in-person-or-online-authentication)

# Word Scramble

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

ELONIN GSHLEUCUDIN \_\_\_\_\_

TEARH ATLEHH \_\_\_\_\_

SLELFIETY \_\_\_\_\_

IKRS OCRASFT \_\_\_\_\_

CIAVET ERLO \_\_\_\_\_

SSOIQNUTE \_\_\_\_\_

LAEHHT ASOLG \_\_\_\_\_

TTNIAEP CODATEVA \_\_\_\_\_

YM LAEEHVHT \_\_\_\_\_

## Cauliflower Fried Rice

### INGREDIENTS

- Nonstick cooking spray
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 (12-ounce) bag frozen riced cauliflower
- 1 cup fresh or frozen vegetables, trimmed and chopped (e.g. carrots, onions, green beans, peas, broccoli)
- 2 scallions, sliced
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 2 tablespoons reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons toasted sesame seeds



### DIRECTIONS

1. Spray a large skillet and place over medium heat. Add eggs and cook to scrambled. Transfer to a small bowl.
2. Increase the heat to medium-high and add the oil. Add the riced cauliflower and cook for 4-6 minutes, until most of the liquid has evaporated.
3. Add the remaining vegetables, scallions, and garlic. Cook, stirring often, for 7-10 minutes, until the liquid has evaporated.
4. Add the soy sauce, sesame seeds, and scrambled eggs. Cook, stirring constantly for 1-2 minutes. Serve warm.

**Nutritional information:**  
(4 servings). Per serving:  
115 calories, 7 g total fat, 2 g saturated fat, 7 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 6 g protein, and 520 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](http://www.healthylife.com/SubscribeVHM).

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

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c/o VISN 8 – VHM  
30445 Northwestern Hwy., Ste. 150  
Farmington Hills, MI 48334

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Last Name

Address

City

State  Zip

### By Email:

[VISN8VHM@healthylife.com](mailto: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  
 13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.  
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[www.visn8.va.gov](http://www.visn8.va.gov)

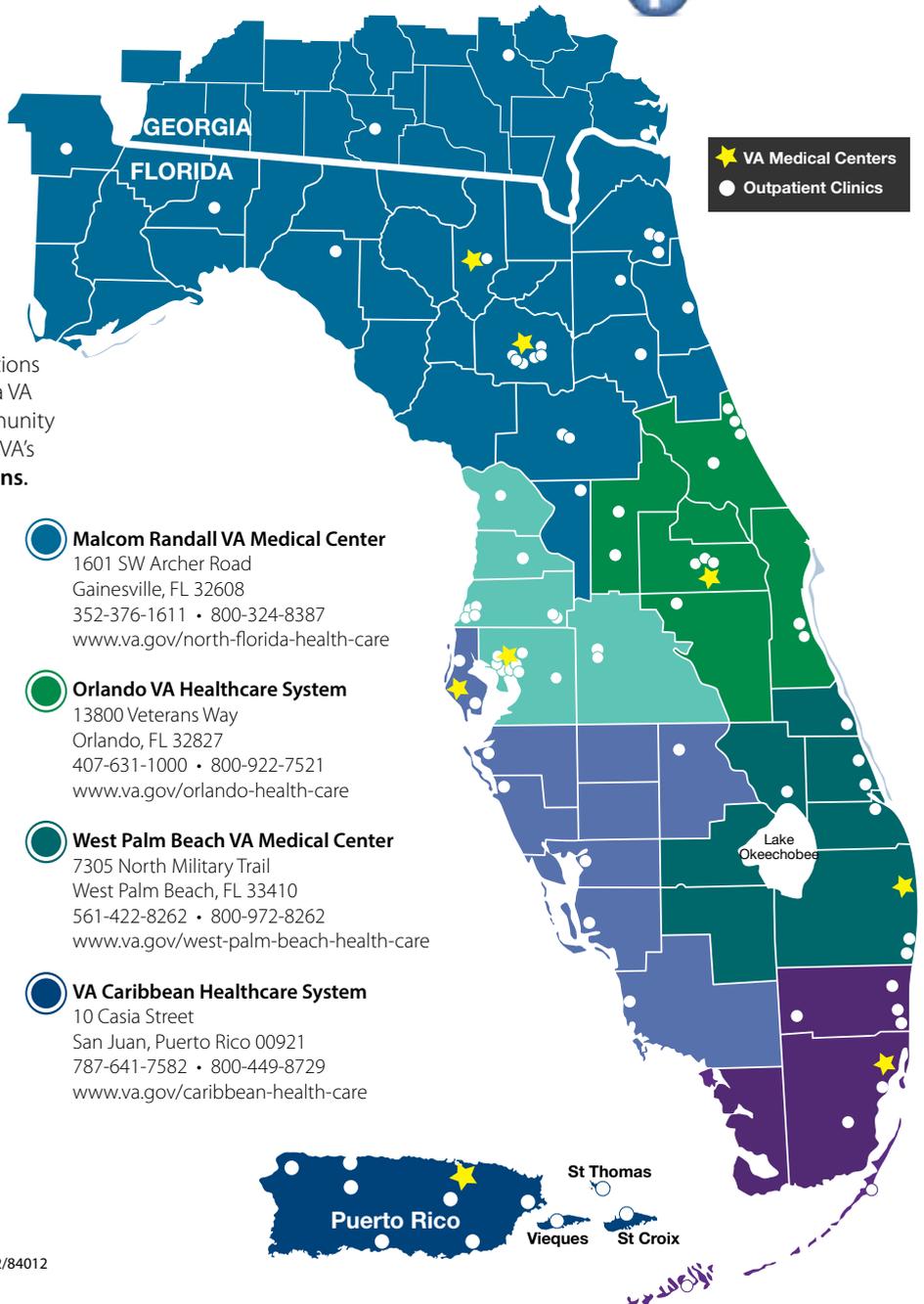


at all Medical Centers



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**NOTE:** This map shows medical center locations only and associated service areas. To locate a VA healthcare center, outpatient clinic, or community based outpatient clinic near you, please use VA's facility locator at: [www.va.gov/find-locations](http://www.va.gov/find-locations).



**Bruce W. Carter Dept. of VA Medical Center**  
 1201 NW 16th Street  
 Miami, FL 33125  
 305-575-7000 • 888-276-1785  
[www.va.gov/miami-health-care](http://www.va.gov/miami-health-care)

**C.W. Bill Young VA Medical Center**  
 10000 Bay Pines Blvd.  
 Bay Pines, FL 33744  
 727-398-6661 • 888-820-0230  
[www.va.gov/bay-pines-health-care](http://www.va.gov/bay-pines-health-care)

**James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital**  
 13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.  
 Tampa, FL 33612  
 813-972-2000 • 888-716-7787  
[www.va.gov/tampa-health-care](http://www.va.gov/tampa-health-care)

**Lake City VA Medical Center**  
 619 South Marion Avenue  
 Lake City, FL 32025  
 386-755-3016 • 800-308-8387  
[www.va.gov/north-florida-health-care](http://www.va.gov/north-florida-health-care)

**Malcom Randall VA Medical Center**  
 1601 SW Archer Road  
 Gainesville, FL 32608  
 352-376-1611 • 800-324-8387  
[www.va.gov/north-florida-health-care](http://www.va.gov/north-florida-health-care)

**Orlando VA Healthcare System**  
 13800 Veterans Way  
 Orlando, FL 32827  
 407-631-1000 • 800-922-7521  
[www.va.gov/orlando-health-care](http://www.va.gov/orlando-health-care)

**West Palm Beach VA Medical Center**  
 7305 North Military Trail  
 West Palm Beach, FL 33410  
 561-422-8262 • 800-972-8262  
[www.va.gov/west-palm-beach-health-care](http://www.va.gov/west-palm-beach-health-care)

**VA Caribbean Healthcare System**  
 10 Casia Street  
 San Juan, Puerto Rico 00921  
 787-641-7582 • 800-449-8729  
[www.va.gov/caribbean-health-care](http://www.va.gov/caribbean-health-care)