



VISN 8
VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

Veterans HEALTH MATTERS

WELLNESS MAGAZINE FOR VETERANS IN FLORIDA, SOUTH GEORGIA & THE CARIBBEAN

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TAKE ONE HOME

Living Heart Healthy



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To Our Readers

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In fact, the CDC estimates that about every 25 seconds, an American will have a coronary event. On page 3 of this issue, learn the signs and symptoms of a heart attack that can make a lifesaving difference — for both sexes. Heart attacks don't happen to just men – women account for nearly 50 percent of heart disease deaths. It's important to know your risks as well as how to prevent coronary heart disease.



Have you ever had a hospital stay and found it hard to sleep? Rest is good medicine, and in our VA hospitals in Florida and the Caribbean, protecting the sleep of our patients is a top priority. Learn the steps we're taking to reduce noise and speed the healing process for our Veterans in the hospital, pages 4 and 5.

For many of us, the start of the New Year comes with a renewed focus on improving our health. Eating wisely with a variety of healthful foods can help protect you from heart disease, type 2 diabetes and some types of cancer. Learn more on page 6.

Finally, for sports fans, it's football season and on page 7 is an easy recipe to make your game-day party delicious and healthy.

All the best in 2012.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nevin M. Weaver".

Nevin M. Weaver, FACHE
VISN 8 Network Director



PARKING GARAGE OPENS IN TAMPA. The James A. Haley Veterans Hospital's long-awaited, six-story parking garage opened on November 15, 2011. Constructed in 1972, Haley is one of the country's biggest, busiest VA hospitals.

Is it a HEART ATTACK?

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States for both men and women. Every 25 seconds, someone in the U.S. has a heart attack, according to CDC estimates. And a heart attack can happen to people of every age, sex, and background.

Heart attack warning signs

If you think you or someone you know may be having a heart attack, call 911 right away. There are five major symptoms of heart attack:

1. Chest pain or discomfort
2. Pain or discomfort in the jaw, neck or back
3. Feeling weak, light-headed, or faint
4. Pain or discomfort in the arm or shoulder
5. Shortness of breath

Is it heartburn?

Sometimes the pain or discomfort of heartburn can be confusing. How do you know if you are suffering from indigestion – or something more serious?

Heartburn – the pain or burning sensation in the chest caused by acid reflux – usually occurs while lying down or bending over. You may also have a sour or acidic taste in your mouth.

“It can be tricky to know what causes chest pain, and sometimes a heart attack feels like indigestion,” says Dr. Jennifer Pearson, MD, Bay Pines VA Healthcare System Emergency Department Assistant Chief.

“With a heart attack, it is important to act fast, so if you have any unusual symptoms you’ve never had with heartburn, such as pain in your arms or jaw, a dizzy feeling, or if you are having trouble breathing, call 911 immediately.”

Know your risk for heart disease.

Luckily, you can prevent heart disease by making healthy lifestyle choices. The first step is to know your risks.

- You have had a previous heart attack or stroke
- You are a man age 45 or older or a woman age 55 or older
- Your father or brother had a heart attack before age 55; your mother or sister before age 65
- You have high blood pressure
- You have high blood cholesterol
- You are a smoker
- You are overweight
- You have diabetes or metabolic syndrome
- You do not get enough exercise

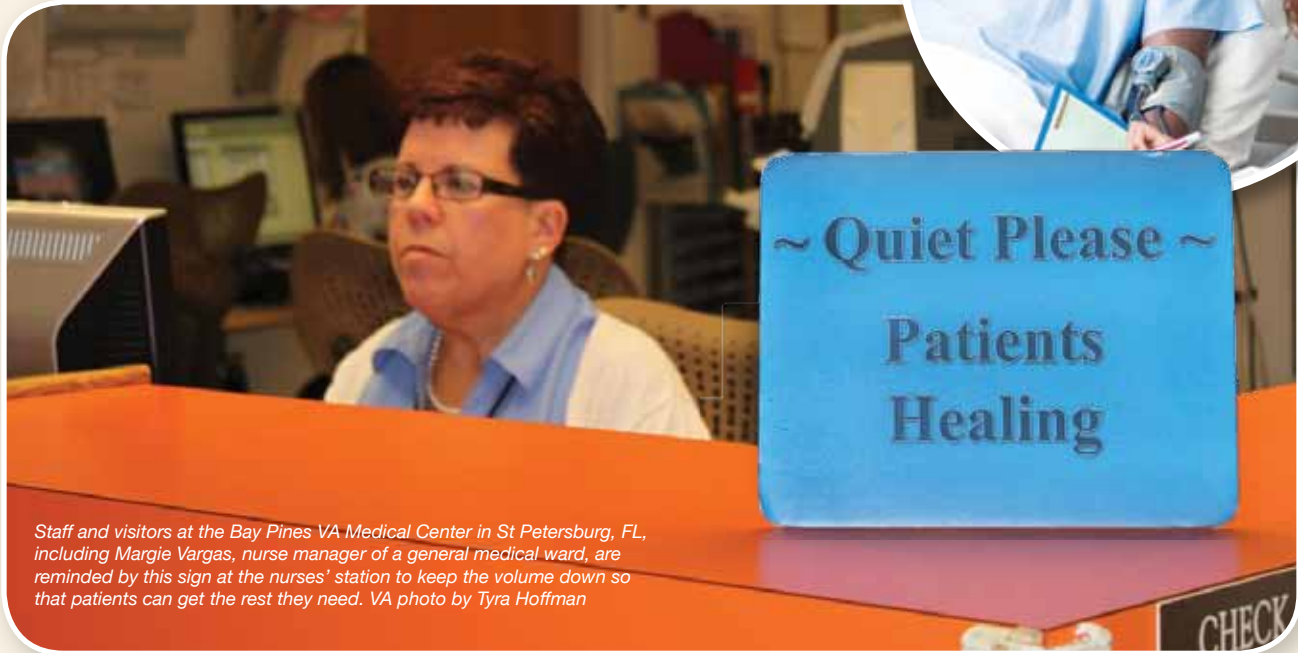


Women and heart disease

Remember that heart attacks happen to everyone. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for women in the United States. While chest pain is still the most common sign of a heart attack in men and women, women are more likely than men to experience other symptoms, such as shortness of breath, jaw pain, nausea, vomiting or excessive sweating.

QUIET PLEASE: Veterans Healing

What We're Doing About Noise

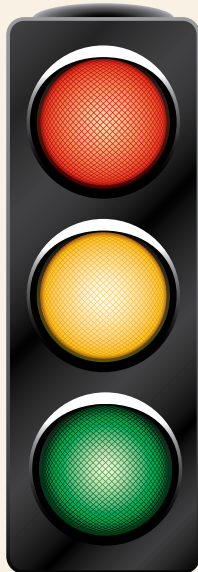


Staff and visitors at the Bay Pines VA Medical Center in St Petersburg, FL, including Margie Vargas, nurse manager of a general medical ward, are reminded by this sign at the nurses' station to keep the volume down so that patients can get the rest they need. VA photo by Tyra Hoffman

It's a proven fact that rest is good medicine – a quiet environment is a healing environment. And if you've ever been a patient in the hospital, you know it can be anything but quiet. People shout down the hallway, carts thump and rattle, doors bang, and overhead announcements blare. It's hard enough to rest in a strange bed without the added challenges that hospitals pose.

In patient-centered hospitals, protecting the sleep of patients is a top priority. Initiatives to reduce noise levels help build awareness among staff and make for a better overall hospital experience for patients.

Hospitals in VISN 8, which include VA facilities in Florida and the Caribbean, have undertaken campaigns that significantly reduce noise on in-patient units. Here's a snapshot of some of the initiatives.



The stoplight-style **"Yacker Tracker"** is an audio-visual reminder to VA staff and others to reduce the noise in a patient area. It monitors noise levels and alerts caregivers when they exceed an acceptable level. Yacker Trackers are being tested on in-patient wards at the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital in Tampa, FL., and the Bay Pines VA Medical Center in St Petersburg, FL.

Employees at the **Malcom Randall VA Medical Center in Gainesville, FL** closely monitor noise levels with designated quiet times and adjusted medical and treatment times so patients get the rest they need. A common patient complaint is the noise associated with cleaning, which often takes place during hours Veterans are trying to sleep. At Malcom Randall, housekeeping tasks are done at times other than in the early morning or at night. Likewise, respiratory therapy services are provided at times that minimize night-time disturbances. Since these steps have been taken, hospitalized Veterans are significantly less bothered by noise on these units. They also report being more satisfied with their in-patient experience. How do we know? We asked them.

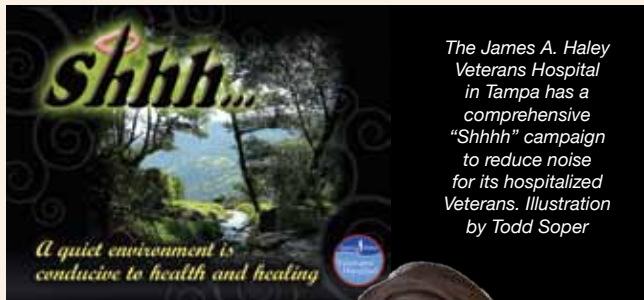
GRAB YOUR HEALTH

by the horns

14 easy ways to be more involved in your care

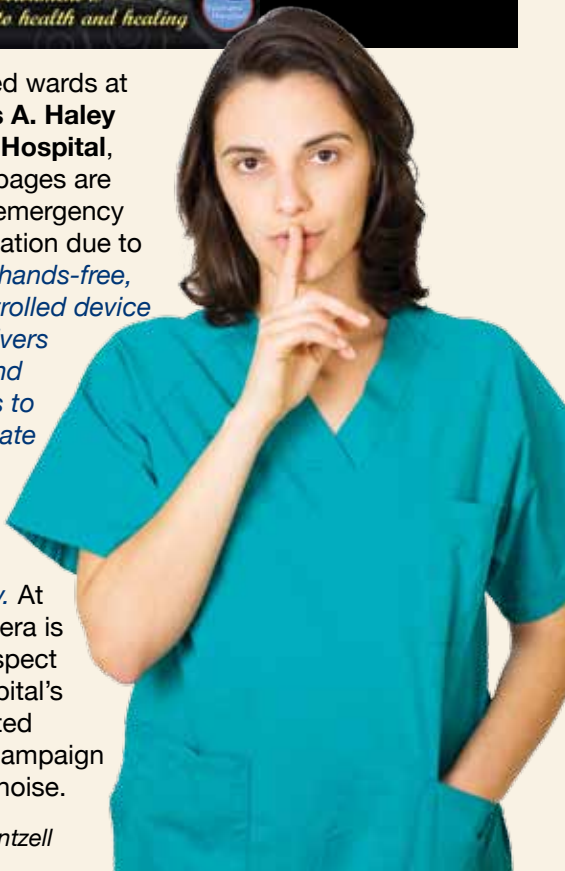


Lowering telephone ring volumes at nursing stations, making changes to the way meals are delivered, providing headphones for Veterans who want to watch television, and replacing noisy wheels on carts are all ways VISN 8 hospitals protect patients' sleep. At the **Bay Pines VA Medical Center**, generous donors help the VA provide comfort kits to patients that include ear plugs and sleep masks.



On selected wards at the **James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital**, overhead pages are limited to emergency communication due to **Vocera**, a hands-free, voice-controlled device that caregivers wear around their necks to communicate between staff and patients quickly and quietly. At Haley, Vocera is just one aspect of the hospital's multi-faceted "Shhhh" Campaign to reduce noise.

- Susan Wentzell



1. Give your health care team the right information about your current health problems, concerns about your health, past illnesses & hospitalizations, medicines (including over-the-counter and herbals) and why you take them.
2. Plan ahead for your visits by writing down any questions you want to ask. Share them with your provider at the beginning of each visit.
3. Share ideas and beliefs about your health problems and treatments with your provider.
4. Tell your health care team about any stressful aspects of your life that might affect your health or your ability to manage everyday activities.
5. Participate in decisions about your health care with your provider. Let your provider know if there are treatment options you prefer.
6. Ask questions about anything that's not clear to you.
7. Speak up with any concerns about the care you are receiving or if you think something is wrong.
8. Request written information and instructions that you can keep and share with your family or caregiver.
9. Gather information about your health problems from your treatment team, the VA library, and websites such as My HealtheVet.
10. Ask when and how you will get results of any tests or treatments.
11. Be clear about any medicines you are prescribed and why you will be taking them.
12. Find out who to call if you have a problem. Make sure you get that person's full name and telephone number.
13. Let your team know if you face any obstacles to your care or if your condition changes.
14. Have a family member or friend come with you to your appointment to help you, if you wish.



Unlock the power of healthy eating

Your diet is key to your health! You may know that you should eat more fruits, vegetables and whole grains, but how much is enough? Which foods are best? What is a whole grain, anyway?

Know your food to crack the code!

Fruits and vegetables: Aim for 5-9 servings of fresh, canned or frozen fruits and vegetables per day. Try to avoid fruit with added sugar or syrups and vegetables prepared with butter, salt or creamy sauces.

Mix it up! Vary the colors, textures and flavors of your fruits and veggies. Help yourself to:

- Dark greens (spinach, broccoli, kale)
- Oranges (carrots, pumpkin, sweet potatoes, peppers)
- Purples (beets, eggplants)
- Legumes (lentils, split peas, pinto, kidney and black beans)
- Starchy vegetables (potatoes, corn)

Whole grains: Whole grain means all parts of the grain seed are intact. Grains are more nutritious this way. Whole grains include whole wheat, brown rice, quinoa, buckwheat, whole oats or oatmeal, bulgur, whole rye, sorghum, whole grain, barley, and wild rice.

Aim for 3 ounces of whole grain per day. One ounce is about 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of breakfast cereal, or ½ cup of cooked pasta.

To see if a food is whole grain, check the ingredients list. A whole grain should be the first ingredient on the list.

Dairy, meat and protein: Aim for 3 cups of fat-free or low-fat milk products per day.

Choose lean meats and poultry. When buying beef, aim for round steaks and roasts, and avoid “prime” cuts. Look for the least visible fat and buy extra-lean ground beef (93% or 95%).

Eat at least one 8-ounce serving of seafood per week. You can choose fish (salmon, tuna, tilapia, trout) or shellfish (shrimp, crab, oysters). Fish is good for your heart!

Try for one meatless main dish per week. You can try meals made with beans or peas, such as split pea soup, chili made with kidney or pinto beans, a salad with garbanzo beans, black bean enchiladas, or veggie burgers.

For a protein-filled snack, have a handful of nuts. They are also great in entrees: pine nuts in pesto, slivered almonds on steamed vegetables or peanuts in a stir-fry.

Salt, fat and alcohol: Moderation is key.

Salt: Aim for 1 teaspoon or less per day.

Choose products with no added salt and use it sparingly when you prepare food at home. Season food with fresh spices and herbs instead. People with high blood pressure should eat no more than ½ teaspoon of salt per day.

Fat: Choose lean, skinless cuts of meat, and prepare without adding fat. Try baking, broiling, roasting, steaming or poaching meat to preserve flavor. Look for foods low in saturated fat, trans fat and cholesterol. Choose heart-healthy fats, such as those found in nuts, fish, and vegetable oils.

Alcohol: Limit yourself to one alcoholic drink per day if you are female and two if you are male. Remember, alcohol adds calories to your diet – with no nutrients!





Learn from these kids, *Laugh more today*

Did you know that laughter is good for your body as well as your mind? Studies show that laughing regularly can boost your immune system, burn calories, lower blood sugar, reduce stress, improve sleep, relieve pain and tension, and increase blood flow. And all of these benefits are great for your heart!

Try to get a few extra laughs in today:

- Watch a funny movie, TV show or YouTube video
- Tell someone your favorite joke
- Goof off with a child
- Play a game with a friend or family member
- Read the comics
- Laugh for no reason!

Low-Fat Blue Cheese Wing Dip

Hosting a gathering to watch the big game? Serve up a bowl of this creamy blue cheese dip with wings and veggie spears.

Ingredients

- ½ cup low-fat sour cream
- ½ cup low-fat mayonnaise
- ½ cup crumbled blue cheese
- 1 tbsp white wine vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, minced

Directions

Combine all ingredients in a blender or food processor. Blend or process until smooth. Cover and chill. If desired, top with additional crumbled blue cheese before serving.

Serves 12. Will keep in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.





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 St Petersburg, FL 33716

Find a VA hospital or clinic near you:

www.va.gov/health/FindCare.asp

VA Sunshine Healthcare Network

www.visn8.va.gov



Bay Pines VA Healthcare System

10000 Bay Pines Blvd.
 Bay Pines, FL 33744
 727-398-6661 * 888-820-0230

James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital

13000 Bruce B. Downs Blvd.
 Tampa, FL 33612
 813-972-2000 * 888-811-0107

Bruce W. Carter Dept. of VA Medical Center

1201 NW 16th Street | Miami, FL 33215
 305-575-7000 * 888-276-1785

North Florida/South Georgia Veterans Health System

Lake City VA Medical Center

619 South Marion Avenue
 Lake City, FL 32025
 386-755-3016 * 800-308-8387

Malcom Randall VA Medical Center

1601 SW Archer Road
 Gainesville, FL 32608
 352-376-1611 * 800-324-8387

Orlando VA Medical Center

5201 Raymond Street | Orlando, FL 32803
 407-629-1599 * 800-922-7251

VA Caribbean Healthcare System

10 Casia Street
 San Juan, Puerto Rico 00921
 787-641-7582 * 800-449-8729

West Palm Beach VA Medical Center

7305 North Military Trail
 West Palm Beach, FL 33410
 561-442-8262 * 800-972-8262



- To enroll or renew your VA health benefits, call 1-877-222-VETS (8387), Monday thru Friday between 8AM and 8PM (Eastern Time). You can also go on-line at www.va.gov/healthbenefits. Click "VA Health Care - Apply Now"
- For medical care and clinic appointments, call your primary care doctor or local VA medical center.
- For reliable health information on the Web, visit www.myhealth.va.gov

