

TAKE THIS ISSUE HOME!

VA



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

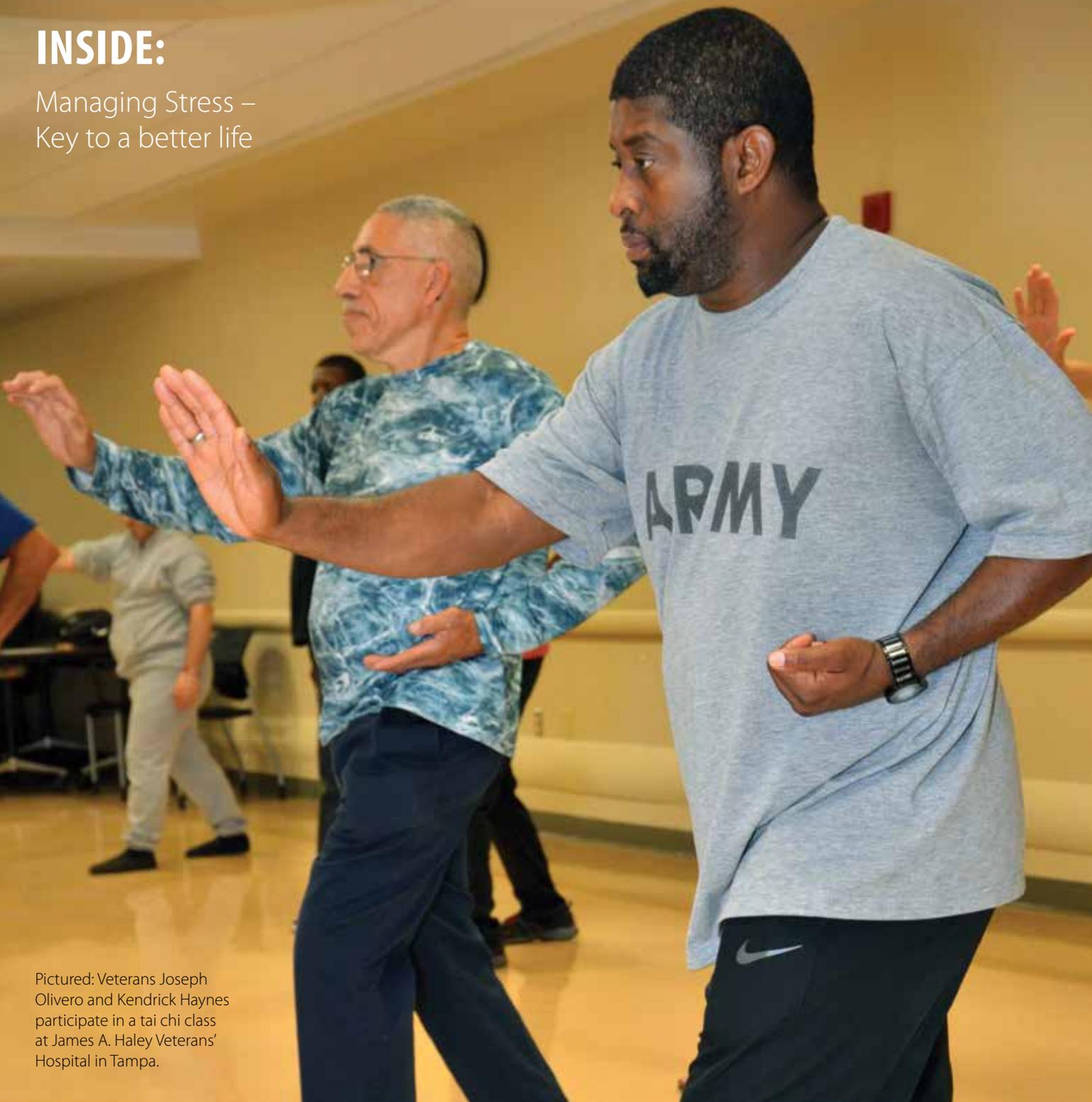
FALL 2019

VETERANS Health MATTERS

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

INSIDE:

Managing Stress –
Key to a better life



Pictured: Veterans Joseph Olivero and Kendrick Haynes participate in a tai chi class at James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa.

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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 or write to:

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To Our Readers



Many of us would probably benefit from managing stress better. Without a doubt, chronic stress takes a toll on our health, both mentally and physically. That's why VA's Whole Health approach offers Veterans many kinds of stress management options. Learn on pages 4 and 5 how one Veteran got his stress under control and lowered his risk for many health problems.

Are you one of 30% of Americans who don't get enough sleep? More research is showing the significant health benefits of quality sleep, including managing stress better. Check out some ways to help get a good night's sleep on page 3. You'll also find information about Path to Better Sleep®, VA's new online sleep program for Veterans.

Along with having more sleep problems, drinking too much alcohol can lead to a whole host of major health problems. If you choose to drink alcohol, read on page 6 about recommended daily limits for alcohol intake to help keep your health risks low.

Finally, we have a fun word puzzle on page 7, followed by a heart-healthy pizza recipe with a veggie crust that may surprise you.

Be well!

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

Great American Smokeout is November 21!

Quitting tobacco is the single most important thing you can do to improve your health and protect your family's health. If you quit smoking or using other forms of tobacco, you and your family will experience short and long-term health benefits. It's never too late to quit! Your health will improve at any age after quitting tobacco.

Make the Great American Smokeout event your day to start your journey toward a tobacco-free life. You'll be joining thousands of Veterans across the country in taking a major step toward a healthier life, and reducing your cancer risk.



The VA can help you get the resources and support you need to quit. Talk to your health care team today or visit **www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco**.

Sleep Solutions

Are you one of the 30% of Americans who don't get enough sleep? If you don't get seven to nine hours of mostly uninterrupted sleep every day, you are missing out on important health benefits. Quality sleep plays a vital role in refreshing your mind and your body daily. This improves immune system function, enhances memory, and reduces your risk of developing several chronic diseases, including heart disease and depression.

Path to Better Sleep®

VA's new sleep program may help if you are having problems getting to sleep and staying asleep. This free, online program can help you set a sleep schedule, modify sleep behaviors, and reduce unhelpful thoughts that can keep you from getting a good night's sleep. For more information visit www.veterantraining.va.gov/insomnia/index.asp.

If you continue to have long-term sleep problems, talk to your VA provider about finding sleep solutions that work best for you.



Avoid caffeine in coffee, tea, soda, and other caffeinated beverages after 12 p.m.

Avoid alcohol which makes getting to sleep easier, but also triggers waking up during the night.

Get out of bed and go to another room if you can't fall asleep within 20 minutes. Do activities, such as light stretching, or meditating before trying to fall asleep again.

6 Tips for Better Sleep

Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on weekends.

Avoid napping, or limit naps to 20 minutes.

Wind down one hour before bedtime. Turn off screens, dim the lights, lower the temperature, and do something relaxing to get sleepy.

Managing Stress

Key to a better life



“The first class I took here, I was so relaxed that I went home and slept for five hours, and that’s the first time I did that in five years.”

By Ed Drohan
James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital Public Affairs

STRESS CAN BE A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD.

On one hand, a certain amount of stress is a good thing because it helps people perform at their highest level. Think of somebody preparing for an important test in school. But, when you go beyond that healthy level, stress can quickly become “distress” and can lead to both mental and physical issues.

According to James A. Haley Veterans’ Hospital Whole Health Chief Dr. Jacquelyn Paykel, chronic (long-term) stress can affect many body systems, including the brain. “When you have chronic stress, you can develop high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and migraines,” Paykel said. “Chronic stress can have an impact on the brain itself. We know there can be a loss of brain matter in response to chronic stress.”

Paykel said that stress is a change in your system that responds to something that impacts you from the outside or the inside of the body. Your thoughts, or how you perceive a situation, can trigger your stress response. When people think of stress, they are usually referring to distress. This is a form of unhealthy stress because a situation is too much for their personal or social resources to handle. As a result, a person is unable to respond how they would like to in that negative situation. That’s where VA’s stress reduction programs can assist.

Whole Health can help

VA's Whole Health system uses a holistic approach to help Veterans manage stress.



"We have psychologists who assist with mindfulness and stress reduction," Paykel explained. "Social workers and health coaches also support our stress management programs," Paykel added. "But it's not just the providers or health care professionals assisting the Veteran. It's everybody working together and really understanding what makes us feel better."

Paykel went on to explain that two of the best methods for reducing stress are exercise and meditation. Programs offered through VA that can help Veterans manage stress better include yoga, tai chi, and qigong.

Many people may think these breathing and deliberate movement practices help someone get their mind in a better place. But there's also a medical explanation for how they help relieve stress.

The body's autonomic nervous system has two parts, which act mostly unconsciously to control body functions, such as heart rate and digestion. One is the sympathetic and the other is the parasympathetic nervous system.

Paykel said you can think of these two parts as the body's gas pedal and brake pedal, respectively. When the parasympathetic system gets stimulated, a person becomes calmer. The breathing exercises and motions found in yoga and tai chi stimulate the parasympathetic system to produce more calm and less stress.



Pictured: Veterans bow with Instructor Jeffrey Belton at the beginning of a combined qigong and tai chi class at James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa.

One Veteran's story

For one Veteran, activating the parasympathetic nervous system by doing tai chi paid big dividends in his life. "I had a stroke five years ago and lost the ability to sleep," said Veteran Jimmie Williams. "I would go two or three days without sleeping, and on the third day I'd get two or three hours of sleep."



Several months ago, Williams began attending tai chi, yoga, and qigong classes (another exercise with coordinated body movements, breathing, and meditation). He said the positive results were almost immediate. "The first class I took here, I was so relaxed that I went home and slept for five hours, and that's the first time I did that in five years," Williams said.

"I also have spinal stenosis – four rods, five plates and 10 screws in my back. When I came to this class, I was on a cane and had an AFO, which is a leg brace. Now I'm AFO free, I'm cane free, and I can actually sleep on a regular basis."



If you need help managing stress in your life, talk with your VA health care provider to see if some of these Whole Health stress management programs are right for you.



Watch the Video!

To see a video version of Managing Stress – Key to a better life, visit www.visn8.va.gov/VISN8/news/publications.asp.

Limit Alcohol Guidelines

Most adults who drink alcohol in moderation don't have serious side effects. But drinking too much alcohol and "binge drinking" can lead to a much higher risk for major health problems, including liver damage, heart disease, and injuries from car crashes.

If you choose to drink alcohol, follow these recommended limits to help keep your health risks low:



	If you drink alcohol*	Binge drinking is:
Men	Limit to 2 drinks a day	More than 4 drinks on one occasion
Women (and 64+)	Limit to 1 drink a day	More than 3 drinks on one occasion

*Limit alcohol guidelines are from www.prevention.va.gov.

What counts as 1 drink?



12 ounces beer
About 5% alcohol

OR



5 ounces wine
About 12% alcohol

OR



1 ½ ounces hard liquor
About 40% alcohol

Do you have alcohol concerns?

If you are worried about how much you drink, talk to your VA health care team about getting help. Effective treatments are available, including individual counseling, group treatments, medications to reduce cravings or prevent relapse, and more. Remember, it's a sign of strength to ask for help.

Word Search

Find these words from the stories in this issue:

ALCOHOL	B	M	O	D	E	R	A	T	I	O	N
BEDTIME	B	E	D	T	I	M	E	U	C	F	L
CAFFEINE	A	D	N	P	O	S	R	O	P	Q	U
EXERCISE	F	I	H	J	M	P	E	E	L	S	E
MEDITATION	L	T	A	I	C	H	I	K	R	V	X
MODERATION	W	A	C	F	G	K	B	O	J	O	E
SLEEP	S	T	R	E	S	S	R	M	W	Y	R
SMOKEOUT	D	I	F	L	Q	T	Z	S	P	H	C
STRESS	L	O	H	O	C	L	A	M	D	J	I
TAI CHI	E	N	N	S	B	G	K	A	F	V	S
	I	U	P	C	A	F	F	E	I	N	E

Recipe provided by the Miami VA Healthcare System

Cauliflower Flatbread Pizza

Watch how to make this pizza on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/Lb9rDCUSQVA>

Ingredients

- 1 chopped cauliflower head
- 1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 large egg whites
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/8 teaspoon salt & pepper
- 1/2 cup low-sodium marinara sauce
- 1/2 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese

These toppings can vary:

- 1 cup fresh baby spinach
- 1/2 cup sliced cherry tomatoes



Directions

1. Place cauliflower in a food processor and pulse until finely chopped. Put in a microwave-safe dish and cook for 6 minutes, remove, and let cool. Place in a clean kitchen towel and squeeze until very dry.
2. In a bowl, mix cauliflower, cheese, egg whites, garlic, salt, and pepper. Press mixture flat onto a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper. Spray with cooking spray and bake for 15 minutes at 375 degrees. Remove from oven and top with rest of ingredients. Bake for 5-8 minutes at 375 degrees.

Nutritional information: Serves 2. Per serving: 229 calories, 8 g total fat, 4 g saturated fat, 25 g carbohydrates, 9 g dietary fiber, 20 g protein, and 543 mg sodium.

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2020 Calendar Coming Soon!

The Healthy Living Calendar will soon be available at VA hospitals and clinics in the VA Sunshine Healthcare Network. Take one home during your next visit.

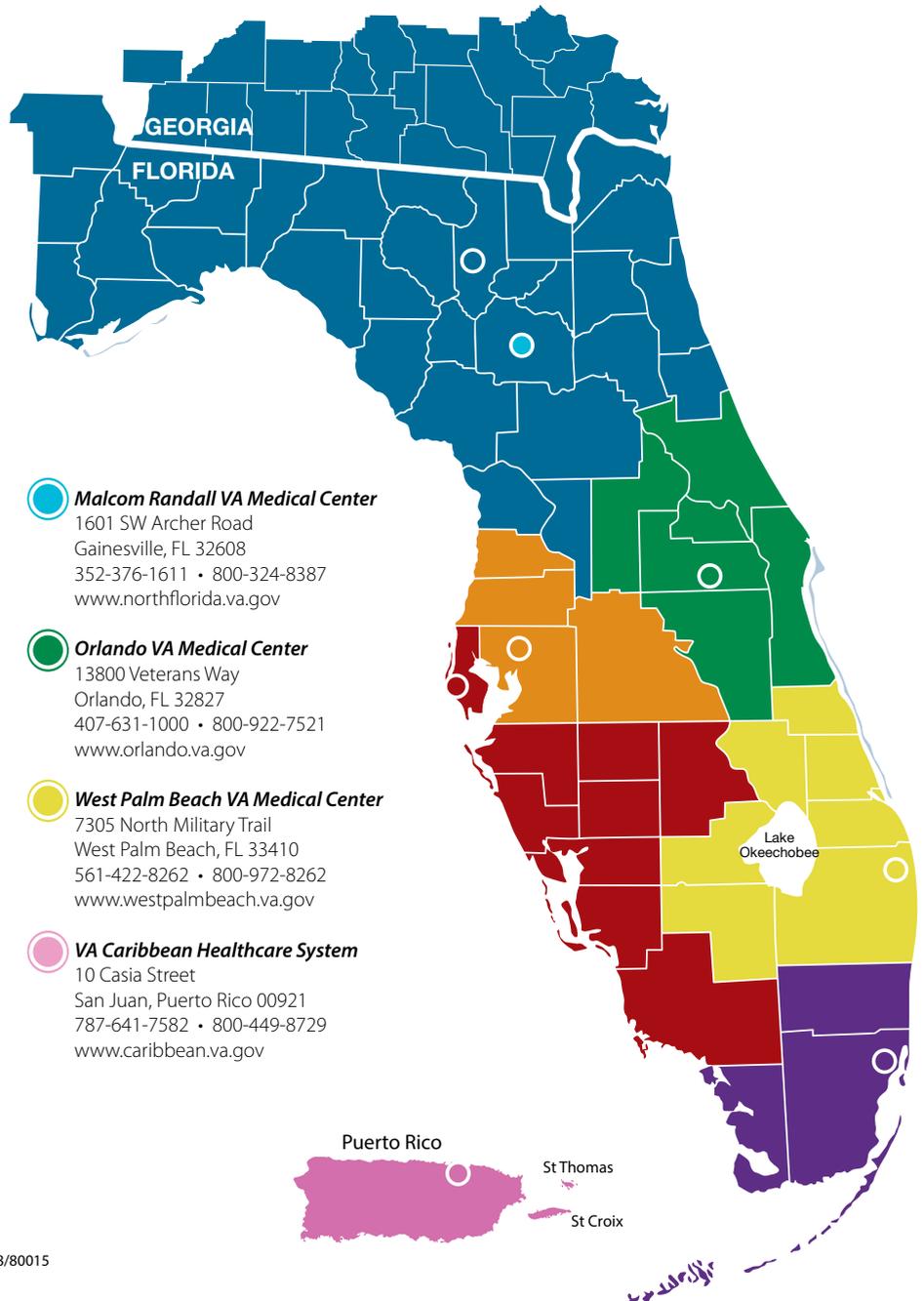
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