

TAKE THIS ISSUE HOME!

VA

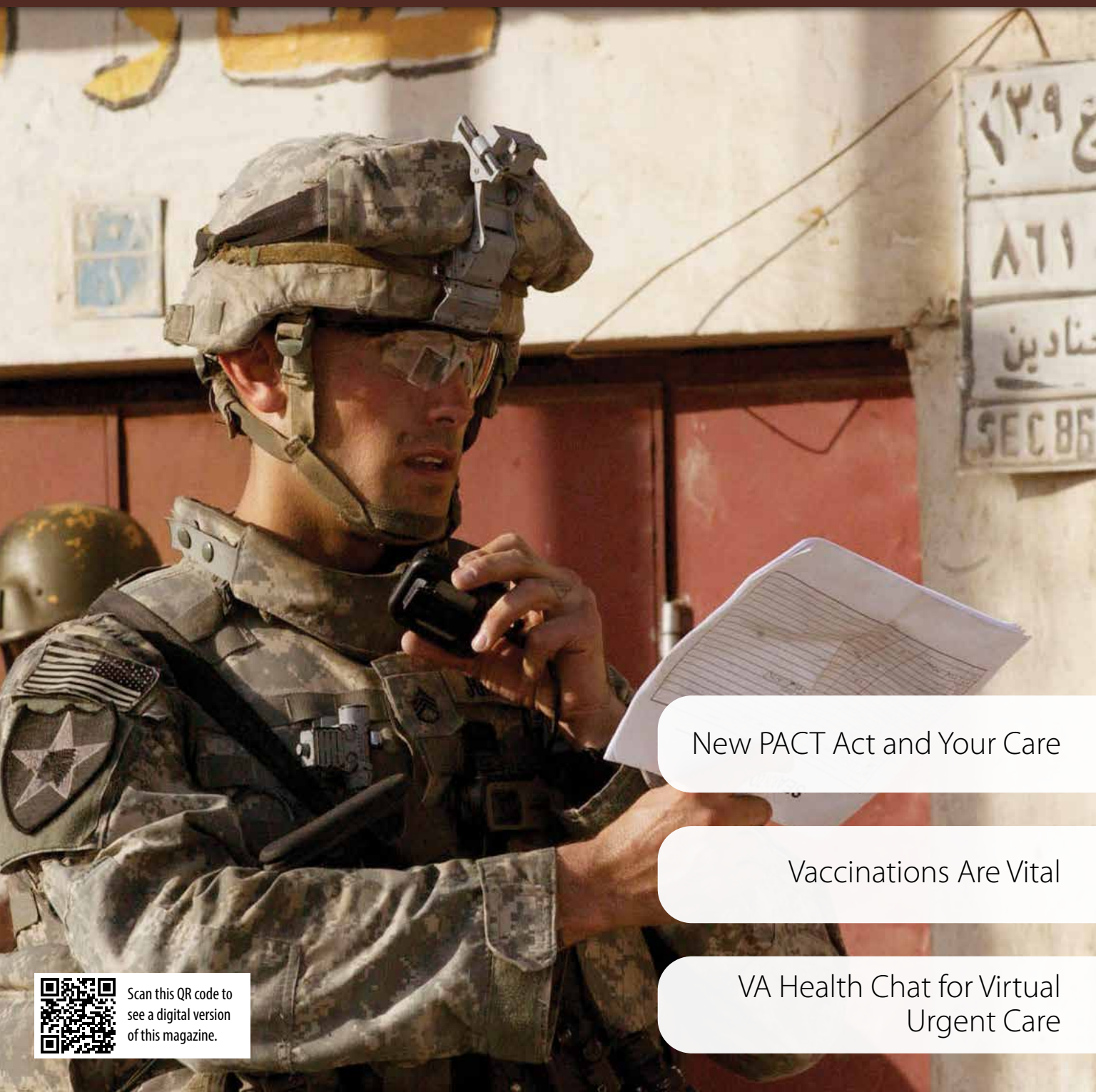


U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
VA Sunshine Healthcare Network (VISN 8)

VETERANS Health MATTERS

WINTER 2022

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



New PACT Act and Your Care

Vaccinations Are Vital

VA Health Chat for Virtual
Urgent Care



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

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

Cindy Snook

Public Affairs Specialist, VISN 8 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, Orlando VA Healthcare System

Edwin Aviles-Alvarado

Veteran Health Education Coordinator
VA Caribbean Healthcare System

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
.....

To Our Readers



First, let me take this opportunity to say how honored I am to be your new network director. As a proud Veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, it is a privilege to serve Veterans in Florida, Georgia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

The PACT Act is one of VA's largest health care and benefit expansions. It expands and extends VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and for Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and Post 9/11 eras. Read on pages four and five what the PACT Act means for Veterans, and their survivors, in getting the care and benefits they've earned.

Are you up to date with your recommended shots? Did you know you can get vaccinated or boosted for COVID-19 at the same time you get your flu shot? On page three, learn more about these and other recommended vaccinations. And on page six, learn about a quick and easy way to receive urgent care from VISN 8's Clinical Contact Center.

Finally, get ready for some brain training on page seven. And be sure to try the healthy dessert recipe that's there, too.

Be well and stay safe!

David B. Isaacks, FACHE
Network Director, VISN 8

VA's #LiveWholeHealth Blog

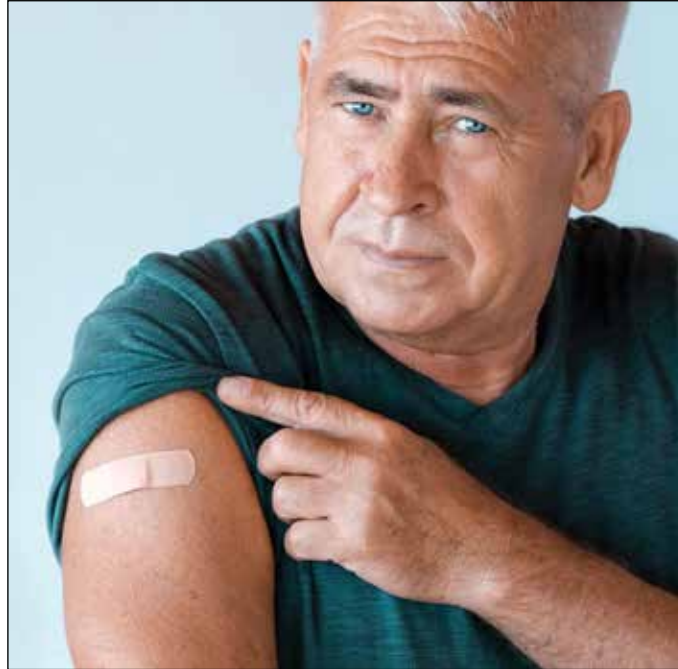
Did you know VA maintains an ongoing blog series that focuses on Whole Health and practices you can do to improve your overall health and well-being? With just a few clicks of the mouse or taps on your mobile device, you can learn how to #LiveWholeHealth. Check out the blog at www.news.va.gov/category/health/livewholehealth.



Vaccinations Are Vital

Are you up to date?

As adults, keeping up with recommended vaccinations ("shots" or immunizations) helps prevent many types of infectious diseases. Protection from some childhood vaccines can wear off over time. Plus, some vaccines are recommended for adults based on age, health conditions, job, lifestyle, or travel habits. Getting your shots is one of the easiest and safest ways to protect your health.



Seasonal Flu Vaccine

The best way to reduce your risk from seasonal flu is to get a flu shot every year. Flu vaccination can reduce flu illnesses and severity, visits to doctor's offices, and flu-related hospitalizations. This is especially important for Veterans with chronic conditions, which can increase the severity of the flu. These chronic conditions include chronic lung disease, heart disease, and diabetes. Getting your flu shot also helps protect your family and your community. These include people who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness, like babies, young children, and those with chronic health conditions.

COVID-19 Vaccine and Booster

If you haven't received your primary COVID-19 vaccine series yet, you can still get an original COVID-19 vaccine. These vaccines are highly effective at preventing severe illnesses from COVID-19. Getting an updated COVID-19 booster shot is also important. It will help protect you and your family from newer virus variants. These variants may spread more easily and affect you more severely. COVID-19 vaccines and booster shots are available to eligible Veterans and family members at no cost. Learn more at www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine.

One Visit, Two Vaccines

You can get vaccinated for COVID-19 at the same time you get a flu shot. No-cost flu and COVID-19 vaccines and updated boosters are available for eligible Veterans. To find where you can get a flu shot, visit www.va.gov/find-locations. You can choose a nearby VA facility, an in-network pharmacy, or an urgent care location. Call ahead to make sure your community provider has COVID-19 vaccines and boosters available.



Other Key Vaccines

You may be due, or overdue, for other important vaccines. Ask your provider what shots are right for you. These include vaccines to protect against:

- Hepatitis A and B
- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)
- Pneumococcal disease
- Shingles
- Tetanus, Diphtheria, and Pertussis
- Varicella (Chickenpox)

The PACT Act and Your Care



On August 10, 2022, the Sergeant First Class Heath Robinson Honoring our Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act—known as the PACT Act—was signed into law. The PACT Act is one of the largest health care and benefit expansions in VA history.

How can the PACT Act affect you?

The PACT Act expands eligibility for VA health care for Veterans with toxic exposures and for Veterans of the Vietnam, Gulf War, and post-9/11 eras. The PACT Act:

- Added more than 20 new presumptive conditions for burn pits and other toxic exposures
- Added more presumptive exposure locations for Agent Orange and radiation

What is toxic exposure?

The term “toxic exposure” refers to a type of Military Environmental Exposure. Examples include:

- **Chemicals:** Herbicides (Agent Orange) used during the Vietnam era, burn pits, sulfur fire in Iraq, Camp Lejeune water supplies, pesticides used during Gulf War, and certain industrial solvents
- **Air Pollutants:** Burn pits, oil well fire during Gulf War, sulfur fire in Iraq, Atsugi (Japan) waste incinerator, sand, dust, and very small, fine particles or liquid droplets
- **Occupational Hazards:** Asbestos, industrial solvents, lead, radiation, vibration, noise, fuels, polychlorinated biphenyl (PCBs), and special paint used on military vehicles
- **Radiation:** Nuclear weapons, x-rays, and depleted uranium
- **Warfare Agents:** Chemical weapons, Project 112/Project Shipboard Hazard and Defense (SHAD), and herbicide tests

What does a presumptive condition for toxic exposure mean?

VA disability ratings require your disability to be connected to military service. For some conditions, you may have to prove the connection to your service. But for other conditions, VA assumes your service caused your condition. These are called “presumptive conditions.” To see a complete list of the new presumptive conditions and presumptive exposure service locations, visit www.va.gov/PACT.

If you haven’t filed a claim yet, learn about your options to file online, in person, by mail, or with help at www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim. If your disability claim was denied in the past and VA now considers your condition presumptive, you can submit a Supplemental Claim at www.va.gov/decision-reviews/supplemental-claim.

Spread the Word

The PACT Act also expands VA health care eligibility for many more Veterans. You can help spread the word about expanded eligibility to enroll in VA health care for your Veteran friends who have not previously enrolled. Here are the key details you need to know to help fellow Veterans get the care they earned and deserve:

Vietnam era Veterans: Veterans who served in the following locations and time periods are eligible to apply for enrollment now:

- Republic of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975
- Thailand at any U.S. or Royal Thai base between January 9, 1962, and June 30, 1976
- Laos between December 1, 1965, and September 30, 1969
- Certain provinces in Cambodia between April 16, 1969, and April 30, 1969
- Guam or American Samoa (or their territorial waters) between January 9, 1962, and July 30, 1980
- Johnston Atoll (or a ship that called there) between January 1, 1972, and September 30, 1977

Gulf War era Veterans: Beginning October 1, 2022, Veterans who served on active duty in a theater of combat operations after the Persian Gulf War may be eligible to enroll in VA health care. This also includes Veterans who, in connection with service during such period, received Expeditionary Medals or other recognitions. These awards include Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal, Service Specific Expeditionary Medal, Combat Era Specific Expeditionary Medal, and Campaign Specific Expeditionary Medal.

Post-9/11 Veterans: Veterans discharged before October 1, 2013, can enroll in VA health care during a special 1-year enrollment period between October 1, 2022, and October 1, 2023. To be eligible:

- They served on active duty in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Persian Gulf War, **or**
- They served in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities after November 11, 1998.

How to talk to your friends about VA health care

If you have eligible Veteran friends who aren't currently enrolled, they may be hesitant to apply. Consider sharing your own experience to help demystify the process. Remind them that they earned the right to this care through their service. Point them in the direction of resources to help, like visiting their nearest VA medical center or clinic.

VA health care for any illness or injury determined to be related to your military service (called "service connected") is free. The PACT Act added more than 20 presumptive conditions, expanding benefits to Vietnam era, Gulf War era, and Post-9/11 Veterans.

Tell your friends to apply for VA health care online at **www.va.gov/health-care/apply/applicationintroduction**, or call the toll-free hotline: 877-222-8387, or in person at their nearest VA medical center or clinic. Learn more about the PACT Act at **www.va.gov/PACT**. Follow the Veterans Health Administration on Facebook and Twitter for real-time updates.

PACT ACT SPECIAL HEALTH CARE ENROLLMENT PERIOD

October 1, 2022 – October 1, 2023

Did you serve in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Persian Gulf War?

–OR–

Did you serve in combat against hostile forces after November 11, 1998?

–AND–

Were you discharged or released between 09/11/2001 and 10/01/2013?

It's free, no annual costs, and your health care may be free as well!

OCTOBER 2022

1

VA U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs



Watch the Video!

View the video, "The PACT Act & Your Care"
visn8.va.gov/visn8/news/publications.asp

Use VA Health Chat



Connect quickly and easily for virtual urgent care

Did you know you can quickly connect to the VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center via secure chat? Well, you can! The VA Health Chat App allows Veterans to connect quickly and easily for virtual urgent care. This tool opens new doors to receive care and answers to health questions. This is especially helpful when a Veteran may have issues using voice communications or prefers to text.

This free app is available to all Veterans who receive care in the VISN 8 service area. This includes most of Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Chat services are available Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Veterans can also connect to the center using the 24/7/365 telephone line by calling 1-877-741-3400. Learn more about the VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center by visiting www.vsn8.va.gov/ccp.asp.

Let us know what you think. Please complete the survey at the end of chat encounters. The feedback will help us determine if VA Health Chat availability should be expanded and enhanced.



Connect to Care in 60 Seconds

There are times when it is hard to tell whether you need to be seen by a doctor or not. With VA Health Chat, you can quickly connect to a VA health care team member for medical advice and care. They can help determine if you need an in-person appointment, identify next steps with medication issues, and more. With VA Health Chat, you can cancel an existing appointment or schedule a Primary Care appointment.

Fits Your Schedule

Health care can be complex. VA Health Chat makes it simpler by giving Veterans access to care without having to step foot in a facility. VA Health Chat also allows Veterans to order prescriptions and manage appointments from the comfort of their own home, or wherever they may be that is convenient for them.

Secure Messaging

To chat with a VA health care team member, you will need VA credentials if you don't already have a My HealtheVet premium account User ID and password, DS Logon (premium), or ID.me. To use secure messaging, you will need internet access. VA Health Chat is available at no cost through internet browsers, on the VA App Store, and on the VA Launchpad app. It is also available for download on the Apple App Store and the Google Play Store.



Download the VA Health Chat app today!
Visit www.mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-chat.

Word Scramble

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

DIVOC RSOOBET _____
BLEEIIGL _____
SAXEDNP _____
LUF HOTS _____
LAHHTA TAHC APA _____
TPCA CTA _____
TIVPSMUREEP SODITINOCN _____
ICOXT _____
GERUNT RACE _____
CATACNIVONI _____

Pomegranate Poached Pears

INGREDIENTS

- 4 ripe firm pears (Bosc pears work best, but can also use Bartlett or Anjou)
- 2 cups (16 ounces) 100% pomegranate juice (or cranberry or apple juice)
- 1 cinnamon stick (or 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon)
- 1 cup (8 ounces) nonfat plain or vanilla Greek yogurt
- 4 tablespoons sliced almonds, toasted

Nutritional information:

(8 servings). Per serving: 150 calories, 1 g total fat, 0 g saturated fat, 45 g carbohydrates, 1 g dietary fiber, 2 g protein, and 15 mg sodium.

DIRECTIONS

1. Peel the pears and cut them in half lengthwise. Remove the cores with a spoon.
2. Place the pears flat-side-down in a large saucepan. Pour the pomegranate juice over the pears and add the cinnamon stick.
3. Bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Cover the pan with a lid and reduce the heat to low. Simmer gently until the pears are tender when pierced with a fork, about 25-30 minutes. Turn them over gently once or twice while they cook. Transfer the pears to a serving dish.
4. To toast the almonds, cook them in a dry skillet for about 3-5 minutes (until they are lightly browned) over medium heat.
5. Serve each pear half topped with 2 tablespoons of yogurt and 1/2 tablespoon of toasted almonds.



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



2023 Calendars Are Here!

Pick up your Healthy Living Calendar during your next visit.

VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

www.visn8.va.gov



at all Medical Centers

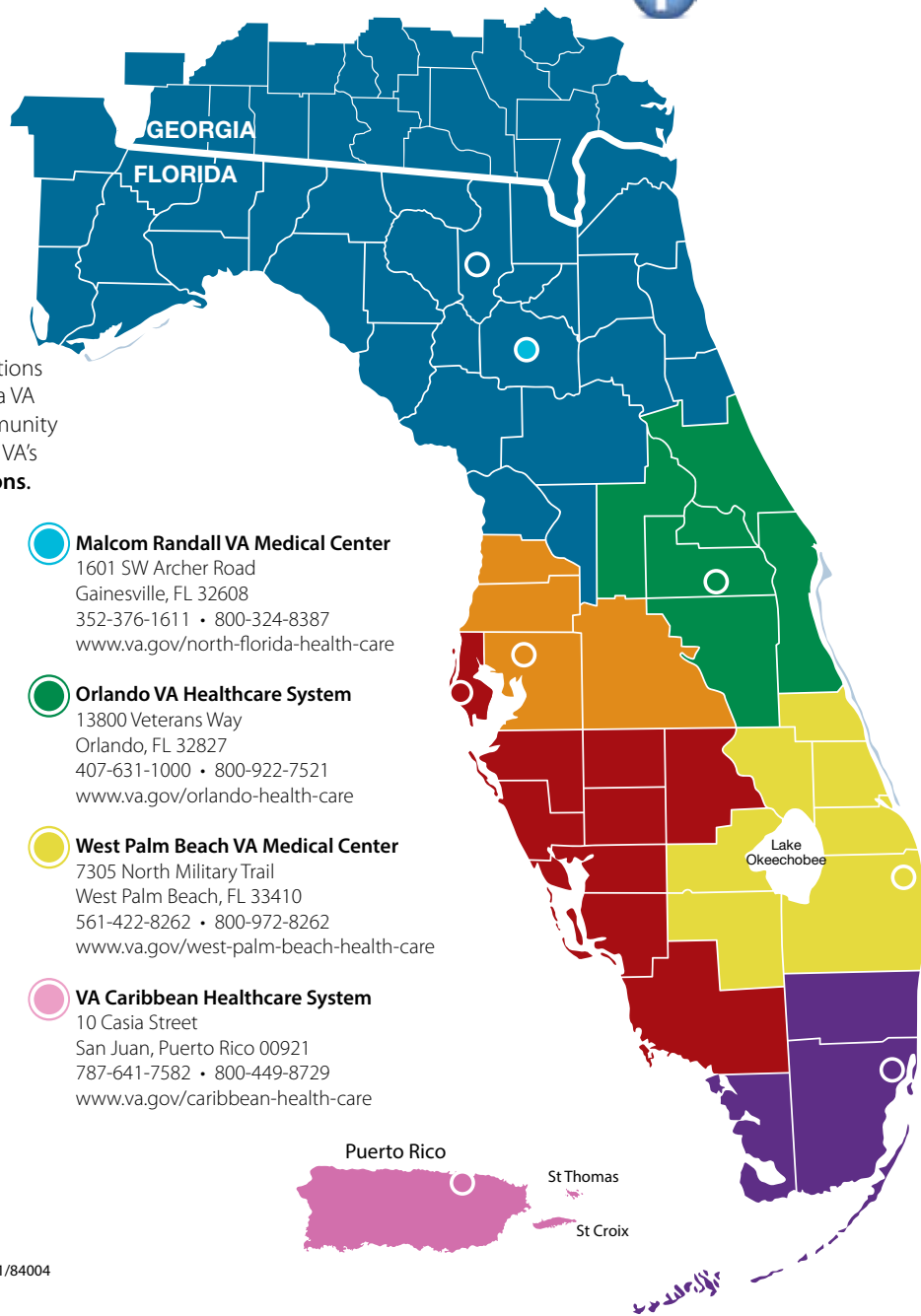


The Right Care, Right Now

1-877-741-3400

24/7/365 Virtual Urgent Care

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.



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



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



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



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



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



Orlando VA Healthcare System
13800 Veterans Way
Orlando, FL 32827
407-631-1000 • 800-922-7521
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



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