



Veterans HEALTH MATTERS

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

WINTER 2013 | WWW.VISN8.VA.GOV TAKE ONE HOME



Recharging
your Batteries:
Sleeping Well & More

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Veterans Health Matters is a quarterly health and wellness magazine for Veterans produced by the VISN 8 Office of Communication. VISN 8 is the country's largest network of VA hospitals and clinics serving Veterans in Florida, South Georgia, Puerto Rico and the Caribbean. Your feedback is welcome. If you'd like to comment on the content, please e-mail or write to:

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To Our Readers

Sleep offers more than a much-needed rest. It gives your body time to repair cells, fight infection and effectively use energy. Don't tuck yourself in just yet. This edition of Veterans Health Matters will help you make the best of your sleeping and waking hours.



Check out the Lee County VA Healthcare Center, a new multi-specialty outpatient center in southwest Florida that will open in late December. (Below) Then, heed the stress reduction tips on Page 3. Page 4 answers questions about sleep and on Page 5 learn the signs of sleep apnea, a common disorder that can put you at risk of serious health conditions.

Go to Page 6 to learn how to get rid of out-of-date or unneeded prescription and/or over-the-counter medications safely. If you want to get involved in an exciting event that also helps disabled Veterans, sign up to volunteer for the 33rd National Veteran Wheelchair Games in Tampa next year. Details on Page 6.

Now, treat - or frustrate - yourself with some holiday mind games and a tasty low-cal punch recipe, both on Page 7.

One more thing. Get a flu shot. It's the best way NOT to get the flu. And be sure to enjoy the beautiful winter weather in Florida and the Caribbean — where the sun is almost always shining.

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

Nevin M. Weaver, FACHE
VISN 8 Network Director



The new Lee County VA Healthcare Center, located at the intersection of Diplomat Parkway and Corbett Road in Cape Coral, Fla. plans to open its doors to eligible Veterans in late December 2012. Part of the Bay Pines VA Healthcare System, the new comprehensive, multi-specialty VA outpatient center replaced the Fort Myers VA Outpatient Clinic. The new 220,000 square foot facility was designed to meet the changing needs of the growing Veteran population in southwest Florida.

COPING with the Holidays

The holidays are a traditional time of happiness, gift giving and celebrating with family and friends. However, for some, the holiday season can also bring with it loneliness, depression, anxiety, and stress. As the holidays approach, think about how you will take care of yourself and others you love during this time. And remember, as a Veteran or family member (or caregiver) of a Veteran, if you feel you are in crisis, you are never alone. Our caring professionals are just a phone call away at 1-800-273-8255.



Below are some coping tips that you can use or share with others.

Reach Out and Touch Someone.

If you're feeling lonely, talk to someone you haven't spoken with in a long time. Chances are they may be feeling the same. And remember—it's OK to not be happy all the time. Just because it's a holiday doesn't mean you have to like it.

It Doesn't Have To Be Perfect.

Sometimes you need to go with the flow. So what if the house is messy? A messy house is sometimes good for the soul. And speaking of expectations, don't set them. Your family and friends love you just the way you are and you should do the same for them.

"No" Is Not a Four Letter Word.

Take a hard look at your own plate to see how full it is before you say "yes" to another invitation or task.

Pace Yourself.

This time of year can be joyful, but also hard on relationships and the pocketbook. Know what you can afford when it comes to gift-giving. Don't feel pressured to give expensive gifts or to travel great distances when your finances can't support either. Plan ahead and realistically.

Plan It Out.

Write lists to prioritize and schedule. Writing things down often helps you keep things organized during a busy and sometimes stressful time.

When It Comes to Eating— Moderation Is Key.

Don't let Aunt Polly's famous cheese cake tempt you into overeating this season. And the same goes for alcohol consumption.

Be Of Service to Others.

Instead of buying something, you can provide a service for someone or volunteer your time and talents as a gift. Visit a Veteran who may not have family. Help those in need by volunteering at a homeless shelter or food pantry. Focusing on others can help you get outside yourself and fight the "holiday blues." For VA volunteer opportunities, go to www.volunteer.va.gov

Ask for Help—24/7 Confidential Support Is A Phone Call Or Click Away.

If you continue to feel depressed, anxious or stressed, don't be afraid to seek help. Caring, professional VA counselors are standing by to help at 1-800-273-8255, Press 1. You can also get help via our online chat at www.veteranscrisisline.net. And you can call the VA hospital or clinic where you receive your care and speak with your healthcare team. All communication is completely confidential.

sleep tight every night

Getting Enough Zzzzz's is Important for Overall Health

Count sheep, listen to white noise, invest in the perfect pillow if that's what it takes to get a good night's sleep. Not only will it keep you from being grouchy in the morning, it might just save your life.



Studies show that not getting enough sleep can increase the risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, stress, stroke, or other medical conditions. It also puts you at higher risk of getting into an accident, becoming forgetful, gaining weight, impairing judgment, and killing your sex drive, for starters.

Why sleep is essential

During sleep, your brain remains active, producing important hormones that promote growth, repair cells and tissue, fight infection and help your body effectively use energy.

How much sleep is enough?

Most adults need seven to eight hours of sleep each night. Some people can function normally with six. Others can't perform at their peak unless they've slept 10 hours. School-aged children and teens function best with at least nine hours. Preschoolers need 10 to 12 hours.

Develop healthy sleep habits

- Go to bed and wake up the same time every day.
- Exercise daily, but not within two hours of bedtime.
- Unwind with a good book.
- Take a warm bath or shower about a half hour before bedtime.
- Avoid stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine.
- Pass on the nightcap. It may help you doze off, but it will prevent you from getting a deep sleep.
- Don't eat large meals within two hours of bedtime.
- No napping after 3 p.m.
- Minimize noise, light and excessive hot or cold temperatures in the bedroom.
- If you don't fall asleep within 20 minutes, get up and do something relaxing until you feel sleepy.

Still not feeling rested?

Sleep experts say that stress is the number one cause of short-term sleeping difficulties. Common triggers include school or job-related pressures, relationship problems, illness or death in the family. Health problems that cause pain or body discomfort and mental conditions such as depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder can also play a role in lack of sleep. Some medications such as decongestants and steroids also cause sleeping problems as a side effect.

If none of the above are contributing factors to your restless nights, consult a doctor to determine if you have a sleep disorders and, if so, which treatments will help you slumber soundly.

Sleep Apnea:

Myth or Fact



Sleep apnea is a common disorder in which there are one or more pauses in breathing, or shallow breaths while you sleep. These pauses can last from a few seconds to several minutes and can occur 30 times or more an hour. Typically, normal breathing resumes with a loud snort or choking sound.

Sleep apnea causes the airway to collapse or become blocked during sleep. It is more common in people who are overweight and children with enlarged tonsil tissues, but can affect anyone.

Here are some common myths and facts to help you determine if you or a loved one should see a doctor for a proper diagnosis and treatment.

Myth: *Sleep apnea is just a fancy diagnosis for snoring.*

Fact: Snoring can be a sign of sleep apnea. Then again, it might just be an annoying sound that your bed partner makes throughout the night because the muscles in his or her throat relax too much.

Myth: *People with sleep apnea know they have it because they're jolted awake when their breathing stops.*

Fact: Most people are unaware that they have sleep apnea because they are sleeping when symptoms occur. (Bed partners, pay attention.)

Myth: *Sleep apnea is no big deal.*

Fact: Unfortunately, sleep apnea is chronic and doesn't allow the body to get the deep sleep it needs to function at its optimum during waking hours. Left untreated, it increases the risk of serious illnesses such as high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, and heart failure. It is a chronic condition that requires long-term management.

Myth: *People who are old or overweight get sleep apnea.*

Fact: Sleep apnea can affect people of all ages and sizes. However, people who are overweight may be able to reduce symptoms by shedding pounds.

Myth: *Alcohol is a good remedy.*

Fact: Sorry, a nightcap may make you drowsy, but it does not promote good quality sleep. Instead, it relaxes the muscles in the back of the throat, blocking the airway. Sleeping pills have the same effect.

FACT:

Effective treatments could include lifestyle changes, specially fitted mouthpieces, or breathing devices such as the CPAP, or continuous positive airway pressure machine, which blows a steady stream of air into the airway during sleep. Some people get relief by sleeping on their sides to keep the throat open. Surgery to remove tonsils should be the last straw and is not effective for everyone.

SAFE MEDICINE DISPOSAL

How many times have you grabbed the same medication out of the cabinet and were clueless about its purpose, baffled that it expired in 1999, or no longer need it?

It's time to purge.

Follow these Federal guidelines for getting rid of out-of-date or unwanted medicines:

- Take your medicines out of their original containers. (Scratch out all identifying information on the label to make it unreadable.)
- Don't flush prescription or other medicines down the toilet as they can be an environmental hazard.
- Put the medicine inside an empty container like a small food storage box or a storage bag.
- Mix your medicines in this container with something you can't eat like cat litter or coffee grounds.
- Throw the container in your household trash (but not the recycle bin!).

To dispose of prescription drugs, especially narcotics, check with your local or county law enforcement or household trash and recycling service for community drug take-back or other programs such as household hazardous waste collection events.



Get all the details on proper disposal of medicines at www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely

Help Us *Seize the day in Tampa Bay*

Would you like to be involved in an exciting event that is expected to draw more than 500 Veterans from across the United States, Puerto Rico and Great Britain?

If so, thousands of volunteers are needed for the 33rd National Veterans Wheelchair Games (NVWG), the largest annual wheelchair sports event in the world. The Games will be held in Tampa July 13 to 18, 2013. This is only the second time the Games have been held in Florida; Miami hosted the event in 1991.

During the Games, Veterans participate in 17 competitive rehabilitative sport events which include air guns, archery, basketball, bowling, field events, hand cycling, a motorized wheelchair rally, nineball, power soccer, quad rugby, slalom, softball, swimming, table tennis, track, trapshooting and weightlifting. The event is open to all U.S. military Veterans who use wheelchairs for sports competition due to spinal cord injuries, neurological conditions, amputations or other mobility impairments. All events are free and open to spectators.

With the theme, "Seize the Day in Tampa Bay," the 33rd Games will be hosted by the James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital along with the Paralyzed Veterans of America's Florida Gulf Coast Chapter.

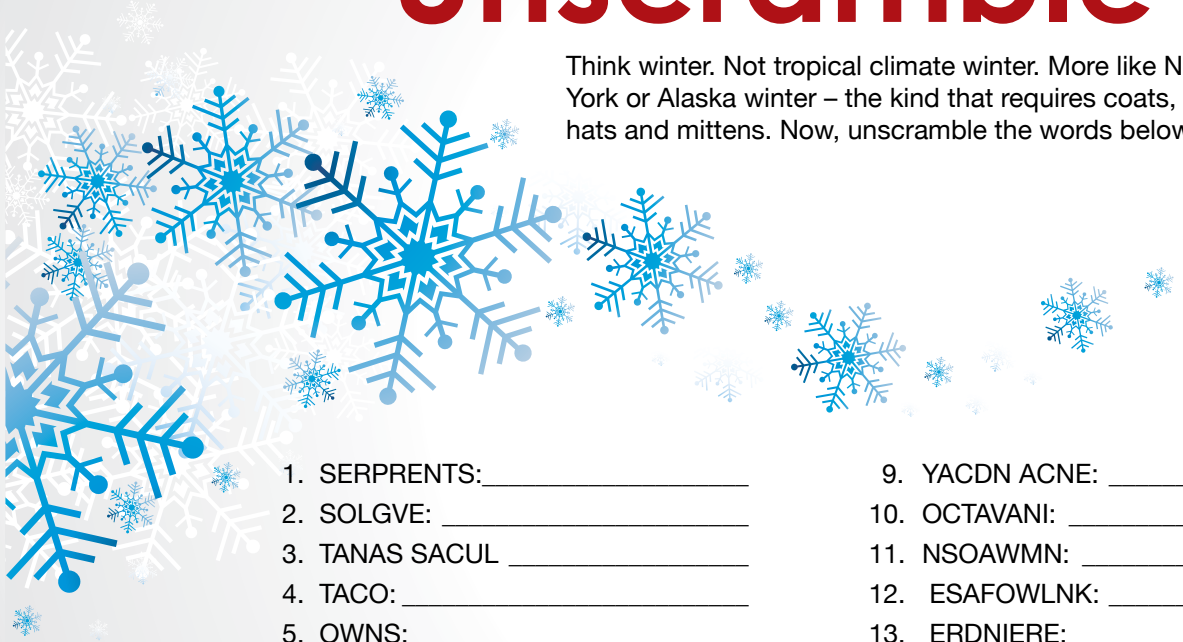
Volunteers are needed in all areas and can be as young as 14 to participate. If you are interested in volunteer opportunities, visit the 2013 NVWG Volunteer Registration website at <https://www.volgistics.com/ex/portal.dll/?FROM=79616>. You can also contact Camilla Thompson, Tampa volunteer coordinator at (813) 972-2000, ext. 6580.



If you or a Veteran you know is interested in competing, go to www.tampa.va.gov/services/pmrs-asf.asp.

Winter Word Unscramble

Think winter. Not tropical climate winter. More like New York or Alaska winter – the kind that requires coats, hats and mittens. Now, unscramble the words below.



- | | |
|-------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. SERPRENTS: _____ | 9. YACDN ACNE: _____ |
| 2. SOLGVE: _____ | 10. OCTAVANI: _____ |
| 3. TANAS SACUL _____ | 11. NSOAWMN: _____ |
| 4. TACO: _____ | 12. ESAFOWLNK: _____ |
| 5. OWNS: _____ | 13. ERDNIERE: _____ |
| 6. SLAYHOID: _____ | 14. WNE RAYE: _____ |
| 7. THO OCELOTCAH: _____ | 15. DOLC: _____ |
| 8. ELDS: _____ | |

Answers: 1. PRESENTS 2. GLOVES 3. SANTA CLAUS 4. COAT 5. SNOW 6. HOLIDAYS 7. HOT CHOCOLATE 8. SLED 9. CANDY CANE 10. VACATION 11. SNOWMAN 12. SNOWFLAKE 13. REINDEER 14. NEW YEAR 15. COLD

Low-Calorie Holiday Punch

Ingredients

- 4 cups cranberry juice cocktail
- 8 cups prepared lemonade
- 2 cups orange juice
- 4 oz. maraschino cherries
- 2 liters ginger ale
- 2 oranges (sliced in rounds)

Directions

1. In a large punch bowl, combine cranberry juice cocktail, lemonade, and orange juice. Stir in the maraschino cherries. Refrigerate for 2 hours.
2. When ready to serve, add ginger ale.
3. Garnish each glass with an orange slice.

Servings (4 oz.): 40 | Calories: 56





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Get Your 2013 Calendar!

VISN 8's 2013 Healthy Living Calendars are here! Pick up a copy during your next visit or ask your VA Provider about getting one.



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