

# Veterans' Health

FALL • 2012

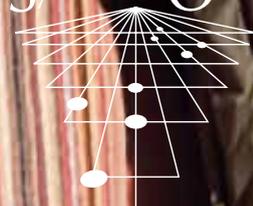
THE WELLNESS MAGAZINE  
FOR OHIO VETERANS

Do you know your  
cholesterol numbers?

How to reach a  
healthy weight

Keep stress at bay

VA Healthcare  
System of Ohio



## To our readers

Full is here! As you look at the leaves changing colors, it's also a great time to look at what you're doing to improve your health. This issue of *Veterans' Health* focuses on a healthier lifestyle for our Veterans and their families.



Pages 4 and 5 offer help on how you can reach a healthy weight by eating right and adding exercise to your daily routine. A healthier weight and lifestyle will also help control your cholesterol. See the article on page 3 to learn more about cholesterol and triglycerides.

Everyone deals with some degree of stress in his or her life. On page 6, we give you tips to help manage that stress.

If you think you may have a service-connected disability, read about the procedure for filing a claim on page 7. You may be eligible for compensation and free health care.

Wishing you a healthy and happy fall!



— Jack Hetrick, Network Director

*Veterans' Health* is published quarterly as a patient education service by VA Healthcare System of Ohio, one of the 21 integrated networks of the Department of Veterans Affairs. The publication is intended to provide information to help you stay well, manage your health care and learn about the many health services available through VA. This publication is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, which should be obtained from your doctor. All articles may be reproduced for educational purposes.

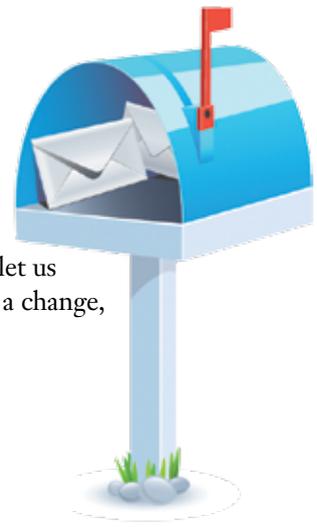
The Mission of VA Healthcare System of Ohio is:

- To provide Veterans a continuum of care that is accessible, value-added and cost-effective, and of the highest quality, within an environment of outstanding education and research.
- To promote a culture that supports and develops a caring, compassionate, competent and quality-oriented workforce.

## About our mailing list

We make every effort to ensure our mailing list is accurate. If you have questions or would like to be added to or deleted from the list, let us know. Please include your entire address. To make a change, you *must* mail the mailing panel to:

*Veterans' Health*  
VA Healthcare System of Ohio Network Office  
11500 Northlake Drive  
Suite 200  
Cincinnati, OH 45249



## Ohio Veterans

Your military service may be worth more than you think. Most discharged Veterans have earned benefits!

### Your benefits could include:

- health care
- help with your education
- a loan for a new home
- a special Ohio Veterans Bonus if you served in the Persian Gulf War or after Oct. 7, 2001
- eligibility to live in an Ohio Veterans Home (for disabled wartime Veterans)

There are a number of other benefits. You could even be qualified for direct financial aid. We want to connect you to your benefits.

**Where do you get started?** The place is at your local county Veterans service office (CVSO). Each CVSO has trained counselors. They can explain your benefits and guide you through the application process. Veterans who get help receive about 40 percent more than those who try to apply on their own.

**Get started right away.** Contact the County Veterans Service Network at **1-877-OHIO VET (1-877-644-6838)** or find your county on the map at **dvs.ohio.gov**.

## *Veterans' Health* Editorial Directors

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## Cholesterol: Do you know your numbers?

**U**nderstanding your cholesterol and triglyceride levels can help you prevent heart disease and stroke. Cholesterol, a fatlike substance in the blood, is made up of HDL (“good”) and LDL (“bad”) cholesterol.

**Total cholesterol:** A high serum cholesterol level is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. To decrease your total cholesterol, limit how much saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol you consume. Lose weight, if you’re not at a healthy weight. Get active. Quit smoking. Avoid secondhand smoke.

**High-density lipoprotein (HDL):** Often called the “good” cholesterol because HDL has heart protective effects. To increase your HDL level, don’t smoke, exercise more, lose excess weight and eat foods high in omega-3 fatty acids. Some sources of omega-3 fatty acids are salmon, herring, mackerel, trout, sardines, flaxseed, walnuts and canola oil.

**Low-density lipoprotein (LDL):** Often called the “bad” cholesterol. Over time, too much LDL in the bloodstream can lead to a narrowing or blockage of blood vessels. To help

lower your LDL, limit the amount and type of fat you eat. And, increase fiber intake, including soluble fiber. Ask your VA dietitian for more information.

**Triglycerides:** Another type of fat in the blood. Higher triglyceride values increase your risk for heart disease. Uncontrolled high blood sugar can raise triglycerides. To control your triglyceride level, lower fat, sugar and alcohol consumption; eat more fiber; control your blood sugar level; eat foods high in omega-3 fatty acids; be more active; and achieve a healthy weight.

### Help for eating healthy

**T**he American Heart Association can help with your health goals, healthy cooking, shopping tips, dining-out choices and recipes. Visit [www.heart.org/HEARTORG](http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG) and click on “Getting Healthy” and “Nutrition Center.”

To learn more about the benefits of adding more fruits and vegetables to your diet, check out [www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov).

### Coming soon— New check-in kiosks!



**T**o better serve you, VISN 10 hospitals and CBOCs will soon have self-service kiosks for your appointment check-in. This will streamline the process and make it easier for you. You’ll also be able to make changes at the kiosks, such as your contact information. Look for more details in the next issue of *Veterans’ Health*.

### It’s that time of the year!

**G**et your flu shot and your 2013 prevention calendar at your local VA. Everyone 6 months of age and older should get a flu shot each year. Types of flu viruses change from year to year. The vaccine changes each year to protect against the strains of flu expected.



# Strive for a healthy weight



**I**t seems like everywhere you look there's advice on losing weight. Nevertheless, we rarely hear about the health benefits of being at a healthy weight. Looking better can be one motivation for dropping pounds, but it's certainly not the only reason to aim for a healthy weight. Being overweight can increase your risk of coronary heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some types of cancer, as well as several other health issues. Other risk factors such as high blood pressure, high LDL "bad" cholesterol and physical inactivity can put you at even greater risk for obesity-related diseases and conditions. The good news is that even small amounts of weight loss can greatly improve your overall health.

## What's a healthy weight?

One tool often used in screening for obesity is

body mass index (BMI), which is calculated using your height and weight. This measure provides a good estimate of body fat for most people. A healthy BMI ranges from 18.5 to 24.9. You can find out your BMI using a BMI chart or ask your health care team.

## What's your BMI?

**R**isk for health problems increases as your body mass index (BMI) goes up. If your weight isn't in the healthy range, moving toward a healthier weight can reduce your risk.

BMI less than 18.5 = underweight range

BMI 18.5 to 24.9 = healthy weight range

BMI 25.0 to 29.9 = overweight range

BMI more than 30.0 = obese range

## What you gain from weight loss

Losing just 10 percent of your weight, if you're overweight or obese, can lead to better health. The weight loss will:

- reduce risk of liver and gallbladder disease
- lower risk of sleep apnea
- lower risk of congestive heart failure
- decrease risk of some types of cancer
- lower stress on bones and joints
- lower risk of heart disease, heart attacks and stroke
- improve blood sugar
- improve blood pressure
- make it easier to move and do activities
- help you feel better



Your waist measurement is another way to find out if you're at higher risk for problems like heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Men with a waist size greater than 40 inches and women with a waist size greater than 35 inches may be more likely to develop obesity-related health problems.

To measure your waist correctly, place a tape measure just above your hip bone around your abdomen while standing. Make sure to keep the tape measure level with the floor and measure your waist after you exhale.

### How to reach a healthy weight

Weight management is about balance. When you balance the number of calories you eat with the number of calories you use, you'll maintain your weight. To lose weight, you must increase your activity to use more calories and/or take in fewer calories by eating less. Knowing how to lose weight is the easy part. Being successful with weight loss requires a lot of hard work and persistence.

Keeping food and activity records can be a good place to start. You can use the online journal tools under the "Track Health" tab on My HealthVet to keep food and activity records. You can also track your progress by entering your

weight as you go.

Another step is to reduce your calorie intake by eating smaller portions and by choosing lower calorie foods. Eating less can be a challenge so be smart about your choices. A regular-size candy bar is about 250 to 300 calories, whereas an apple is about 60 calories.

Try increasing your everyday activity by adding exercise into your daily routine. Take the stairs, park farther away, take the dog for a walk or ride your bike to the store. The goal is 150 minutes of moderate activity each week. Always talk with your health care provider before starting any exercise routine. For some added support, consider joining the *MOVE!* program, VA's weight management program.

If you're already at a healthy weight, keep up the good work, eat healthy and stay active!

## Resources to help you reach your goal

- [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)
- [www.move.va.gov](http://www.move.va.gov)
- [www.cdc.gov/healthyweight](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight)
- [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov)



# Don't stress about stress!

**W**hen you have trouble coping with life's demands, we call this "stress." A life without some stress would be boring. Most of us like some challenges. But, too much stress creates problems.

People who are overly stressed report problems concentrating, feelings of worry and fear, irritability with others, feeling overly tired and a sense that the body is wound up (tense muscles, sweaty palms, pounding heart).

Why is stress management so important? Too much stress, or chronic stress, can increase your risk or lead to a wide range of health issues, such as heart disease, infections, diabetes, pain and problems with eating, digestion and even your memory.

## Relieving stress: What you can do

Some suggestions to help decrease the amount of stress in your life include:

**Physical activity:** Take a brisk walk or do some other physically demanding activity to help reduce your stress. Daily physical activity is best.

**Problem solving:** To improve your ability to cope, learn problem-solving skills. Most VAs offer classes or groups on problem-solving skills. Ask your provider for a referral.

**Relaxation training:** Learn relaxation and mindfulness skills. These skills can help you to

manage stress, and may protect you from at least some of your physical responses to stress. One method is deep-breathing exercises. Self-help books are available on this topic, and groups may be offered at your VA.

**Time management:** List what needs to get done. Make plans for addressing issues, and stick to the plan. Self-help books are also written on this topic.

**Positive thinking:** Stress is often found with negative, self-critical thinking. Focus on positive thoughts about yourself and include your favorite songs, poems, prayers or hobbies.

**Expression:** Speak up in respectful ways. Sharing your thoughts and feelings in an assertive and respectful manner can help decrease stress.

**Pleasant activities:** You may have stress because you don't make enough time for fun in your life. Plan to do things that you enjoy on a regular basis and see if this buffers your stress.

## Get help 24/7

If you or someone you know is in an emotional crisis, call the Veteran's Hotline at **1-800-273-TALK (8255)** and press 1 for Veterans.

# Do you have a service-connected disability?

**V**A may offer compensation and free health care for an unresolved medical or mental health condition that can be traced to your military service. Some types of service-connected disabilities include wounds from explosives, post-traumatic stress disorder and exposure to chemicals. A pre-existing condition will likely not be rated as service connected.

## The claim process

**1** Meet with a service officer. Bring any paperwork that you have about your condition with you. This includes a doctor's progress notes, military records that detail the event and medications you take. These items will help support your claim. List all of your conditions that need to be evaluated. A claim is filed and an exam is scheduled for each one. Only those described to the service officer will be evaluated.

**2** Your claim is sent to the VA regional office in the state where you live. The regional office will call you to decide where you'll go for your exam.

**3** You'll be informed of the date and time for your exam at a VA medical center or by a special examiner. There's no charge for the exam, and you may be eligible for travel reimbursement. Based on the number of conditions to be evaluated, you may need to see several providers. After all of your exams and tests are complete, the Compensation and Pension Office will forward your file back to the regional office for a



service-connected determination.

**4** After the review of your claim is complete, you'll receive a letter from the VA regional office that explains the decision.

- In complex cases, it can take up to 12 months for a decision.

- If you're found to have a service-connected disability, your compensation will begin from the first day of the month after you first met with the service officer.

**5** If your claim is found to not be service connected, you have 365 days from the date of the letter to appeal your claim. You'll need to provide more or new information to support the claim.



# Reaching us is easy

Keep this information handy—when you need us, we'll be there.

## Northeastern Ohio

**Cleveland VAMC**  
10701 E. Blvd.  
Cleveland, OH 44106  
216-791-3800

**Akron Annex**  
95 W. Waterloo Road  
Akron, OH 44319  
330-724-7715

**Akron CBOC**  
55 W. Waterloo Road  
Akron, OH 44319  
330-724-7715

**Canton CBOC**  
733 Market Ave. S.  
Canton, OH 44702  
330-489-4600

**East Liverpool CBOC**  
15655 state Route 170,  
Suite A  
East Liverpool, OH 43920  
330-386-4303

**Lorain CBOC**  
205 W. 20th St.  
Lorain, OH 44052  
440-244-3833

**Mansfield CBOC**  
1456 Park Ave. W., Suite N  
Mansfield, OH 44906  
419-529-4602

**McCafferty CBOC**  
4242 Lorain Ave.  
Cleveland, OH 44113  
216-939-0699

**New Philadelphia CBOC**  
1260 Monroe Ave.,  
Suite 1A  
New Philadelphia, OH 44663  
330-602-5339

**Painesville PC CBOC**  
7 W. Jackson St.  
Painesville, OH 44077  
440-357-6740

**Painesville MH CBOC**  
54 S. State St.  
Painesville, OH 44077  
440-357-6740

**Parma CBOC**  
8787 Brookpark Road  
Parma, OH 44129  
216-739-7000

**Ravenna CBOC**  
6751 N. Chestnut St.  
Ravenna, OH 44266  
330-296-3641

**Sandusky CBOC**  
3416 Columbus Ave.  
Sandusky, OH 44870  
419-625-7350

**Warren CBOC**  
1460 Tod Ave. N.W.  
Warren, OH 44485  
330-392-0311

**Youngstown CBOC**  
2031 Belmont Ave.  
Youngstown, OH 44505  
330-740-9200

## Southeastern Ohio

**Chillicothe VAMC**  
17273 state Route 104  
Chillicothe, OH 45601  
740-773-1141 or 1-800-358-8262

**Athens CBOC**  
510 W. Union St., Suite B  
Athens, OH 45701  
740-593-7314

**Cambridge CBOC**  
2146 Southgate Parkway  
Cambridge, OH 43725  
740-432-1963

**Lancaster CBOC**  
1550 Sheridan Drive, Suite 100  
Collonade Medical Building  
Lancaster, OH 43130  
740-653-6145

**Marietta CBOC**  
418 Colegate Drive  
Marietta, OH 45750  
740-568-0412

**Portsmouth CBOC**  
840 Gallia St.  
Portsmouth, OH 45662  
740-353-3236

**Wilmington Outreach Clinic**  
448 W. Main St.  
Wilmington, OH 45177  
937-382-3949

## Southwestern Ohio area

**Cincinnati VAMC**  
3200 Vine St.  
Cincinnati, OH 45220  
513-861-3100 or 1-888-267-7873

**Bellevue, KY CBOC**  
103 Landmark Drive, 3rd Floor  
Bellevue, KY 41073  
859-392-3840

**Brown County CBOC**  
4903 state Route 125  
Georgetown, OH 45121  
937-378-3413

**Clermont County CBOC**  
4600 Beechwood Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45244  
513-943-3680

**Dearborn, IN CBOC**  
1600 Flossie Drive  
Greendale, IN 47025  
812-539-2313

**Florence, KY CBOC**  
7711 Ewing Blvd.  
Florence, KY 41042  
859-282-4480

**Hamilton CBOC**  
1750 South Erie Highway  
Hamilton, OH 45011  
513-870-9444

## Western Ohio area

**Dayton VAMC**  
4100 W. Third St.  
Dayton, OH 45428  
937-268-6511

**Lima CBOC**  
1303 Bellefontaine Ave.  
Lima, OH 45804  
419-222-5788

**Middletown CBOC**  
4337 N. Union Road  
Middletown, OH 45005  
513-423-8387

**Richmond, IN CBOC**  
4351 S. A St.  
Richmond, IN 47374  
765-973-6915

**Springfield CBOC**  
512 S. Burnett Road  
Springfield, OH 45505  
937-328-3385

## Central Ohio

**Columbus VAACC**  
420 N. James Road  
Columbus, OH 43219  
614-257-5200

**Grove City CBOC**  
1955 Ohio Drive  
Grove City, OH 43123  
614-257-5800

**Marion CBOC**  
1203 Delaware Ave.  
Corporate Center #2  
Marion, OH 43302  
740-223-8809

**Newark CBOC**  
1855 West Main St.  
Newark, OH 43055  
740-788-8329

**Zanesville CBOC**  
2800 Maple Ave.  
Zanesville, OH 43701  
740-453-7725