

VA Healthcare System of Ohio  
*Veterans Integrated Service Network 10*

# Welcome New Patient

*You Served Us, So Let Us Serve You!*

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## VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM OF OHIO

Hello. VISN 10 leadership welcomes you and recognizes you as a new enrollee for VA health care. We are grateful for the opportunity to serve you. We are proud to provide you with our top quality healthcare.

Across Ohio, we have four major Medical Centers and one large outpatient clinics. We also operate 26 community clinics which you will find we placed closer to your home. The Medical Centers are located in Chillicothe, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton and the Outpatient Clinic is in Columbus. Each of our facilities has highly qualified staff that provides special attention to all of your health needs. Our sites in Ohio continue to grow to ensure we provide you access to the highest quality care anywhere.

We take pride in **our** VA Medical Centers, knowing that each will provide you with comprehensive health care in a warm, friendly environment. Should you have any concerns please give us feedback. You can do so by filling out a "Quik Card" or by speaking with one of our Patient Advocates.

Many thanks to you for your dedication; you served us, so let us serve you.

Jack G. Hetrick, FACHE  
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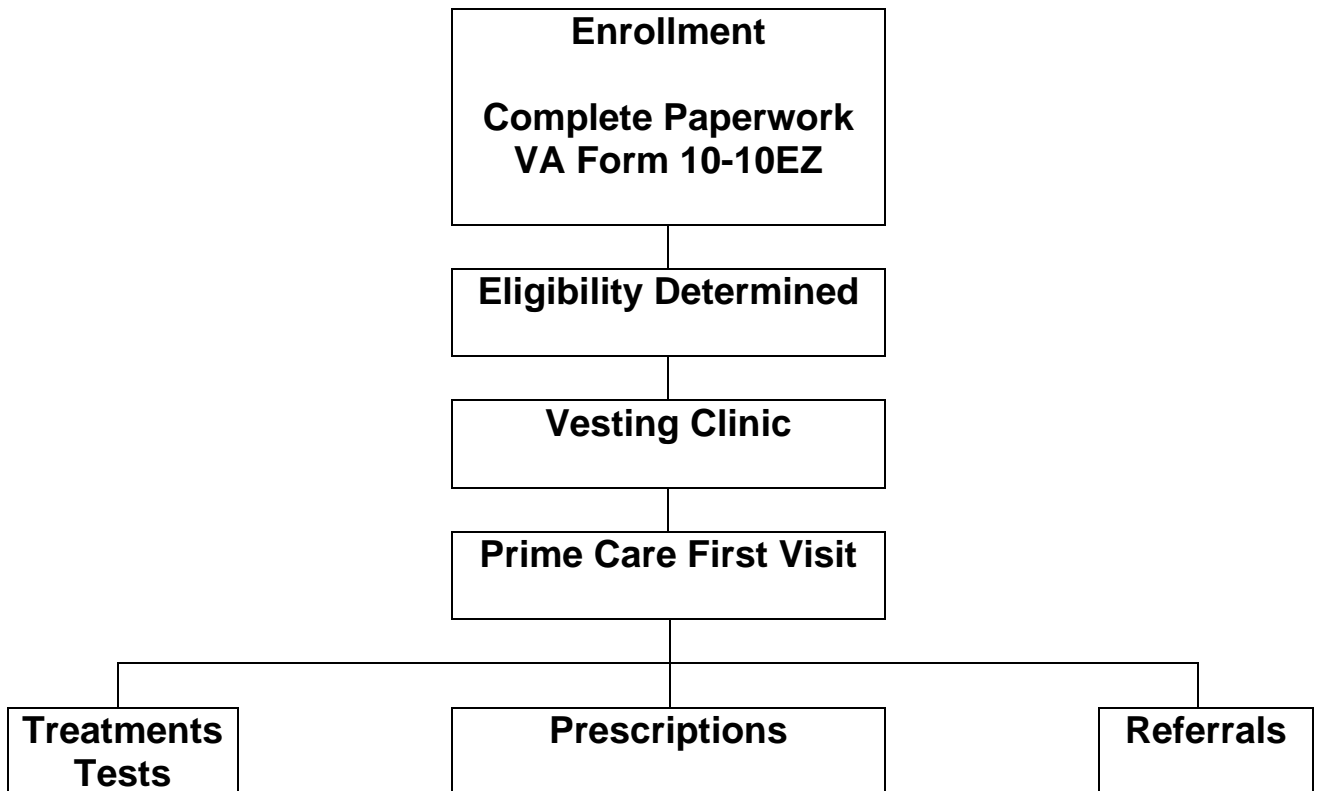
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# Steps to Becoming a V.A. Patient



**Expect to be asked to repeat** much of your information at each step in the process.

This is part of the V.A.'s double-check system to ensure that you receive the care and benefits that you are entitled to, and to be sure that we provide you the best care and treatment possible.

There are more details about each step on the following pages.



# ENROLLMENT & ELIGIBILITY

## KEY POINTS

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- Most veterans must enroll to receive VA healthcare.
- A veteran may enroll at any VA health care site or Veterans' Benefit Office at any time. There is no time limit on when you may apply after your service has ended.
- Service Officers are at all medical centers. They can help you complete claims for Compensation and Pension exams, and assist you with eligibility questions and information.
- After you have enrolled, you will receive a letter from the Eligibility Office with your **priority level**.
  - Your priority level determines how you are prioritized to receive care, such as making appointments.
  - For instance, veterans who were injured during their service have a higher priority level, and will be given a higher priority for care and services.
- In some cases, veterans may need to re-enroll each year to set their priority level. The VA will send these veterans a VA Form 10-10EZ to complete each year. You may choose not to re-enroll.
- Congress decides the enrollment priority level. Sometimes there may be changes in VA funding for some priority groups. The VA will notify you in writing, if there is any change in your enrollment status.
- You should speak to an Eligibility clerk to review what your priority level means for you.
- If you change your address or the VA you use for health care or have other changes in status, call or write the VA site where you receive your health care or call the toll-free number 1-877-222-VETS.
- If you are enrolled, you can get health care at any site in the VA health care system.
- VA health care includes all inpatient and outpatient services. Preventive and primary care are very important.

- The healthcare program provides your medicines **only** if a VA provider (doctor, nurse practitioner, physician assistant) or a VA contract doctor sees you as a patient and prescribes your medicines. Some veterans will be required to make a co-payment for prescriptions.
- Domiciliary (DOM), nursing home care and dental care are **NOT** included. Some veterans may be eligible for these services under some other VA rule.
- Veterans should keep any healthcare insurance they already have.
- Veterans may choose the VA site they prefer for their preventive and primary care.

**You must see a VA provider (doctor, nurse practitioner or physician assistant) to get your medications from a V.A. Medical Center Pharmacy.**

## Income Verification Matching – Means Test




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Most non-service connected veterans and non-Compensable 0% service connected veterans must complete a Means Test each year.

The purpose of the Means Test is to be sure each veteran receives care according to the correct eligibility assigned. Eligibility is based on income and asset information. The Means Test is an annual assessment to help the VA offer free health care/ hospitalization to low-income veterans.

The Means Test reviews your family income and assets.

- You will need to provide health insurance, employment, income and asset information for yourself, your spouse and dependents.
- Your VA Means Test is based on your prior year income, and will be updated each year.
- Your Means Test will determine your need to make co-payments.
- Call the Eligibility Office at your local V.A. Medical Center for more information.

## Special Eligibilities

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Some veterans may be placed in a special priority group. In these special circumstances, eligibility is not based on income.



### Special eligibilities include:

- **Catastrophically Disabled Veterans** – veterans who are paraplegic, blind or unable to care for themselves due to severe physical and mental problems.
- **Exposure to Agent Orange** while serving in Vietnam or Korea
- **Ex-Prisoner of War**
- **Purple Heart Recipient**
- **Project SHAD** (on ships) and **Project 112** (on land) testing that began in 1962
- Veterans treated with **Nasopharyngeal Radium** during active duty
- **Iraqi Freedom/Enduring Freedom** veterans within 2 years of discharge from Reserves or National Guard

## Co-Payments and Health Insurance

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### **Where does the VA get the money for health care for veterans?**

- Funds from Congress (tax dollars)
- Funds from a veteran's health insurance
- Co-payments from veterans

### **Where does the money go?**

All of the money that the VA collects from insurance companies and co-payments are given to the Medical Center network to pay for veteran programs.

### **Why does the VA bill your health insurance?**

By law, the VA must bill a veteran's health insurance for treatment for non-service connected problems. This means that the VA must bill any health insurance plan that covers you, your spouse, your guardian, etc.

Exception: Treatment for service-connected conditions are not billed to insurance companies.

Any money collected from your insurance company is used to lower the amount you owe out-of-pocket.

*The VA needs to have your health insurance and billing information.*

- Always bring your insurance card(s) with you when you come to the VA.
- Please ensure we have your current address at each visit.

Your insurance coverage does NOT affect your eligibility for VA health care

Thank you for choosing the VA for your health care needs.



# WHAT IS VESTING?

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**Vesting is a mini-assessment of your health history and current physical condition.**

## **What do you need to bring?**

- A copy of your medical record from your current doctor.
- A list of all medicines that you take – both prescribed and over-the-counter. This includes the dose and how often you take it. You should bring your medicine containers with you to the visit.



## **What happens?**

You will see a V.A. provider. Your V.A. provider may be a doctor, nurse practitioner or physician assistant.

This provider will do a history and physical.

He/she may order blood work or other tests at this time.

He/she **will not** be able to order any prescriptions for you.

## **How long will this take?**

Plan to spend about 2-hours at the Medical Center or Clinic location where your “vesting” is done.

# PRIME CARE VISIT

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## What is primary care?

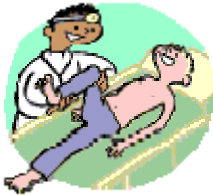
It is our goal that each patient have one provider assigned to his/her care. Primary care providers are responsible for the healthcare of their assigned patients. They refer patients to specialists as needed.

## What do you need to bring?

- A copy of your medical record from your current doctor.
- A list of all medicines that you take – both prescribed and over-the-counter. This includes the dose and how often you take it. You should bring your medicine containers with you to the visit.



## Your first primary care visit:



- A complete medical history and physical exam will be done. This will include a pain assessment.
- You will have a health care screening completed.
- Your immunization history and needs will be identified.
- Any prescriptions you need will be written, so you can obtain them at the V.A. Pharmacy.
- Diagnostic tests and blood work may be ordered.
- Any referrals for other care and evaluation will be made.

### How long will this visit take?

You should plan to be at the Medical Center or Clinic for at least two to three hours for your first visit.



## Healthwise for Life

You will be given a copy of the *Healthwise for Life* book. It provides you with information on a wide range of health problems, and ways that you can stay healthy.

## Prescriptions

You will be able to take your prescriptions to the Pharmacy to have them filled. You may need to talk to a Pharmacist about your prescriptions before they can be filled. This is done so we can be sure that you understand what your medications are for, and any side effects that you need to watch for.

# Your V.A. Health Care Providers

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## Primary Care:

Your health care provider may include:

### **Doctor**

A medical doctor (M.D.) or doctor of osteopathy (D.O.). Doctors are educated in many areas of medicine, and may be a primary care doctor or a specialist.

### **Nurse Practitioner (N.P.)**

A registered nurse with advanced education and training.

N.P.'s are educated to diagnose, monitor and treat chronic diseases.

### **Physician Assistant (P.A.)**

Licensed staff with general education in health care.

P.A.'s can treat many basic conditions.

## Specialists & Others:

### **Physician Specialists**

Doctors may specialize in many areas of medicine. Your primary care provider may decide that you also need to see a specialist.

### **Your Health Care Team:**

There are a wide variety of staff at the V.A. to meet your individual needs. Some of the types of special staff available include:

- Nurses: L.P.N.'s and R.N.'s
- Dietitians
- Physical Therapists
- Social Workers
- Counselors and Psychologists



# Be a Partner in Your Healthcare



The single most important way you can help yourself is to be an active member of the healthcare team. Taking an active role in your healthcare is a 5-step process:

## 1. Take part in decisions about your treatment.

- **Know** which provider or team is in charge of your care.
  - **Know** what tests you are to have and make sure you understand what is to be done, and why, before you consent to any test.
  - **Ask** questions. Your doctors and nurses want to be sure you understand your medicines, treatments, tests and activities.

## 2. Find out about your condition.

- **Ask** questions. Your healthcare team wants to be sure you understand your illness. There are handouts that the staff can give you on almost any topic.
- **Ask** to have the words repeated if unclear.
- It will help if you write down the questions to **ask** before each doctor/provider visit. Use the form that follows, or the one in your *Healthwise for Life* book.

## 3. Watch for problems and be involved in solving them.

- Describe your symptoms and/or pain clearly.
- Share any special needs.
- Between visits, keep a list of questions.
- Write down the things that are not normal, for example: pain, loss of appetite, frequent urination, light-headedness, etc.

## 4. Follow your treatment plan.

- **Ask** for a list of all **medicines** you must take at home. The list should include **all** your medicines, not just the new ones started in the hospital.
- **Ask** if there are any foods and drinks – including alcohol – that you should avoid.
- **Ask** about the side effects of your new medicines.



- **Ask for written directions** about your medicines, treatments and activities.
- Read the directions for your medicines and care and make sure you understand them before you leave the hospital.

## 5. Know who to contact if you have a problem.

- **Ask** who you should call if you have side effects or other problems.

### Getting involved pays off!

*Taking an active role in your care has many advantages. Our goal is to provide you with the highest level of quality care. We can do this best, if you partner with us.*

You may find it a help to bring a family member or friend with you to your visits. An extra set of ears can be helpful.

Your doctor, nurse and other healthcare providers welcome your involvement.

Use the form on the next page to prepare for your clinic visits.

# At Your Clinic Appointment:

## Be Informed – Ask Questions

We want to make sure we answer all of your questions when you come for any clinic visit. Please ask your provider to review and discuss the following points with you.

### Medications and Treatments:

- Instructions and directions for use \_\_\_\_\_
- Side effects, benefits, and risks \_\_\_\_\_
- Changes in medicines and treatments \_\_\_\_\_
- Reason for medicines and treatments \_\_\_\_\_

### Problems:

- What to do if I have a problem? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who to call if I have a problem? \_\_\_\_\_

### Concerns You Have About:

- Changes or problems at home
- Home care needs
- Anxiety/fears about condition or treatment

### Tests (if ordered): \_\_\_\_\_

- Why tests have been ordered
- How and when tests will be scheduled
- When test results will be available
- How to find out about test results

### Follow-up Care:

- Next appointment at this clinic \_\_\_\_\_
- Why do I need to see a specialist or other provider?

### Other Questions:

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**If there is anything that you do not understand,  
be sure to ASK questions**



## Making Clinic Appointments

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The process for making appointments is different at each medical center. Ask the staff how to best schedule appointments that will meet your needs.

Number to Call for Appointments \_\_\_\_\_

## Cancelling Clinic Appointments

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It is a VISN 10 goal and the VA nationwide to provide appointments to our veterans within 30 days of your requested date. This is not always possible, but we continually strive to meet this goal.

You can help us attain this goal by calling your VA Medical Center as soon as you know you will not be able to make any appointment. This will give medical center staff a chance to offer the time to another patient who is waiting for an appointment.

**The number to call to cancel an appointment is:** \_\_\_\_\_

You may leave a message at this number to cancel your appointment. Please be very specific when you leave a message.

**The following information is needed:**

- Full Name
- Last 4 of Social Security Number
- Name of Clinic
- Appointment Date
- You should also indicate if you want the appointment rescheduled.

# No Shows = Missed Opportunities

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A **no show** is when a patient **does not report** for a scheduled appointment, and **does not call** the VA to let us know that he/she cannot come in for a scheduled appointment.

**No shows affect our ability to provide timely appointments to other veterans. Last year, over 40,000 patients no showed an appointment.**

## What this means:

1. The patient did not call to cancel the appointment
2. A **missed opportunity** for another veteran who is waiting for an appointment to be scheduled into that time slot
3. Poor use of doctors, nurses and other support staff, when patients were not here as planned. This increases our costs of providing care and service to veterans.

**If you cannot make your appointment, please call to cancel your appointment as soon as you know you will not be able to keep your scheduled appointment date.**

To cancel an appointment call: \_\_\_\_\_

## You will need to provide:

1. Your full name
2. Last 4 numbers of your Social Security Number
3. Name of Clinic
4. Date of appointment



# For Healthcare Questions or Problems

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## For Routine (non-emergency) Questions:

1. Each patient is given a *Healthwise for Life* book (see page 21). You can find the answers for many of your questions in this book.
2. During the week, if you have a problem or symptoms, please call the clinic where you receive your care.

Do not delay calling at the first signs of a problem. Early treatment is key to dealing with many health care problems.

3. After hours, on weekends and holidays, you can call the **VA Tele-Nurse**.

**VA Tele-Nurse**  
**Call Toll Free: 1-888-VET-OHIO (1-888-838-6446)**

**What is VA Tele-Nurse?** We offer telephone advice for our Veterans. You may call the TELE-NURSE if you have **symptoms**, **questions**, or need **advice** about any health problem.

The VA TELE-NURSE can also give you information, counseling, and referrals to the nearest VA Medical Center or Clinic.

**When you call the Tele-Nurse** be prepared to answer these questions:

- Full Name
- Social Security Number
- Current Address
- Phone Number (and area code)
- Which VA Medical Center or Clinic you go to for your care
- Your Primary Care Physician
- All prescribed and over-the-counter medicines you currently take. It will help if you have the medicines you take by the phone when you call
- Reason for your call, and any medical or physical problems you have that will help the nurse answer your question

## Emergency Problems:

If you have a true emergency, get to the nearest Emergency Room right away!

### ***Know the Heart Attack Warning Signs***

Uncomfortable pressure, fullness, squeezing or pain anywhere in the chest lasting more than a few minutes

- Pain spreading to the shoulder, neck, in one or both arms, stomach or back
- Chest discomfort with lightheadedness, fainting, sweating, nausea, vomiting or shortness of breath
- Chest discomfort with a feeling of doom or imminent death

If you experience any of these warning signs, take 1 regular aspirin (unless you are allergic to aspirin).

### **What do you do if you have these signs?**

- **CALL 911**
- Get to the **NEAREST** Emergency Room
- **DON'T WAIT**

### ***Know the Warning Signs for a Stroke***

The most common signs include:

- Numbness, weakness or paralysis in the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body.
- Sudden blurry or decreased vision.
- Trouble speaking or understanding what others are saying.
- Loss of balance or coordination.

**REMEMBER:** Not everyone has all of these signs. And, some symptoms may come and go.

### **What do you do if you have these signs?**

- **CALL 911**
- Get to the **NEAREST** Emergency Room
- **DON'T WAIT**

A stroke is an **EMERGENCY!** Doctors have medicine that may save your life **if** you get to the hospital in time.



# Clinics Closed

## Federal Holidays

The VA HealthCare System of Ohio observes the following holidays. **Clinics are not open on these holidays.**

**New Year's Day**

**Martin Luther King (January)**

**President's Day (February)**

**Memorial Day**

**Independence Day**

**Labor Day**

**Columbus Day (October)**

**Veterans Day**

**Thanksgiving**

**Christmas**



## V.A. Medical Center Pharmacies

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The V.A. Pharmacies use a **formulary system**.

### **What is a formulary?**

A formulary is a list of approved medicines that are available to V.A. patients.

### **Will I be able to get the same medicines at the V.A. that I have been taking?**

You will be able to get medicines that treat all of the problems or conditions that you have. But, the drugs may be different than the ones that you have been taking.

- **Your V.A. Provider** will not simply re-write the prescriptions that your doctor outside the V.A. was giving you.
- **“Outside Medications”** – the ones you may have been taking before coming to the V.A. may not be a drug that we provide.
- **“Equivalent Medications”** – drugs that do the same job as your outside medicines may be prescribed, if your provider decides that they are just as appropriate for you to take.
- **Specialist Referrals:** Sometimes your primary care provider will need to refer you to a V.A. specialist before certain drugs can be prescribed for you. For example you may need to see a V.A. cardiologist (for heart problems), an oncologist (for cancer treatment), etc.

**Our goal is to make sure you get the right treatment!**

### **Mail-Only Medications**

There are some drugs that your local V.A. pharmacy does not stock. These medicines must be mailed to you from Chicago.

Only new prescriptions and urgent medicines will be filled by the pharmacy at your local V.A. All refills must be mailed to you.

### **How Do I Get My Refills?**

Most of the time, patients need to request refills by mail, phone or on the internet at [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)

The process at each Medical Center may not be the same. Ask for the specific directions at your local facility.

## **Your Medications**

It is important that your provider and your pharmacist also know **all** of the over-the-counter medicines that you take.

# Affirming Our Commitment to Patient Education

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**Your Health Care Providers** include Doctors, Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants. All your health care team members are great resources for health information. **Ask them!**

**Healthwise for Life** is a book given to you in an effort to provide you with the best health care. Our goal is to help you stay healthy. This book is easy to read and can answer many of your questions that relate either to your health or illnesses. It has been given to you to help you know more about your health and assist in the shared decision-making process.

**Patient Education Programs** and support groups are offered on a wide-range of topics to help you and your family members. **Ask** your health care team about programs that may be helpful for you to achieve the best possible health.

**Veteran's Health Magazine** is the VISN 10 patient education newsletter. Each edition has up to date health topics. The newsletter is sent to your home four times a year, and is also available on the VISN website at [www.visn10.va.gov](http://www.visn10.va.gov)

**MOVE!** is a national weight management program designed to help veterans lose weight, keep it off and improve their health. Each of the medical centers has programs and services in place to help you with weight problems. Go to [www.move.va.gov](http://www.move.va.gov) for tips on losing weight and keeping it off.

**MyHealthVet** is a website just for veterans. Besides links to veterans services, you can also get VA news, have access to a library of health care topics, and order your prescription refills on-line. Future updates will allow you to access your medical profile and information about your VA healthcare. [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)

## Major VA Health Care Initiatives

The VA has focused programs to improve the health, wellness, and well-being of our veterans in the following areas:

- Weight Management
- Smoking Cessation
- Substance Abuse
- Diabetes
- High Blood Pressure
- P.T.S.D.

Your provider can give you more information on these programs.

### **Other Consumer Health Materials**

You will find a variety of handouts throughout our facilities on a wide-range of health topics. There are books, pamphlets and videos available for your use on a wide range of health topics, at several of our medical centers. If you have a special need, **ask** your health care team how you can find the health care information that you need to better understand your disease, tests and treatments.

## MyHealtheVet

<b>What To Do Online</b>	<b>How to Get Online</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Order prescription refills online</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check the status of your refill order anytime</li> <li>• View and track your entire prescription history online</li> <li>• Refills will be delivered through the Consolidated Mail Out Pharmacy (CMOP) Program</li> </ul> </li>   <li>• <b>Add information to your personal health journal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Allergies</li> <li>• Tests and procedures</li> <li>• Over-the-counter medicines and supplements</li> <li>• Military health history</li> <li>• Recent medical events</li> <li>• Immunizations</li> <li>• VA and Non-VA treatment sites</li> <li>• Personal information: self and emergency contact information, health care provider, health insurance. <i>The personal information can be printed on <b>Wallet ID Card</b>.</i></li> </ul> </li>   <li>• <b>Record and track health readings in your personal Health eLogs.</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li style="width: 50%;">• Blood pressure</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Body temperature</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Blood sugar</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Weight</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Cholesterol</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Heart Rate</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Pain</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Pulse Oximetry</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Activity Journal</li> <li style="width: 50%;">• Food Journal</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Go to <a href="http://www.myhealth.va.gov">www.myhealth.va.gov</a></b> to register. If you registered before 11/11/2004 you must re-register. A Registration Wizard will guide you through the seven step process.</p> <p><b>Step 1 Create a User ID</b> <i>User ID is the unique name of your MyHealtheVet account.</i></p> <p><b>Step 2 Create a Password</b> <i>Password is your code to access your account</i></p> <p><b>Step 3 Create a Password Hint</b> <i>The hint is used to help you remember your password.</i></p> <p><b>Step 4 Provide Registration Information</b> <i>Information includes your name, email address, veteran status, etc.</i></p> <p><b>Step 5 Accept Terms &amp; Conditions</b> <i>Read and accept the terms for using MyHealtheVet.</i></p> <p><b>Step 6 Understand Privacy Policy</b> <i>Read and understand the VA's policy for keeping your information private.</i></p> <p><b>Step 7 Confirm Registration</b> <i>Review and confirm the completed steps.</i></p> <p><b>HELP Getting Online</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MyHealtheVet website. Just click on any HELP button or the (?) symbol for assistance.</li> <li>• Staff may be available at your local facility to help you.</li> </ul>



## ***Other Features***

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- Three (3) trusted sources of health information is available in the **Health Info** section: VA –developed Health Information; MedlinePlus – a government resource; and Healthwise – a consumer health education resource.
- View and download a virtual tour that will introduce you to the tools and features of the site.
- Access Learn About – a feature that allows you to select A-Z topics, such as health education, computer training resources, and other areas of interest.
- Get the latest news on VA health, benefits and special veteran interests and events.
- See the latest “Tip of theDay”, your favorite links and weather conditions for your local area.

## ***What’s Coming in the Future?***

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- View appointment dates
- View co-payment information
- Delegate access to all or some of your online information to others
- Read a copy of key parts of your VA medical record

**My HealthVet** is a web-based application designed specifically for veterans and their families. It will help veterans work better with healthcare providers to achieve the best possible health.

# PREVENTION AND WELLNESS BEGINS WITH A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

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Our goal is to help you stay healthy. Prevention and wellness are important aspects of your health care. This information has been written to **help you make healthy lifestyle choices**. If you have any questions, please discuss them with your primary care nurse or health care provider.

_____	_____
(My Primary Care Team)	(Phone Number)
_____	_____
(My Health Care Provider)	(My Team Nurse)
_____	_____
(My Pharmacist)	(Pharmacist Phone Number)

## HEALTH SCREENING

Health screenings are available at the VA. Screenings available include:

- Alcohol
- Blood Pressure
- Cholesterol
- Depression
- Diet & Weight
- Eye Exam
- Fecal Occult Blood
- Hepatitis C
- Mammogram
- Oral Health
- Pain
- Post Traumatic Stress (PTSD)
- Pap Smears
- Rectal Exams
- Safety
- Sexual Trauma
- Tobacco Use
- Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA)

***Ask your primary health care provider about these screenings.***

## SMOKING

Tobacco in all forms has serious health risks. There is no safe number of cigarettes. Smoking is strongly linked to an increased risk of:

- Chronic Bronchitis
- Emphysema
- Heart Disease
- High Blood Pressure
- Dementia
- Stroke
- Lung Cancer
- Other cancers (esophagus, bladder & kidney)

***If you want to stop smoking, ask for a referral to the Smoking Cessation Program***

## NUTRITION

For a healthy diet follow these guidelines:

- Eat 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day
- Eat 2 small servings of protein each day
- Eat 6 servings of whole grains (bread, cereal, pasta) each day
- Use less salt
- Limit the amount of fats and oils
- Maintain your BMI (body mass index) less than 26; this measure will be done once each year – ask your provider what your BMI is.

***If you want to lose weight ask for a referral to the MOVE (weight loss program)***

## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Physical activity is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. Benefits include:

- Improved muscle strength and endurance
- Improved flexibility
- Stronger bones
- Improved heart function and circulation
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Weight reduction or maintenance
- Improved sense of well-being

An **Activity Program** can be planned to meet your needs and health conditions. ***Check with your provider about an activity program.***

## ALCOHOL

**Too much alcohol** in any form (beer, wine or hard liquor) may cause physical health problems. Pregnant women should not drink alcohol during pregnancy.

**Substance Abuse Treatment Programs Are Available**  
*Please talk to your health care provider!*

## STRESS

Stress is a normal, vital part of life. But if not controlled, it may lead to physical and emotional illness. Learning to manage stress can lower your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, back and muscle aches, depression and digestive problems.

### **Some Ways to Decrease Stress**

- Walking
- Reading
- Practice deep breathing
- Laughing
- Hobbies
- Pets
- Volunteering
- Enjoying the company of others

### **Relaxation is the Key to Stress Management**

**If you want professional counseling,  
ask your health care provider for a referral.**

## REDUCE YOUR RISK FOR HIV & HCV

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is caused by a virus (HIV). By preventing HIV infection, you can prevent AIDS. Hepatitis C is a disease of the liver caused by hepatitis C virus (HCV). There is currently no cure for AIDS and Hepatitis C and no vaccine to prevent HIV/HCV infections. You can reduce your risk of getting HIV and HCV by:

- Not having sex
- Having sex with only one, mutually faithful, uninfected partner
- Using a latex condom correctly each time you have sex
- Not shooting drugs or sharing needles and syringes with others

## SUN PROTECTION

Sun exposure increases the risk of skin cancer. Check with your provider if you have skin lesions that change appearance or do not heal.

### To Protect Yourself

- Wear a hat with a 3-inch brim
- Wear long sleeves
- Use sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or more

## IMMUNIZATION

**Tetanus/Diphtheria:** Protect yourself with a shot every 10 years

My last tetanus shot was given \_\_\_\_\_

**Pneumonia Shot:** If you are 65-years or older, or if you have diabetes, heart disease, lung disease or certain other conditions, you should have a pneumonia shot.

My last pneumonia shot was given \_\_\_\_\_

**Flu Shot:** Protect yourself with a flu shot each year, from the **Flu Clinic**.

Each Fall, the Primary Care service sponsors a Flu Clinic, open to all patients. It usually begins early in October, and runs into November.

You are strongly urged to get a flu shot each year.

If you are not vested, you may be vested at the time of your Flu Clinic visit.

My last flu shot was given \_\_\_\_\_

## KNOW YOUR NUMBERS

Blood Pressure \_\_\_\_\_

Cholesterol \_\_\_\_\_

Body Mass Index (BMI) \_\_\_\_\_

Weight \_\_\_\_\_

## HealthierUS Veterans

### ***Eat Healthy – Be Active – Get Fit for Life***

- Aim for at least 5 servings of colorful vegetables or fruit each day
- Make half your grains whole grains
- Know the limits on fat, salt and sugar
- Have 3 servings of lowfat milk, yogurt, cheese or other calcium-rich foods each day
- Control calories
- Drink water or other low calorie beverages

### ***Obesity: A Major Risk Factor***

If you are overweight or obese, you are at a higher risk for

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart disease
- and many other diseases that could threaten your health

### ***Here's What You Can Do:***

Stay active and eat healthy. Regular physical activity and good nutrition help you:

- Have more energy
- Control blood sugar
- Decrease “bad” (LDL) cholesterol and raise “good” (HDL) cholesterol
- Reduce body fat and weigh gain
- Lower blood pressure

### **The HealthierUS Veterans Initiative Can Help You**

#### ***MOVE!***

*MOVE!* is VA's weight management program designed to help you lose weight, keep it off and improve your health. Find out more at: [www.move.va.gov](http://www.move.va.gov) – or – ask your provider for local details.

#### ***MyHealth\_eVet***

Use MyHealth\_eVet as a good source for information about you health and wellness. [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov)

### ***Eat Healthy – Be Active – Get Fit for Life***

- Use the stairs instead of the elevator
- Stretch while watching TV
- Park further away from your destination
- Take a walk (or wheelchair roll) each day
- Move your body every chance you get

# Customer Service

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## **Patient Rights & Responsibilities**

Copies of Patient Rights and Responsibilities are posted and visible in each VISN 10 medical facility in a variety of locations. If you would like a copy of the Patient Rights and Responsibilities, please contact your Patient Representative at one of the locations listed on the next page.

## **Customer Service**

We want to provide you with impressive care and service. We measure customer satisfaction through two types of survey tools.

**Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients** are questionnaires mailed to 10% of our inpatients and outpatients each month by a national company, Picker Institute. Patients are selected randomly and responses remain anonymous. We only receive a summary of the total results. If you receive one of these surveys in the mail to complete, we strongly encourage you to take the time to complete it. We have made many improvements in our care systems based on the feedback that we have received.

**QuikCards** are available to **all** inpatients and outpatients to complete on-the-spot. They are provided in strategic locations throughout our medical centers, or you may request one from the Patient Advocate.

If you have a problem we encourage you to let us know, so that we can find a way to better meet your needs and expectations.

## **Patient Representative (Advocate)**

The Patient Representatives work on your behalf to ensure your all-around satisfaction with VA healthcare services. They are available to meet with you when you have problems or issues that the staff have not been able to solve to your satisfaction.

**To Reach Your Patient Advocate  
See the Next Page**

## HOW TO REACH YOUR PATIENT REPRESENTATIVE (ADVOCATE)

<p><b>CHILLICOTHE</b></p> <p>Office: Building 31 Room B050 &amp; B057</p> <p>Phone: 740-773-1141 ext. 6107 – or - 7945</p>	<p><b>DAYTON</b></p> <p>Office: Room 1D – 108E</p> <p>Phone: 937-268-6511 ext. 2164 – or - 2488</p>	<p><b>CLEVELAND</b></p> <p><b>Brecksville Office:</b> Building 2, Rooms 104 &amp; D141</p> <p>Phone: 440-526-3030 ext. 6713 –or – 7790</p>
<p><b>CINCINNATI</b></p> <p>Office: Room A103</p> <p>Phone: 513-475-6527</p>	<p><b>COLUMBUS</b></p> <p>Office: Room 1008</p> <p>Phone: 614-257-5290</p>	<p><b>Wade Park Office:</b></p> <p>1<sup>st</sup> Floor Rooms B122 &amp; 123</p> <p>Phone: 216-791-3800 ext. 4019 &amp; 4026</p>

**JCAHO** (Joint Commission Accreditation Healthcare Organizations)

Patients may contact the JCAHO about any issues that involve patient safety or quality of care. 1-800-994-6610



# Living Wills or Advance Directives

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**Advance Directives are decisions that you should make before you are sick or as soon as you become sick.** You may not always be able to make decisions on your own. The Living Will or Advance Directives tell those who are caring for you what you want.

**The two types of advance directives are explained below:**

## **1. Living Will**

- This is a legal document.
- It tells **your** wishes – what you do or do not want if you are not able to make your wishes known.

## **2. Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care**

- This is a legal document.
- You may choose a person you trust to make health care choices for you, if you are not able to speak or make your own decisions. Be sure to tell that person what you want. You should also talk to your doctor.

### **You have the right to:**

- Be told about your health and health problems and the plans for your treatment
- Appoint someone to make healthcare decisions for you if, in the future, you are not able to make those decisions for yourself
- Accept or refuse any medical treatment
- Indicate what medical treatment(s) you do or do not want, if in the future, you are not able to make your wishes known

### **Who can help you decide about a Living Will?**

Talk with your Family, Doctor, Social Worker or Chaplain.

**You may get Advance Directive forms from a social worker or chaplain.**

## Words You Need to Know

**Advance Directive:** A written document that tells what you want or do not want, if you are not able to make your wishes about health care treatments known.

**Artificial Nutrition and Hydration:** When food (nutrients) and water are fed into you through a tube inserted through your nose or abdomen into your stomach or intestine, or given to you intravenously.

**Comfort Care:** Care that helps keep you comfortable, but does not treat or cure your disease. Bathing, turning, keeping your lips and mouth moist, and giving pain medicine are all examples of comfort care.

**Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR):** Treatment to try to restart a person's breathing or heartbeat. It may be done by breathing into your mouth and pushing on your chest, by putting a tube through your mouth or nose into your throat, giving medications, giving an electric shock to your chest, or by other means.

**Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care:** A document that appoints a specific individual to make health care decisions for you, if you cannot make your own decisions.

**Life-Sustaining Treatment:** Any medical treatment that is used to delay the moment of death. A breathing machine (ventilator), CPR, and artificial nutrition and hydration are types of life-sustaining treatments.

**Living Will:** Instructions you have made in advance to tell what medical treatment you do or do not want if you cannot make your wishes known.

**Permanent Vegetative State:** When a person is unconscious, with no hope of regaining consciousness, even with medical treatment. The body may move and the eyes may be open, but as far as anyone can tell, the person can't think or communicate.

**Surrogate Decision-Maker:** This is an individual, organization or other body authorized to make health care decisions for you, if you cannot do so yourself.

## *Ethical Concerns & Patient Care*

### *Ethics Committees*

Each Medical Center has an Ethics Committee to help you with difficult decisions. **Ethical decisions** often involve a conflict with our moral values and beliefs. Sometimes deciding what you want to do is hard.

#### **Do you have question or concerns about?**

- Patient Rights
- Do Not Resuscitate Orders
- Advance Directives, Living Wills
- End of Life issues
- Next-of-Kin issues
- The type of care given/recommended
- Honoring of religious beliefs

#### **What is an Ethics Committee?**

The Ethics Committee is group of people here to help you deal with ethical concerns which arise with patient care.

Members of the Ethics Committee can assist patients, patient family members, a patient-chosen friend or appointed representative, or staff.

#### **Who are the members?**

Doctors	Patient Advocate
Chaplains	Social Workers
Nurses	Psychologist

Other staff may also serve as members.

#### **What are some of the Committee's activities?**

- Case consultation
- Education
- Policy Recommendations

#### **What are some questions dealt with by the committee?**

- Benefit or lack of benefit of proposed treatments
- Caregivers' concerns about treatment decisions
- Ethical issues about treatment options
- Decisions to continue, withhold, and/or withdraw treatment

#### **What happens when an Ethics Consult is made?**

A member will be assigned to serve as a consultant to help address the issue or concern. He/she will:

- *Meet with all the parties involved and listen to each person's concerns*
- *Review and explain policies that need to be considered in reaching a decision*
- *Research issues and gather*
- *Make recommendations*
- *Help those involved develop a plan*

#### **Who can request an Ethics Committee consult?**

Any person involved with the patient's health care can make a referral.

• Patients	• Families	• Staff
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*There is no charge for this service.*

## Five Steps to Safer Health Care

### 1. Ask questions

Ask questions and be sure you understand the answers.

It's your body and you have the right to know.

- If you don't understand something you are told, let the person know.
- Have a trusted family member or friend with you. They can help remind you of questions you wanted to ask. And, they can help remember the answers to your questions.

### 2. Keep and bring a list of ALL the medicines that you take

- Give your provider and pharmacist a list of all medicines that you take, including over-the-counter drugs.
- Tell doctors, nurses and pharmacists about allergies you have, or negative reactions you have had to medicines in the past.

### 3. Get the results of any test or procedure

- Ask when and how you will get the results of tests or procedures.
- Do not assume the results are fine if you do not get them when expected.
- Ask what the results mean for your care.

### 4. Pay attention

**Make sure you are getting the right treatments and medicines.**

**Don't assume anything.**

- Tell the nurse, doctor or pharmacist if something doesn't seem quite right.
- Expect health care workers to introduce themselves when they meet you and look for their I.D. badges.
- Notice if care workers have washed their hands. Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of infections. Don't be afraid to remind staff to do this.
- Make sure your identity is checked before you receive a medicine, test or treatment.

### 5. Be involved in all decisions about your treatment.

- You should agree on what is to be done.
- You need to know what the next steps in your care are.
- Don't be afraid to ask for a second opinion.

# One VA

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## WHO TO CONTACT

### Summary of Federal Benefits for Veterans & Dependents

#### **Veterans Benefits Administration**

Disability  
Education  
Family and Survivor Benefits  
Home Loan Guaranty  
Life Insurance  
Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment

#### **Veterans Health Administration**

Home Health Care  
Mental Health & Substance Abuse  
Nursing Homes/Long Term Care  
Prescription Medications  
Preventive Medicine Services  
Primary and Specialty Care  
Rehabilitation Services  
Respite and Hospice Care  
Surgery  
Women Veterans Health Programs

#### **National Cemetery Administration**

Burial of Veterans in a VA National Cemetery  
Memorial Remembrances: headstones, markers, presidential memorial certificates, and burial flags

#### **Transportation**

Contact local county Veterans Service Officer

### **“Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents” VA Pamphlet 80-00-1**

To get a copy, please phone, fax or write to:

**Superintendent of Documents  
P.O. Box 371954  
Pittsburgh, PA 15250-7954  
Phone: (202) 512-1800  
Fax: (202) 512-2250**

Include your name, address, daytime phone, and a payment of \$5.00 each (\$6.25 to mail to a foreign address)

#### **General Benefits**

<b>VA Hotline</b>	1-800-827-1000
<b>Education &amp; Training</b>	1-888-442-4551
<b>Headstones &amp; Markers</b>	1-800-697-6947
<b>Life Insurance</b>	1-800-669-8477

#### **Healthcare Benefits**

<b>Veterans Healthcare</b>	1-877-222-8387
<b>Mammography Helpline</b>	1-888-492-7844
<b>CHAMPVA</b>	1-800-733-8387
<b>Health Eligibility Center</b>	1-800-733-8387
<b>Spina Bifida</b>	1-800-929-8387

#### **Miscellaneous**

<b>Debt Management Ctr.</b>	1-800-827-0648	<b>Devices for the Deaf</b>	1-800-829-4833
<b>Gulf War Vet Helpline</b>	1-800-749-8387	<b>TeleNurse</b>	1-888-838-6446