

TAKE THIS ISSUE HOME!

# VETERANS Health MATTERS

FALL 2023

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



Get Recommended  
Screenings & Tests

Emergency Suicidal  
Crisis Care

Head Outdoors for  
Physical Activity



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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



Prevention of Veteran suicide is our top clinical priority. To help address suicide prevention, Veterans in suicidal crisis can go to any health care facility, at VA or in the community, for free emergency health care. Veterans don't have to be enrolled in VA care, but some eligibility criteria apply. Learn more about this potentially life-saving emergency care on page three.

Getting recommended health screenings and tests helps catch and treat serious health problems before symptoms appear. Read about screenings and tests that may be recommended for you on pages four and five, with a spotlight on colorectal cancer screening.

If you are looking for more ways to be active outdoors, check out some ideas that may be a good fit for you on page six. While you are there, learn about free passes for Veterans at our beautiful national parks.

Finally, on page seven, challenge your brain with a word puzzle and try out the fall-inspired smoothie recipe.

Be well and stay safe!

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

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## Prefer to text vs. call? VA Health Chat is Available!

Veterans enrolled for VA health care in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands may contact the VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center by using the VA Health Chat App. This app is available for Android and iOS devices. It provides easy, online access to chat with VA staff when you have health concerns and other questions. You can learn more about VA Health Chat at **[www.mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-chat](http://www.mobile.va.gov/app/va-health-chat)**.

Veterans can access the center using VA Health Chat between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Eastern, Monday through Friday, except on Federal holidays. The VISN 8 Clinical Contact Center is a 24/7/365 urgent care service, which can also be reached anytime by calling toll-free 1-877-741-3400. Learn more at **[www.visn8.va.gov/ccp.asp](http://www.visn8.va.gov/ccp.asp)**.



# Emergency Suicidal Crisis Care

Veterans in suicidal crisis can go to any VA or community health care facility for free emergency health care.

This includes inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days and crisis-related outpatient care for up to 90 days, including ambulance transportation and related prescriptions.

During a medical or mental health emergency, you should seek care immediately at the nearest emergency department. Let staff know you are a Veteran. If you believe your life or health is in danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

Emergencies are never planned, so make sure you and your family members know where to go before you need help. You can find your nearest community emergency room or urgent care facility by visiting the VA Facility Locator at [www.va.gov/find-locations](http://www.va.gov/find-locations).



## Eligibility

You are eligible to receive free suicidal crisis care if you were discharged from the military under a condition that is not dishonorable or the result of a general court martial and served prior to September 7, 1980. If you enlisted or were commissioned after September 7, 1980, or entered active duty after October 16, 1981:

- You were discharged for a disability that was caused, or made worse, as a result of your active-duty service.
- You were discharged for a hardship or “early out.”

If you were discharged under other than honorable conditions, you are eligible if:

- You served 100 cumulative days in a combat zone or in support of a contingency operation, either directly or by operating an unmanned aerial vehicle from another location.
- You were the victim of a physical assault of a sexual nature, a battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment while you were serving in the armed forces.



## What to Do if You Receive a Bill for Your Care

If Veterans receive a bill after receiving care during or after a suicidal crisis, call or visit your local VA medical center’s patient advocate to start the review process.

- If you received your crisis care at a VA medical center, you can also call the number on the bill to begin the review process.
- If you received your crisis care at a non-VA facility, provide to your local VA medical facility patient advocate a signed VA Form 10-583 (Claim for Payment of Cost of Unauthorized Medical Services), a billing statement from the provider showing a diagnosis code, and a receipt of any payment you made.

# Get Recommended Screenings & Tests

*Catch and deal with health problems early*

Health screenings are medical tests that look for diseases and health problems before you have any symptoms. Finding problems early often means they are easier to treat or manage with lifestyle changes and/or medications. A health screening may be a blood test, a physical exam, a visual test using technology, and/or a list of questions your provider asks you. These tests are an important part of your preventive health care.

Some health screenings are recommended for all adults, regardless of your age, gender, health, and family history. These include screening for depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and tobacco use. Other recommended screenings may change as you age and will depend on your personal risk factors, family history, and your preferences. If you already have a symptom of the condition, you should always talk to your provider about it.

Screening Test or Exam	Recommendation	Date Done
High cholesterol	Talk with your provider.	
Colon cancer screening	Age 45–75: Frequency depends on test. Age 76–85: Talk with your provider.	
Depression	Every year	
High blood pressure	Every year	
HIV infection	At least once; annually with ongoing risk factors and all pregnant Veterans	
Overweight & obesity	Every year	
Tobacco use	Every visit	

FOR MEN	Recommendation	Date Done
Abdominal aortic aneurysm	Age 65–75: Talk with your provider.	
Prostate cancer	Age 55–69: Talk with your provider.	
Syphilis & other STIs	Talk with your provider.	

FOR WOMEN	Recommendation	Date Done
Breast cancer	Age 40–44: May begin annual screening Age 45–54: Every year Age 55–74: Every 1–2 years Age 75 & older: Talk with your provider.	
Cervical cancer	Age 21–29: Every 3 years Age 30–65: Every 3–5 years depending on test chosen	
Gonorrhea, Chlamydia & Syphilis	Talk with your provider. Screening for syphilis is recommended for all pregnant Veterans.	
Osteoporosis	Age 18–64: Recommended for some Age 65 & older: Recommended once	

Talk with your health care team about screenings for Hepatitis B and C, PTSD, lung cancer, military sexual trauma, and diabetes. Visit [www.prevention.va.gov](http://www.prevention.va.gov) for the full recommended list.



## Discuss with Your Provider

Talk with your provider about which health screenings are recommended for you:

- Ask about the risks and benefits of the test being considered. All screening tests have potential risks, such as bleeding or infection. Others can give the wrong result. Your provider can help you decide if the benefits outweigh the risks for you.
- Ask how long it will take to get the test results. Make sure you get the results of every screening test.
- Discuss the results with your provider and what the recommended next steps are for your care.



Learn more about VA's recommended health screenings at [www.prevention.va.gov](http://www.prevention.va.gov).



### Watch the Video!

Check out the video, "Health Screenings: Catching and Dealing With Health Problems Early" at [visn8.va.gov/visn8/news/publications.asp](http://visn8.va.gov/visn8/news/publications.asp).



## Spotlight: Screening for Colon Cancer



Colon or colorectal cancer almost always develops from precancerous polyps (abnormal growths) in the colon or rectum. Some screening tests can detect these polyps, so they can be removed before they turn into cancer.

These tests also find colon cancer early and before it spreads, which makes treatment more effective. Plus, this type of cancer rarely causes symptoms in the early stages, so screening for colon cancer is important.

One type of screening test for colon cancer is the fecal immunochemical test (FIT). You can get this test from your provider. This test checks for blood in the stool that you cannot see. You can do this test in the privacy of your home and return the stool sample in the mail. Another similar test you can do at home is the fecal occult blood test.

Visual tests, like a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy, use a long, flexible lighted tube that is gently inserted into the rectum. Polyps can be removed at the same time and tissue samples are sent to a lab for testing. Talk with your provider about the right colon cancer screening test for you.

# Head Outdoors for Physical Activity

Being physically active and moving your body in the great outdoors is good for your mind and your body.

Getting regular physical activity – anywhere – improves your physical and emotional health. And when you spend time being active in outdoor spaces, it can improve your mental health even more.

Studies show spending time outdoors can boost your mood and reduce stress and depression, especially if you are in natural areas, like parks, nature trails, beaches, or gardens. Plus, there are often ways you can connect with others doing the same activities. And many people find it is more fun doing activities outdoors instead of exercising indoors at home or at the gym.



## Looking for a New Outdoor Activity?

Here are some outdoor activities that many people enjoy:

- Walking or hiking in a park or on a trail
- Bird-watching
- Jogging in your neighborhood park
- Swimming at an outdoor pool or beach
- Cycling on your own or with a group
- Gardening in your backyard, porch, or a community garden
- Fishing off a dock, bridge, or boat
- Playing golf with friends
- Rollerblading on a multi-use trail
- Practicing tai chi in a park or field
- Paddling a kayak, canoe, or paddleboard
- Joining a disc golf club
- Playing pickleball on an outdoor court
- Playing basketball with your buddies on an outdoor court
- Doing yoga on the beach at sunrise



## Visit National Parks For Free

A free lifetime pass is available for military Veterans when entering national parks, national wildlife refuges, and national forests. The full name of the pass is the America The Beautiful - The National Parks and Federal Recreational Lands Veterans Lifetime Pass. This pass covers entrance fees. Any fees for things like camping, tours, making reservations, or concession facilities are not covered with this free pass.

The National Park Service is committed to making its facilities, programs, and services accessible for visitors of all abilities to enjoy. For more information on how to get your free Interagency Military-Lifetime Pass visit <https://store.usgs.gov/MilitaryPass>.

# Word Scramble

Unscramble these words that appear in this issue of *Veterans Health Matters*.

NOCOL NACREC \_\_\_\_\_

GEMERYNCE REAC \_\_\_\_\_

HHLAET THAC \_\_\_\_\_

LANNIOTA SPRAK \_\_\_\_\_

STOORDOU \_\_\_\_\_

YASPCHLI VIIAYCTT \_\_\_\_\_

GECNESISRN \_\_\_\_\_

IDISEUC VONPETIREN \_\_\_\_\_

## Berry-Beet Smoothie

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium beet, cut into 1/2-inch-thick wedges (about 1 cup). Option: Buy cooked beets in the grocery produce section.
- 1-1/2 cups low-fat (1%) milk (or other unsweetened, non-dairy milk)
- 2 cups frozen strawberries
- 1 tablespoon sweetener (e.g., honey, agave, sugar)
- Pinch of salt

### DIRECTIONS

- Place a steamer basket inside a large saucepan or stockpot and add just enough water to fill the area under the steamer. Bring the water to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to medium-high to maintain a rapid simmer (just below boiling).
- Add the beet wedges and cover the pot with a lid. Cook until the beets are tender, about 15 minutes.
- Remove the steamer basket from the pot and set aside to cool for 5 minutes. Peel off the outer of the beet with a knife.
- Pour the milk into a blender. Add the berries, sweetener, salt, and steamed beet. Blend about 2-3 minutes or until smooth. Serve immediately.



**Nutritional information:**  
(2 servings). Per serving:  
175 calories, 2 g total fat,  
1 g saturated fat, 35 g  
carbohydrates, 4 g fiber, 7 g  
protein, and 190 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).

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

(Please print)

First Name  Middle Initial

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.  
 Tampa, FL 33612

**You don't have to go through a crisis alone.**

Dial 988 then Press 1 to reach the Veterans Crisis Line day or night.

# VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

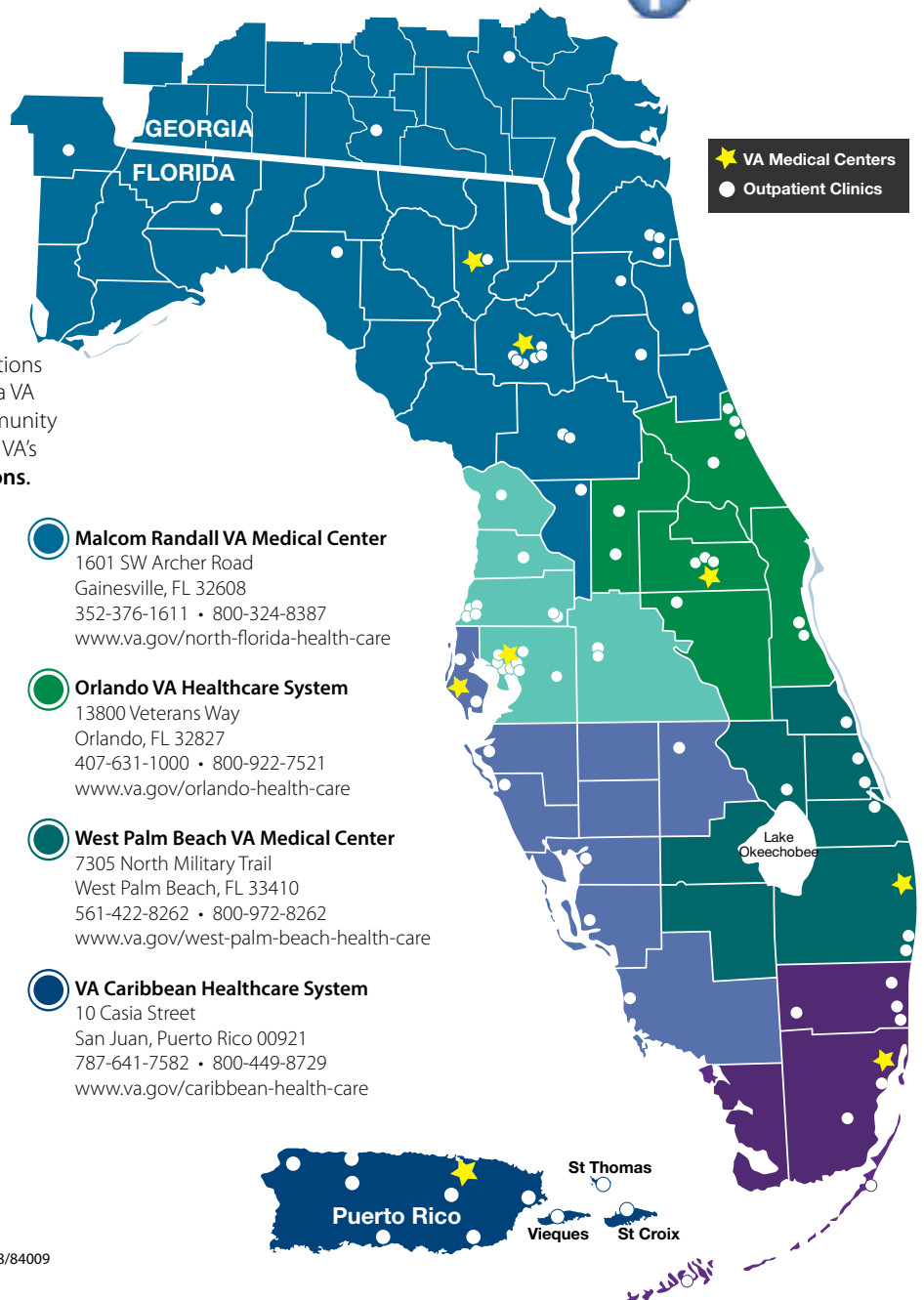
[www.visn8.va.gov](http://www.visn8.va.gov)

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](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)