

TAKE THIS ISSUE HOME!

VA



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

VETERANS Health

WINTER 2018

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

MATTERS



INSIDE:

Women Battling Heart Disease &
Stroke – pages 4-5

Pictured from left: West Palm Beach VA Medical Center dietitians Lori Drummond, Angela Lee, and Leighann Dewitt gather around a rosemary plant in the facility's Healing Garden, part of the VAMC's Garden Therapy program. Rosemary is a fragrant, heart-healthy herb and a natural source of antioxidants. *VA photo by Joanne Deithorn.*

To Our Readers

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A big thank you to all the Veterans and others who replied to our recent Readership Questionnaire about *Veterans Health Matters* and the *Healthy Living Calendar*. I am happy to report that your responses support our main goal of providing information that helps you live healthier lives. Also, you pointed out we still have some work to do to improve these publications, and we are working hard to do that! For more details, including some of your valuable suggestions, see page 3.

During American Heart Month in February, VA's Women's Health Services is partnering with the American Heart Association to raise awareness about heart disease and stroke among women Veterans. Did you know women can have heart attack symptoms that are different from men? Learn about them, along with other important information about heart disease and stroke on pages 4 and 5.

This issue's fun activity and our featured recipe also follows a heart-health theme. Test your word search puzzle skills and check out the easy-on-your budget soup recipe on page 7.

Finally, learn on page 6 how you and your family can benefit from the emotional guidance and spiritual services offered by VA chaplains as part of your Whole Health.

Be well!

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

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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I Ate WHAT?

Are you trying to get back to those healthy habits you had before the holidays set in? Here are some tips to help get back on track with your pre-holiday health goals:



1. Accept that what you did last month, last week, or yesterday is done. There's no going back, so set your sights on what you can do moving forward.
2. Return to a healthy eating routine. Start by eating more meals at home where you can control ingredients. Re-stock with healthy choices including vegetables, fresh fruit, whole grains, and lean proteins.
3. Get more sleep – Wind down your day earlier so you have at least one hour before bedtime to relax.
4. Start moving again – Give yourself time to return to your pre-holiday exercise levels to avoid injury. Build up to getting at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days.
5. Track it – Keep a log for a few weeks. Include your exercise, sleep habits, and number of meals you eat at home.

2018 Reader Questionnaire Results

By Susan Wentzell
Managing Editor, *Veterans Health Matters*

94% rated the magazine as excellent or good

40% became better informed on healthy living in general

33% received valuable information to help manage their health



We would like to thank the 376 Veterans and others who replied to our Readership Questionnaire about ***Veterans Health Matters*** and the ***Healthy Living Calendar*** in the Summer 2018 issue of this magazine.

You told us what you think, and you let us know what articles you want to see in the future. Also, you gave us information about how you want to receive the magazine, which is currently distributed in VA medical centers and clinics in Florida, S. Georgia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The good news? Your answers support our main goal of providing information to help Veterans become more informed about healthy living and better management of your health.

Key Results

- ***Veterans Health Matters*** was rated very highly (Excellent or Good) by **94%** and **73%** said the same for the ***Healthy Living Calendar***.
- **91%** of you said they read all or most of the magazine's articles.
- Many of you told us you made a positive behavior change because of information you read.
- Most prefer getting the magazine at home vs. other delivery methods. We started offering that option in the Spring 2017 issue and since then, more than 1,300 Veterans have signed up for home delivery. You can too – see page 7.

Your Suggestions

We learned you want more articles on whole health, weight loss, nutrition (herbs and organic foods), exercises for those over age 65, sleep issues, caregiving, and cancer.

You also want to hear from Veterans who have successfully overcome obstacles like alcoholism, smoking, and eating disorders. Veteran testimonials can be very powerful!

You want more healthy recipes in ***Veterans Health Matters***, along with women's health articles, more original photos, and more "fun" stuff, like word jumbles. However, there are clearly some areas we still need to work on, such as letting you know how you can receive the ***Healthy Living Calendar***.

VISN 8 and the *Veterans Health Matters* Editorial Board will use all your answers to improve the magazine and calendar to better serve you. Our common goal is to continue to provide our Veterans with the most useful, up-to-date health information possible.

Thank you for your continued support!

Women Take Heart

Battling Heart Disease & Stroke

February is American Heart Month. VA's Women's Health Services is joining this national movement with the American Heart Association and their Go Red for Women campaign to raise awareness about heart disease and stroke among women Veterans. Do you know that the symptoms for a heart attack can be different in women compared to men, or that women have a higher lifetime risk of stroke?

One in three women die from heart and blood vessel diseases, killing one woman every minute.

What is CVD?

Heart and blood vessel diseases are known as cardiovascular disease (CVD). Many heart-related problems are caused by a buildup of plaque in arteries, making it harder for blood to flow through. If a blood clot forms, blood flow can stop and cause a heart attack if blood vessels go to the heart. Or, a clot can cause a stroke if blood vessels go to the brain. A stroke can also be caused by sudden bleeding in the brain.



SYMPTOMS OF HEART DISEASE

Some women have no symptoms until they have a heart attack, while others may experience:

- Angina (dull/heavy to sharp chest pain)
- Pain in neck, jaw, throat, upper abdomen, or back
- Fluttering feelings in the chest
- Shortness of breath, fatigue, or swelling in the feet, ankles, legs, and abdomen

Call 911 if you have any of these symptoms or get immediate medical care.

SYMPTOMS OF STROKE

- Face drooping – One side droops or is numb, especially when the person smiles.
- Arm weakness – One arm drifts downward when the person raises their arms.
- Speech difficulty – Speech is slurred, or a person is unable to speak, or hard to understand.

Call 911 if you have any of these symptoms, even if they go away.

TREATMENT

For both heart disease and stroke, the main goals are to stop further damage, help prevent a future heart attack or stroke, and restore body function as much as possible. This may include medications and surgery to open or bypass blocked arteries, and controlling or reducing risk factors. Rehabilitation programs help reduce risk for future problems, and help restore balance, speech, and movement for patients recovering from a stroke.

Watch the Video!

You can view the video version of "Women Take Heart - Battling Heart Disease & Stroke" at www.visn8.va.gov/VISN8/news/publications.asp.



Know Your Heart-Health Numbers

There are some risk factors for CVD you can't do anything about, such as your age, sex, and family history. Fortunately, approximately 80% of CVD may be prevented with lifestyle changes and education. Knowing your heart-health numbers is a good place to start the conversation about your personal risk with your health care provider.

Risk Factor	Ideal Numbers for Most Adults
Blood cholesterol	Talk to your doctor about how your cholesterol numbers affect your overall risk.
Blood pressure	less than 120/80 (mm HG)
Fasting blood sugar	less than 100 (mg/dL)
Body Mass Index	less than 25 (kg/m ²)



Heart Attack Symptoms in Women

Call 911 if you experience these warning signs:

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness or pain in the center of chest that may or may not go away and come back. Although this is the most common symptom in women and men, women are more likely to have some of the following symptoms:
- Pain or discomfort in the arm(s), back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Shortness of breath, with or without chest discomfort
- Nausea/vomiting, lightheadedness, or breaking out in a cold sweat
- Extreme fatigue



Lifestyle Changes to Reduce CVD Risk Factors

- Maintain a healthy weight or lose weight if overweight.
- Be physically active on most days.
- Eat a balanced diet that includes cutting back on foods high in fat and sugar.
- Quit tobacco, if you use it.
- Avoid or limit alcohol to one drink a day for women.
- Learn to manage stress and relax.
- Manage blood pressure, which may include taking medication as recommended by your doctor.
- Control blood sugar, especially if you have diabetes or pre-diabetes.
- See your doctor as recommended for blood pressure and cholesterol monitoring, along with other heart-health issues.

More Heart-Health Resources

- American Heart Association www.heart.org
 - American Heart Association: Go Red for Women Campaign www.goredforwomen.org
 - U.S. Office on Women's Health: Make the Call, Don't Miss a Beat (also in Spanish) www.womenshealth.gov/heart-attack
 - Million Hearts www.millionhearts.hhs.gov
- Visit www.womenshealth.va.gov for more information and resources for women Veterans.



High blood pressure can be silent - and deadly!

High blood pressure is the leading cause for stroke and can do significant damage to your heart and blood vessels. Often, there are no signs. That's why it's so important to get it checked as your health care provider recommends. Treatment may include medications and making lifestyle changes.



Focus on Whole Health: Spiritual Health & the Role of VA Chaplains

Whole Health is an approach to health care that empowers and enables YOU to take charge of your health and well-being, and live your life to the fullest. It is fueled by the power of knowing yourself and what works best for you. Good spiritual health is an important part of Whole Health and the services VA chaplains provide play a key role.

Who are VA chaplains?

Chaplains are part of the VA health care team. They are trained to help with the religious, spiritual, psychological, and social needs of patients, families, and hospital staff. Certified chaplains go through years of education and hands-on-experience. They work in VA hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes/community living centers. Although they may be connected to a particular faith, they work with anyone, regardless of their beliefs.

What do VA chaplains do?

Chaplains have many roles. They help Veterans and their families during happy and difficult times by doing the following:

- Listening to you and your family, helping with tough issues, such as end-of-life decisions.
- Providing grief support.
- Helping with advance directives, which give legal directions about your health care wishes. Learn more at www.va.gov/geriatrics/guide/longtermcare/advance_Care_Planning.asp.



VA Chaplains are vital members of a Veteran's care team. They provide spiritual guidance and comfort in times of need. Chaplain Kim House (center) visits with Veteran James Mohler and his wife Ljubica in the West Palm Beach VA Medical Center's Hospice Unit. VA photo by Joanne Deithorn

- Performing religion-specific ceremonies or services, such as meditation, prayer, observance of holy days, etc.
- Connecting you with spiritual support in your community.
- Assisting with ethical concerns, feelings of guilt, and self-forgiveness. After leaving active duty, some people feel guilty about things they had to do during their military service.
- Helping you connect, or reconnect, with God or a higher power.

What if I am not religious?

You can meet with a chaplain whether you belong to a religion and no matter what your beliefs are. Anyone can benefit from seeing a VA chaplain. They can provide social support and teach you coping skills. Also, they can help you identify what gives your life meaning and communicate your beliefs to the rest of your VA health care team.

How can I find a VA chaplain?

Chaplains are available at VA facilities 24 hours a day, seven days a week. You can call your local VA and ask for a chaplain consult or ask your VA health care team.

Word Search

Women Battling Heart Disease & Stroke

Find these words related to the article on pages 4-5. Remember to look up, down, and backwards. Good luck!

ATTACK	P	R	E	S	S	U	R	E	Z	C
BLOOD	U	M	L	L	C	B	D	M	P	L
CHECKUP	K	V	N	Q	H	W	V	C	G	I
CHOLESTEROL	C	A	D	W	O	M	E	N	S	L
DROOPING	E	I	R	G	L	P	T	A	Z	G
NAUSEA	H	H	K	A	E	L	E	U	B	N
NUMBERS	C	D	S	K	S	I	R	S	O	I
PRESSURE	A	K	C	A	T	T	A	E	C	P
PREVENTION	T	H	G	I	E	W	N	A	C	O
RED	M	F	R	C	R	P	S	J	A	O
RISKS	B	L	E	K	O	R	T	S	B	R
STROKE	Y	G	D	F	L	B	L	O	O	D
TOBACCO	N	U	M	B	E	R	S	F	T	Y
VETERANS	P	R	E	V	E	N	T	I	O	N
WEIGHT										
WOMEN										



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1. Complete this form with the Veteran's full name and current mailing address.
2. Cut out the form and insert in a stamped envelope.
3. Mail to:
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Crockpot Black Bean Soup

This heart-healthy soup is so easy to make with the help of a crockpot. It's also great as leftovers, or to freeze for up to six months.

Ingredients

- 1 lb. dry, uncooked black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tsp. cumin powder
- 1 (15 ounce) can diced tomatoes, no salt added
- 4 cups lower sodium chicken broth
- 2 cups water



Directions

1. Place all ingredients in a crockpot and stir to combine. Cook on low for 10 hours.
2. To thicken the soup, after 9 hours, remove one-quarter of the beans, in a separate bowl, mash and return to the crock pot.
3. Serve with toppings such as diced avocado or tomato, chopped cilantro, or sliced jalapeno peppers.

Nutritional information: Serves 10. Per serving: 169 calories, 0 g total fat, 0 g saturated fat, 31 g carbohydrates, 12 g dietary fiber, 11 g protein, and 233 mg sodium.



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What matters most to you? This coming year, let VA help you reach your health care goals with Whole Health, a new approach that addresses all aspects of your health and well-being. Contact your VA health care team to get started.

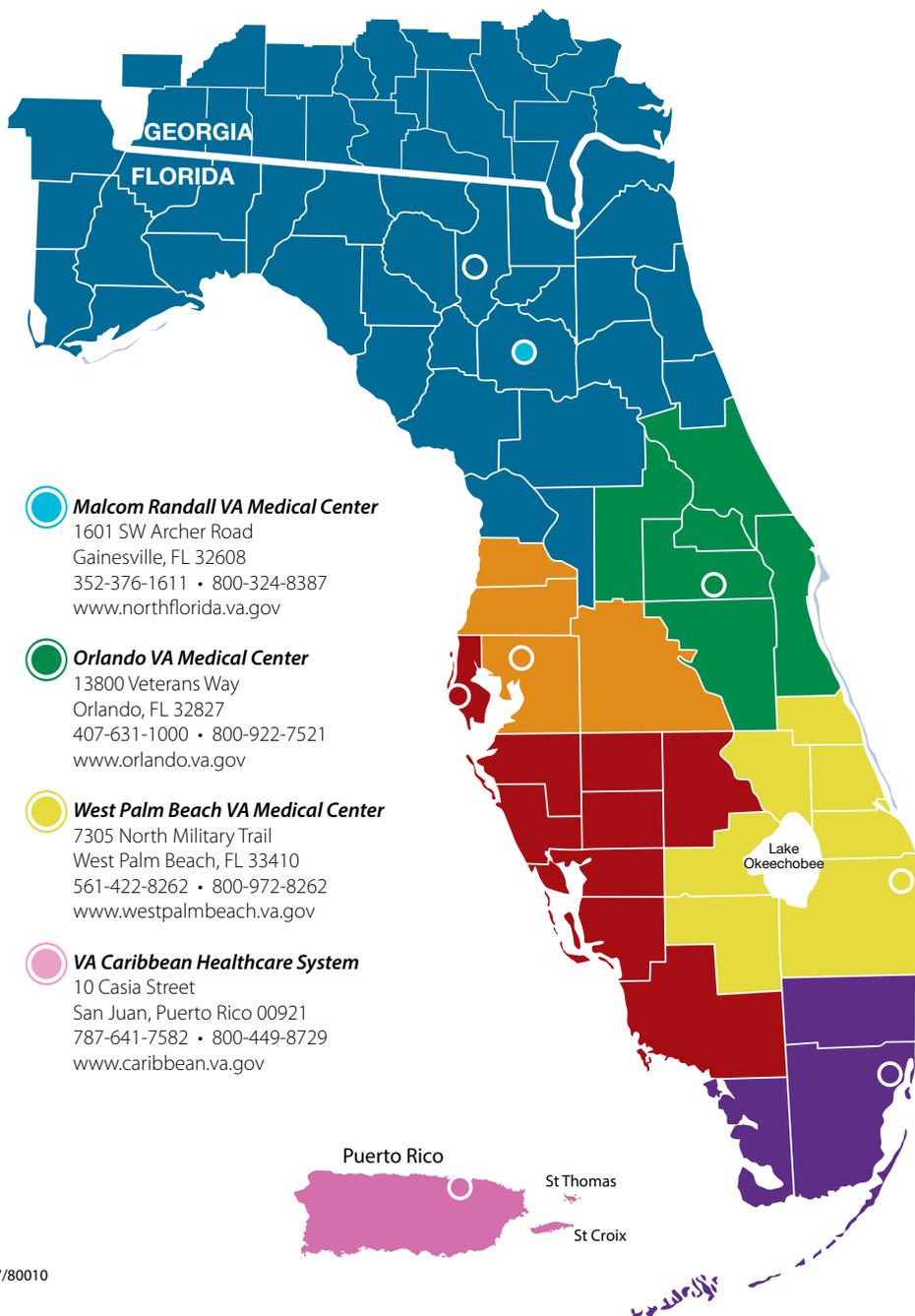
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