Veterans’ Health

Enjoying the Holidays with Diabetes

Breaking the Stigma of Mental Health

FEATURED FACILITY:
Dayton VAMC Marks 150 Years
To our readers

Fall is a great time to enjoy many things, like cooler weather, fall colors, and fun times at the local cider mill. And, don’t forget the delicious fall treats. But when you have diabetes, it can be difficult to maintain good health while enjoying all your favorite comfort foods. Learn about how you can have your donut and eat it, too, on page 6.

We’re pleased to announce that Dayton VA Medical Center is celebrating its 150th birthday! It’s not only the third oldest VA medical center in the nation, but also one of the most cutting-edge health care systems. Learn more on page 3 about how they are delivering top-notch care to Veterans.

Establishing good eating and exercising habits now can help you enjoy the holiday season and maintain a healthy weight. Our MOVE! Program can help you drop excess weight or keep a healthy weight. Read more on page 8.

Reducing and eliminating Veteran suicide has become a top priority for Veterans Affairs. And it starts with you! Visit www.veteranscrisisline.net/BeThereSupport and learn more about how you can get involved in the movement. And, if you know someone who is struggling, call the Veterans Crisis Line today: 1-800-273-8255 and press 1 or text to 838255.

Robert P. McDivitt, FACHE
Network Director, VISN 10

VISN 10: We’re Here for You

This map shows the location of some of the many VA health care facilities in our Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN). We have 10 medical centers, one ambulatory care center, and 63 community based outpatient clinics (CBOCs) to serve more than 680,000 Veterans in three states.

To find the nearest VA medical center or schedule an appointment, visit www.visn10.va.gov.
Facility Highlight:

Dayton VA Medical Center

The Dayton VA Medical Center provides care for 40,000 Veterans in the southwest region of Ohio. It has outpatient clinics in:

- Lima, Springfield and Middletown, Ohio
- Richmond, Indiana

The 382-acre main campus includes a VA National Cemetery, a 91-bed acute care hospital, a 200-bed nursing home, and a 99-bed residential treatment center.

The Dayton VA Medical Center is the third oldest VA Medical Center in the country and celebrated its 150th anniversary this year. The Dayton Soldiers Home opened in the fall of 1867 and cared for thousands of disabled Veterans from the Civil War. In the early years, Veterans lived in a homelike setting while receiving health care, learning trades, and doing chores to support the life of the community. A hospital first opened on the property in 1870. Residents built the “Home Chapel” with limestone quarried on the property, as well as a grotto and gardens. The beautiful gardens were a national tourist attraction around 1900. At one time, the grounds included a hotel, a restaurant, animal exhibits, and boat rides on the lakes. In 2012, the Dayton VAMC was designated as a National Historic Landmark.

- Home telehealth programs using new technologies are available for many health issues. These include weight loss, tobacco cessation, high blood pressure, diabetes, COPD, heart failure, depression, PTSD, substance abuse, and other mental health conditions.
- New treatment strategies have been added to substance abuse programs to address the opioid epidemic. Each Veteran in Dayton’s residential treatment program has six hours of therapy, classes and meetings available every day.
- Working with community partners, the Dayton VAMC was recognized in 2016 for effectively ending homelessness among Veterans in the area.

The Dayton community has been working with our VA to restore the historic Healing Gardens and Grotto. You can learn more of the Dayton VAMC’s history and see historic photographs at www.dayton.va.gov/museum/index.asp. Pictures of the restored grotto and gardens can be found at www.daytongrottogardens.org.

In 2016, Dayton VAMC was named as the future home of the Veterans Affairs National Archives. And this year, construction started on a Fisher House where military and Veterans’ families will stay at no cost while receiving extended care.
Helping to Bust Mental Health Stigma

**National Mental Illness Awareness Month**

Illnesses take many forms – some are seen, others unseen. But just because an illness cannot be detected with the naked eye does not mean it is not as serious as other conditions. Mental illness is one of the unseen conditions, and it carries some strong stigmas. These stigmas can cause those with a mental illness to feel shame and isolation. This is a major reason why mental illness goes untreated.

Only about half of all Americans with a serious mental illness will seek treatment. People with mental illness sometimes set unrealistic goals for themselves and believe that they can overcome their issues with simple willpower. But most people require some treatment to achieve a full recovery.

American media often shows people with mental illnesses as unstable, violent, and unable to contribute to society. These stigmas are untrue. Mental illness is not significantly linked to violence. In fact, individuals suffering from a serious mental illness are much more likely to be victims of violence than perpetrators.

Stigmas are closely related to language

Negative labels, such as “crazy” and “schizophrenic,” emphasize imperfections. They create a negative image and make it harder to see the person who has a disease. When you refer to someone as “a person with schizophrenia” or “a person who has depression” you can help to remove the stigma.

How do we bust stigmas?

1. Don’t use disrespectful terms for people with mental illness. Try to avoid saying things like “crazy.”
2. Don’t be insensitive or unrealistic about mental health. You would not tell someone with cancer to get over it.
3. Be a champion. Stigma is often caused by a lack of understanding or inaccurate information regarding mental health. Teach your friends, family members, co-workers, and others about mental illness.

How can you help fight the stigmas attached to mental illness?

Talk about it! Seek out information, research online, and talk to loved ones about mental illness. If you or someone you know may suffer from a mental illness – do not be afraid to speak up or seek treatment. Recovery is possible for most individuals suffering from mental illnesses.
Good dental health is about more than just having pretty teeth. Your mouth’s health can affect the wellness of your entire body. Here are 10 ways to have healthy teeth and gums:

1. Brush your teeth at least twice each day. Aim for first thing in the morning and last thing before going to bed. Brush two minutes each time.

2. Floss your teeth at least once a day. It is best to floss before brushing.

3. Use fluoride toothpaste, which helps strengthen tooth enamel and prevent tooth decay.

4. Have a healthy lifestyle. Eat healthy meals and avoid sugary snacks and drinks between meals.

5. Rinse your mouth after you eat to wash away food and cut down on plaque.

6. Replace your toothbrush every three months (or sooner, if needed). A worn-out toothbrush will not clean your teeth as well.

7. Do not use tobacco. Those who smoke or chew have more tooth and gum disease.

8. If you drink alcohol, limit yourself to one drink (women) or two drinks (men) per day. Heavy alcohol use raises your risk of oral and throat cancer.

9. Infections like gum disease raise your blood sugar. If you monitor your blood sugar and can’t explain why the readings are high, see your dental team.

10. Get regular dental check-ups. Most people should see the dentist twice a year.

During regular dental check-ups, your dental team looks for signs of disease, infection, injuries, or oral cancer. See your dentist right away if:

- Your gums bleed.
- You see any red or white patches on the gums, teeth, or floor of the mouth.
- You have mouth or jaw pain that won’t go away.
- You have sores that do not heal within two weeks.
- You have problems swallowing or chewing.
Fall Dining with Diabetes

Holiday treats are famous for being high in calories and carbohydrates. It’s easy to overindulge with autumn favorites like caramel apples and, of course, Halloween candies. Those with diabetes must be particularly cautious as eating too many sweets can raise serious health risks.

Here are some tips to keep in mind before you head out to your next holiday party or fall festival:

Be prepared to say “no.” Your family and friends may show their love through preparing and serving food. Have a polite go-to phrase such as, “Thank you! If it’s OK, I’ll take one to eat later.”

Set the example. When you attend a party, bring a dish that is lighter in calories, higher in fiber, and packed full of nutrients. When you take a healthy dish to a party, you help others stick to their goals and guarantee you will have a healthy option to choose.

Finally, try to include your family and friends in your plans. Having diabetes does not mean you must eat special food. It just means taking extra caution. Help others understand that the portion size and the pairing of food can make a difference in your blood sugar. Eat stuffing and turkey together at one meal and potatoes and turkey leftovers at another meal.

Seasonal Recipe: Garlic Mashed Cauliflower

Ingredients
- 8 cups cauliflower
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed and peeled
- ¼ cup skim milk
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon chopped fresh or dry chives, for garnish

Directions
Place cauliflower florets and garlic in a steamer basket over boiling water, cover and steam until very tender, 12-15 minutes. (Or, place florets and garlic in microwave-safe bowl with ¼ cup water, cover and microwave on high for 3-5 minutes). Place the cooked cauliflower and garlic in a food processor. Add skim milk, salt, and pepper to taste; pulse several times, then process until smooth and creamy. Transfer to a serving bowl. Serve hot.

Serves 4. Per serving: 58 calories; 0 g fat; 12 g carbohydrates (6 g sugar); 214 mg sodium; 5 g fiber; 5 g protein.
Imagine you have a question about managing your diabetes. Rather than waiting until your next doctor’s appointment, wouldn’t it be nice to go online and chat with a provider that day? Or, perhaps you could talk with other Veterans about how they manage their diabetes? That is the idea behind the VA’s new Virtual Medical Center program coming in early 2018.

Within this new virtual hospital and learning environment, patients and VA staff have direct access to medical care and resources anytime, anywhere. Veterans will have the chance to sign up for virtual classes that are group-oriented and allow Veterans to consult online with providers about their diabetes self-management or other health issues. Patients will communicate via “avatars” that are online representations of those in the group. Patients can talk with fellow Veterans’ avatars or schedule one-on-one virtual appointments with their providers.

During the virtual diabetes self-management classes, patients “meet-up” in real time for eight one-hour virtual sessions with a provider and a group of Veterans dealing with similar health issues. In between, patients may do online coursework at home or wherever is convenient for them.

“This is ideal for those who live in remote locations or who may have a handicap,” says Dr. Brian Burke, Chief of Diabetes Services at the Dayton VAMC. “To go to a classroom for a wheelchair bound Veteran is challenging. So, most would prefer to do it online.”

This program is still in beta, but will open to all Veterans once the initial pilot programs are completed. In addition to diabetes, the first-round of clinics will center on palliative care, behavioral health and pain management, followed by Wounded Warrior.

VA staff members will also benefit – having virtual communities where they can collaborate with other medical staff and learn how to provide this type of virtual care for patients.

If you are interested in signing up for a virtual class, talk to your primary care team or specialty care team for more information.
Americans are getting heavier and Veterans are no exception. More than three quarters of Veterans enrolled at VAs are overweight or obese. Achieving weight loss success starts with turning unhealthy habits into healthy ones. This doesn’t mean striving for perfection, but it does mean creating a routine for yourself that you can stick to. MOVE! can help you do that.

MOVE! is VA's evidence-based, weight management education program. It is offered at all medical centers and community clinics in the VA system. When you are ready, MOVE! can help you lose weight and keep it off. The program focuses on healthy eating, increasing physical activity, and successfully changing behavior.

Even small improvements in your weight can:
- Improve your overall health and quality of life.
- Prevent or reverse some diseases.
- Help you live longer.

MOVE! offers many options to help meet your goals.

**MOVE! classes**
Participants attend weekly or biweekly sessions with other Veterans (and family members). They weigh in and review personal food journals. Participants learn and share information about eating out, cooking, good nutrition, behavior change, and physical activity.

**TeleMOVE!**
This program uses telephone messaging and support services. Participants are assigned to a dietitian or nurse care coordinator who helps guide them through the weight loss process. Participants communicate in one of three ways: by phone, going online, or using a special monitor. Each day, participants review educational materials, complete a questionnaire, and report their weight.

**MOVE! Lifestyle Coaching**
During this program, participants speak regularly over the phone with a designated weight-management coach. The program is tailored to meet the participant’s unique needs.

Veterans Kathy Walters, Mike Walters and Aaron Clark (left to right) learn about growing and eating fresh food during their MOVE! class at the Northern Indiana VAMC, Marion Campus. The group had just listened to a guest speaker from the Purdue Master Gardeners program, who donated vegetable starters for the class to transplant and grow.
Veteran Robert Janes participated in the TeleMOVE! program at the Ann Arbor VA Healthcare System from June 2015 until July 2017. He started making lifestyle changes on his own and used TeleMOVE! to continue his efforts. He now encourages other Veterans to take control of their health.

**TeleMOVE! team:** Congratulations on your success! How do you feel the TeleMOVE! Program helped you achieve your weight loss goal?

**Mr. Janes:** The people who are working for the TeleMOVE! Program are there to help you along the way to your personal goal. We all have set backs, but the care coordinator helps you get through those problems. Any time I needed to talk, I just had to send a secure message or make a phone call. They have your best interests in mind. It's not just a job for them.

**TeleMOVE! team:** What advice do you have for other Veterans who are considering joining TeleMOVE?

**Mr. Janes:** My advice is to take it one day at a time. There is nothing you can’t do if you put your mind to it. I went from 290 pounds to 190 pounds, but it took 14 months. Over those 14 months, I walked almost 2,000 miles and wore out three pairs of walking shoes (walking was my exercise). But my family and friends saw the difference in me. My brothers and sisters – you can do this too.

To see other amazing stories of Veterans and their weight loss successes, check out the national MOVE! website at www.move.va.gov. Be sure to check out the story of the VISN 10 Veteran who successfully lost 142 lbs. and kept it off.
Take Care and Be Aware

VA medical centers hold events throughout the year to help Vets and employees learn more about their health. Check your facility’s calendar to learn more.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month - October

This October, the VA is proud to participate in National Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Breast cancer is the second most common kind of cancer in women. About 1 in 8 women born today in the United States will get breast cancer at some point.

Talk to your health care team about your risk for breast cancer, especially if you have a close family member who has had breast or ovarian cancer.

The good news is that women can survive breast cancer if it’s found and treated early. In 2017, the VA adopted the American Cancer Society guidelines for breast cancer screening. Here are the new screening guidelines for women of normal risk:

• Women age 40 to 44 – talk with your health care team about when to start and how often.
• Women age 45-54 should have a mammogram annually.
• Women age 55 and older should have a mammogram every two years.

Diabetes Awareness Month - November

Diabetes is one of the leading causes of disability and death in the United States. One in 11 Americans have diabetes — that’s more than 29 million people. And another 86 million adults in the United States are at high risk of developing diabetes. Throughout the month, diabetes educators will provide information about risk factors, screening, and treatment.

If you are overweight, have high blood pressure, or are age 45 or older, then you are at higher risk of developing diabetes. To help prevent type 2 diabetes:

• Watch your weight
• Eat healthy
• Get more physical activity

When you make healthy changes to manage or prevent diabetes, you may also prevent heart attack, stroke, kidney disease, vision loss, and amputation.
The Great American SmokeOUT – November 16

The Great American SmokeOUT is celebrated the third Thursday in November and it’s a day for making plans to quit smoking for good. Your local VA medical center proudly partners with the American Cancer Society every year to encourage smokers to quit.

The first national SmokeOUT was held 40 years ago in 1977. Since then, cigarette smoking rates in the U.S. have dropped from 42% to 17%. But other dangerous and addictive ways of smoking – pipe, cigar, electronic cigarettes, and hookah – are on the rise. There’s no safe way to use tobacco. Tobacco use is the single largest cause of preventable disease and death in the world.

About 40 million Americans still smoke. Quitting is the most life-saving action a smoker can take. The health benefits begin the moment you stop smoking, including adding years to your life. At any given time, 70% of smokers say they want to quit. Over 3 million Americans are successful at quitting each year.

Each VA medical center provides counseling and medication to help smokers quit. Talk to your health care team for more information. You can also try these other VA resources:

- A toll-free tobacco quitline for Vets: 1-800-QUIT-VET (1-800-784-8838). A counselor will answer your call in less than a minute and help you create your own personal quit plan. Any information you share will be kept private.
- A free text messaging service called SmokefreeVET sends daily support, advice and encouragement. Text the word VET to 47848 from your mobile phone or visit www.smokefree.gov/VET to sign up.
- A mobile app called Stay Quit Coach has been shown to double quit rates for Veterans with PTSD. The app is free at the Apple iTunes store.

To find out about SmokeOUT events in your community, contact your local VA medical center or the American Cancer Society (800-227-2345).
#BeThere for a Veteran

When someone is going through a tough time, helping them feel included and supported is one of the best things you can do. Small actions of support – such as calling up an old friend or bringing over dinner – are thoughtful ways to show you care. Whether you have one minute, or an hour or more to share, you can help a Veteran feel loved and supported.

Spread the Word
Explore ways to show you care, and share these ideas with your friends on Facebook and Twitter at www.veteranscrisisline.net/BeThereSupport.

Signs of Crisis
Veterans who are considering suicide often show signs of depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, and/or hopelessness. Visit www.veteranscrisisline.net/SignsOfCrisis/Identifying.aspx for a full list of symptoms.

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