

SUMMER • 2012

Veterans' Health

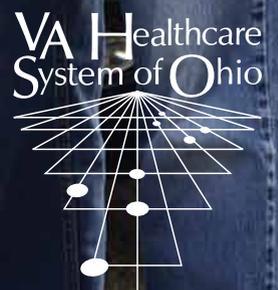
THE WELLNESS MAGAZINE
FOR OHIO VETERANS



Get online with
Secure Messaging

The dangers
of addiction

Healthwise for Life:
Take charge
of your health



To our readers

As we enter the summer season, we continue to work hard to help keep you healthy. This issue of *Veterans' Health* focuses



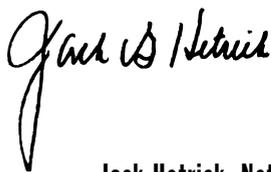
on topics that may benefit you or someone you love.

On page 3, learn how *Secure Messaging* can save you time and money by cutting down on trips to your health care provider.

Pages 4 and 5 focus on learning the signs of addiction and how it can affect your health or the health of a loved one. We provide a quiz to assess a person's risk for alcohol addiction.

We also remind you on page 6 about our *Healthwise for Life* self-care guide. We encourage you to use this guide to help make better health care decisions. It provides tips for staying healthy and a symptoms guide for common health problems.

Best wishes for a safe and healthy summer!

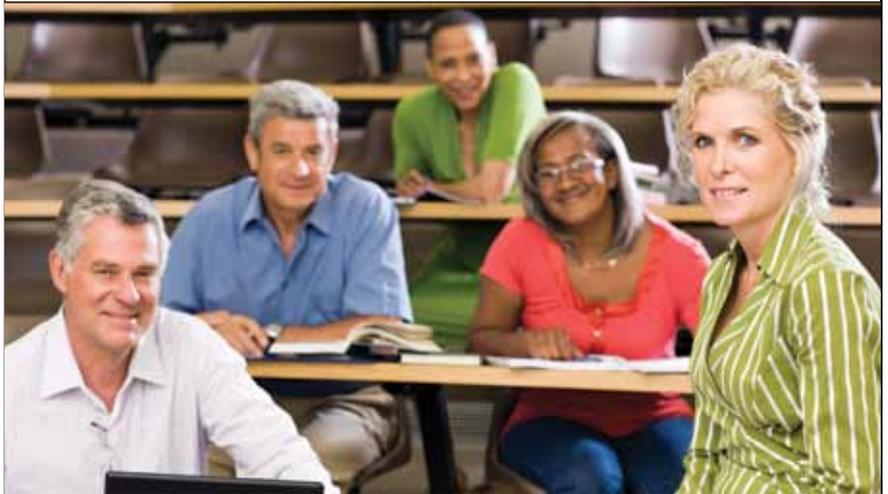
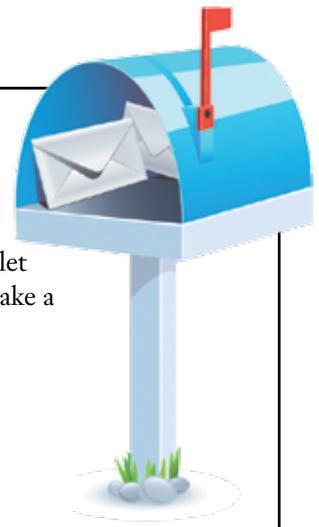


— Jack Hetrick, Network Director

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



Sign up for HealthyU classes!

In the spring issue, we featured an article on *HealthyU* classes. These classes are for Veterans with a chronic disease who want to learn how to better manage their health. If you're interested in these classes, see the local contact information below.

Chillicothe	740-773-1141, ext. 6024 or ext. 6510
Cincinnati	513-861-3100, ext. 5343
Cleveland	440-526-3030, ext. 6337
Columbus	614-257-5564 or 614-257-5280
Dayton	937-268-6511, ext. 2527

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.

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Cincinnati VAMC

VISN 10 Patient Education Council

Cut down on face-to-face appointments

Get online with *Secure Messaging*

Leslie Moon, P.A., gets excited about *Secure Messaging*. A VA health care provider, Moon arrives early to work each morning to answer questions from her patients. *Online*. The My HealthVet tool lets her focus on patients' problems with no interruptions. "That's very cool," says Moon.

One patient had a back problem that wasn't getting better. Moon and the patient worked it out through online messages. "*Secure Messaging* saved the patient numerous trips to the VA facility," says Moon. For rural Veterans this means saving on gas, travel time and the stress of city traffic.

Patients no longer have to wait on the phone, through several minutes of instructions, to leave a message with a clerk. They can now send their health care team a nonurgent message anytime. "Patients expect privacy, and they feel secure asking a question online. It's just as if they were in the room with me," says Moon. She usually sends a response within 24 hours, except on weekends.

Moon reports that Veterans are also happy to see their VA lab results online. Even though she sends a letter with their results, patients prefer looking them up on the computer. Patients then send a secure message and ask what to do next to improve results.

A patient can request prescription renewals and clinic appointments online.



Leslie Moon,
Physician Assistant,
Columbus, Ohio

"There used to be a lot of steps between me and my patients—*Secure Messaging* makes it more personal."

—Leslie Moon, Physician Assistant,
Columbus, Ohio

Some of her homeless patients create accounts at the public library. Moon also recommends *Secure Messaging* to hard-of-hearing patients.

Patients can access their health care when they want to and at the level they want. All VA primary care teams now use *Secure Messaging*. Patients must first register online for My HealthVet, then get authenticated at a VA facility. See the box below for more information.

How to find <i>Secure Messaging</i> on My HealthVet	
Register or log in at www.myhealth.va.gov .	
Select 	3. Once logged on, select the red <i>Secure Messaging</i> tab at the top of the My HealthVet home page. Then, select 
1. Log on to your my HealthVet account. If you don't have an account, register online. (Enter your first, middle and last names. Under Relationship to VA, check VA patient.)	Call the My HealthVet coordinator at your local VA Medical Center with any questions.
2. Complete a one-time, in-person authentication form at a VA facility.	

The dangers of addiction

Addiction, a type of behavioral compulsion or dependence on drugs or alcohol, can cause a variety of medical, emotional or social problems.

Drug addiction includes using legal, prescription drugs as well as illegal substances like marijuana or cocaine. The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that 16 million Americans took prescription drugs for a nonmedical purpose at least once in 2009. The types of prescription drugs used include pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants and sedatives.

Substance use disorder

Substance use disorder includes addiction to alcohol, drugs or nicotine. Long-term substance use can cause high blood pressure, depression, stomach problems, sexual problems and even cancer. Signs of substance use and possible addiction include:

- needing more to get the same effect, relax or feel better
- experiencing withdrawal symptoms when the substance isn't used

Struggling with a gambling addiction?

The gambling program at Cleveland VA is the first to address the pathology of gambling and the problems associated with this addiction. Participants in the five-week program include all eligible Veterans as well as active duty soldiers and personnel. The treatment focuses on improving the quality of life for participants and their families. The goals of treatment are to alleviate depression; chart a path through financial disasters; and most of all, provide hope. Hope is necessary to stand up against the high rate of suicide, which is a real danger. Success in the program isn't always measured by total abstinence, but by developing control and improving quality of life. For more information, call **216-791-3800, ext. 6963.**

- using more or for longer than intended
- wanting to cut down or control use
- spending a lot of time getting, using or recovering from the substance
- giving up other activities to keep using
- continuing to use despite knowing that it's causing problems

While the nicotine in tobacco is one of the most addictive drugs, it doesn't cause cancer or death. Instead, 70 of the other chemicals found in tobacco cause cancer. Tobacco use increases your risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, lung disease and many cancers. It's the most preventable cause of death in the United States. On average, tobacco users die 13 to 14 years earlier than nonusers, and tobacco users are more likely to spend the last 10 to 15 years of their lives disabled. Here's the good news: A person's health improves immediately after stopping tobacco use:

- Within 8 hours, the hands and feet will feel warmer due to improved blood flow.
- Within 24 hours, the lungs will start clearing out impurities.
- Within 48 hours, the chance of having a heart attack begins to drop.
- Within 72 hours, breathing is easier and a person has more energy.
- Within 12 weeks, breathing problems continue to improve.
- Within a year, the risk of heart disease is cut in half.
- Within 10 to 15 years, the risk of a heart attack is cut in half.

10 has special is to help with l, drug or tobacco ou can find more rmination about hese problems in your *Healthwise for Life* book.





Addictive behaviors

Addictive behaviors include gambling, shopping, eating, sex and computer use. People may depend on them as much as alcohol, drugs or tobacco. Signs of addictive behaviors include:

- spending a lot of time thinking about the behavior
- needing more of the behavior to get the same effect, relax or feel better
- doing the behavior more or for longer than intended
- wanting to cut down or control the behavior
- spending a great deal of time and money on the behavior
- giving up other important activities to do the behavior
- continuing the behavior despite knowing that it's causing problems

If you think you have a problem with an addictive behavior, talk to your provider. VA has specialists and programs to help you.

Guidelines for moderate alcohol use

The *2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend that if you choose to drink alcohol, do so only in moderation—up to one drink a day for women or two drinks a day for men. Examples of one drink include:

Beer: 12 fluid ounces

Wine: 5 fluid ounces

Distilled spirits (80 proof): 1.5 fluid ounces

Are you at risk for problem drinking? Take the Healthwise Test:

Answer the questions below. The number in the parentheses is the score for that question. Add up the total points when finished.

1. How often did you have a drink containing alcohol in the past year?

- Never (0)
- Monthly or less (1)
- 2 to 4 times a month (2)
- 2 to 3 times a week (3)
- 4 or more times a week (4)

2. In the past year, how many drinks did you have when you drank?

- I didn't drink in the past year (0)
- 1 to 2 drinks (0)
- 3 to 4 drinks (1)
- 5 to 6 drinks (2)
- 7 to 9 drinks (3)
- 10 or more drinks (4)

3. How often did you have 6 or more drinks on one occasion in the past year?

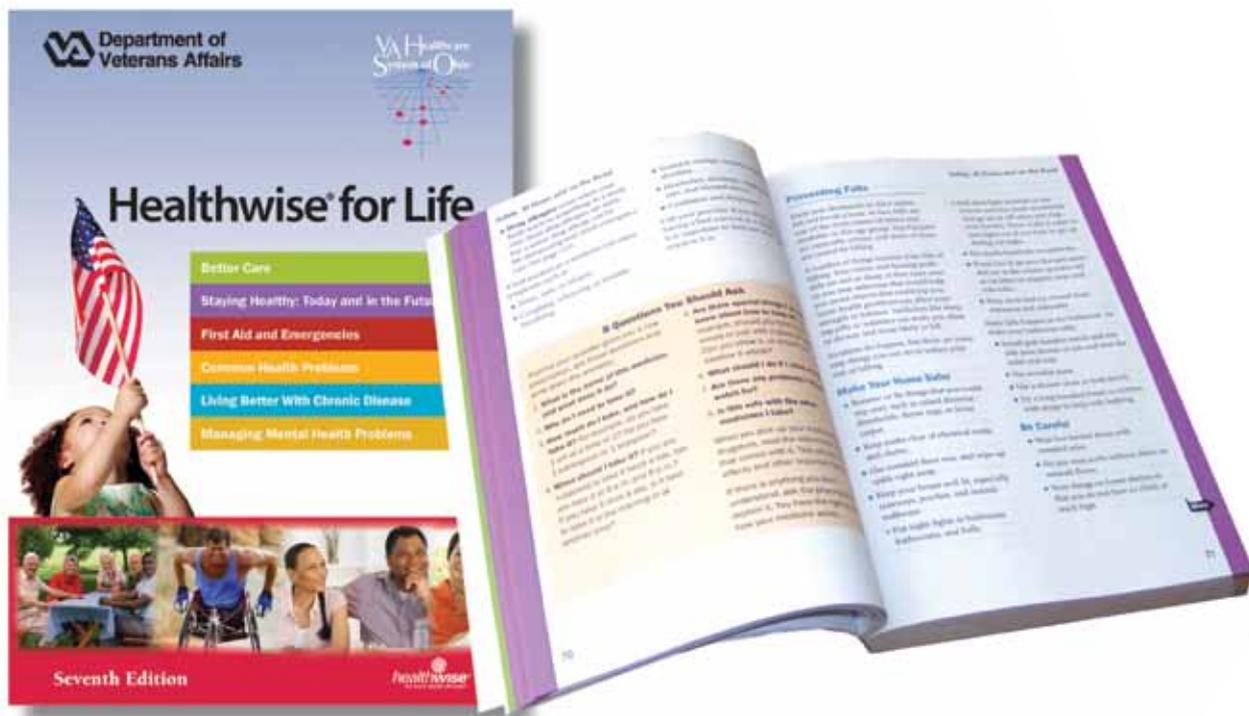
- Never (0)
- Less than monthly (1)
- Monthly (2)
- Weekly (3)
- Daily or almost daily (4)

Score: _____

The scale is from 0 to 12. The higher your score, the more likely your drinking is affecting your health and safety. A score of 4 or more is considered positive in men and 3 or more is considered positive in women.

A positive score means you're at risk for hazardous drinking or alcohol addiction. More information is available online at My HealthVet (www.myhealth.va.gov). You'll find screening tools for alcohol use and substance abuse. Both of these tools are in the Research Health section under Mental Health.

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Take charge of your health with *Healthwise for Life*

“**H**ealthwise for Life” is a self-care guide we provide to Veterans who are enrolled in and receive care at one of the following VISN 10 facilities:

- Chillicothe VA Medical Center (VAMC)
- Cincinnati VAMC
- Cleveland (Louis Stokes) VAMC
- Columbus (Chalmers P. Wylie) Outpatient Clinic
- Dayton VAMC

This book is designed to help you make better health decisions. If you don’t already use your book, start today! Inside the front cover, you’ll find a checklist to help you prepare for your next provider visit. You’ll also find two cards for your wallet—a medical I.D. card and a card for tracking immunizations and preventive screenings.

Almost all disease and health-related topics are covered. Each disease or health condition

is described, including causes, symptoms, home treatment and when to call the doctor. One section is focused on staying healthy and covers topics ranging from wellness exams and screening tests, to safety and managing stress. The first aid section offers tips on dealing with all types of emergencies. Other sections of the book include:

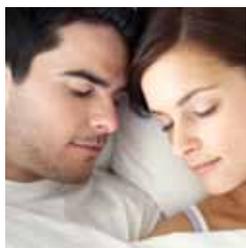
- **Better care**—tips on tests, medicines, surgery and an “ask-the-provider” checklist
- **Common health problems**—in addition to chapters on A to Z health problems, there’s a helpful symptoms guide
- **Living better with chronic disease**—if you have a chronic illness, you’ll find tips for staying healthy in this section
- **Managing mental health problems**

The book is now in its seventh printing. If you’ve lost your copy or have a very old copy, request a new book on your next visit to one of our VISN 10 medical centers or clinics.

Think safety first

There are things you can do to protect yourself and those you love from harm. Review the common safety issues below and the steps you can take to “be safe.”

Prevent sexually transmitted infections (STIs)



STIs can be passed to another person during sex.

- The best way to fully protect yourself is to **abstain** from sex.

- **Decrease the number of your sexual partners** to

reduce your STI risk.

- **Use a latex condom** each time you have sex (vaginal, anal or oral) if your partner might be or is infected.
- Be in a mutually **monogamous relationship** with an uninfected partner. If you and your partner only have sex with each other, you can reduce your risk of an STI.
- STIs can be **passed from an infected pregnant woman to her baby** before or during delivery. If you're pregnant, **get tested**. If you have an STI, **get treated**.
- Many STIs don't have symptoms. You can have an STI without knowing it. **Talk to your provider** if you have any questions.
- **Seek treatment early**. Untreated STIs can cause serious health problems. If you're treated for an STI, your sex partner(s) should also be treated.

Prevent falls

Among older adults, falls are the leading cause of injury deaths. They're also the most common cause of nonfatal injuries and hospitalizations for trauma. About half of all falls happen at home.

If you or your loved one had a recent fall or has balance problems, follow these home-safety tips:



- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep rugs from moving.
- Install grab bars on the wall next to your toilet and in your tub or shower area.
- Improve the lighting in

your home. Hang lightweight curtains or shades to reduce glare.

- Wear shoes both inside and outside the house. Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.
- Remove things you can trip over (such as papers, books, clothes and shoes) from stairs and places where you walk.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach without using a step stool.
- Use nonskid mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Have handrails and lights put in all staircases.
- Improve your strength and balance with physical activity and strengthening exercises.

Prevent motor vehicle crashes and injuries



- Driving while impaired causes more than half of all motor vehicle crashes. Motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of death in Veterans during their early years of deployment. Don't drive when you drink alcohol or use drugs and don't ride with someone else who is.
- You can reduce your and your loved ones' chances of dying by correctly using seat belts and car seats. Wear seat belts when riding in cars and helmets when riding on motorcycles or bicycles.
- Don't text or talk on a cellphone while driving.

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
8701 Brookpark Road
Parma, OH 44129
Coming in 2012

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
Outreach Clinic**
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