



UPDATE

November/December 2015

A bi-monthly newsletter for Veterans served by the St. Cloud VA Health Care System, and for those who serve Veterans. Send news items and comments to St. Cloud VA Health Care System, Attn: Public Affairs Officer, 4801 Veterans Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56303, or via email to Barry.Venable@va.gov



**Being Your Own Health Care Advocate:
Talking About Your Symptoms.....p. 11**

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HONORING SERVICE
EMPOWERING
HEALTH

Calendar of Events

Friday, November 13 (10 a.m.-4 p.m.)—**Vet Center Health Fair**, 7001 78th Avenue North, Brooklyn Park, MN. Representatives from the St. Cloud VA will be available to discuss health care services and eligibility.

Friday, November 13 (1-4 p.m.)—**Managing Stress for Caregivers**, St. Cloud VA, Building 48, Room 204. Caregivers of enrolled Veterans of all eras are invited to attend a workshop designed to provide an overview of physical and mental techniques and tools that can be used to understand and manage the physical and emotional stresses they experience. Registration is required as space is limited. To register, contact Jessica Behrends, 320-252-1670, ext. 7283, or jessica.behrends@va.gov.

Saturday, November 14 (9 a.m.-Noon)—**Access Focus Day**, St. Cloud VA, Building 1. Clinical and scheduling staff at the St. Cloud VA will participate in a VHA-wide event focused on ensuring Veterans identified as having acute care needs are seen in a timely manner. Eligibility staff will be available to enroll eligible Veterans for VA health care; Veterans seeking enrollment are asked to present a copy of their armed forces discharge certificate (DD214) and current insurance information. Stearns County Veteran Service Officer will also be on site to answer questions about the full range of Veterans benefit programs. Enrolled Veterans who have not yet obtained their annual flu shot can receive an immunization between 9 a.m. to noon. The Urgent Care clinic will operate on its normal schedule, which is from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., 365 days a year.

Tuesday, November 17, December 1 & December 15 (Noon-2 p.m.)—**Veterans Law Clinic** at the St. Cloud VA in Building 28, Room 126. Free legal consultation for Veterans for Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal law issues will be discussed. Please call 320-253-0138 or 1-800-622-7773 to schedule an appointment.

Tuesday, November 17 (10 a.m.-2 p.m.)—**VA Benefits Presentation** with Becker Senior Center at City Hall, 12060 Sherburne Avenue (County Rd 23), Becker, MN. Representatives from the St. Cloud VA will be available to discuss health care services and eligibility.

Wednesday, November 18 (6-7 p.m.); or Wednesday, November 25 (2-3 p.m.)—**VA Caregiver Support Line**. Free education and support for Caregivers—right from your home phone! Topic for November is *Stepping Into Stillness: Maintaining Your Gravity*. To register, call Jessica Behrends at 320-252-1670, ext. 7283.

Wednesday, November 18 & December 16 (8:10-8:45 a.m.)—Listen to **Voices for Veterans Radio Show** on WJON AM 1240.

Calendar of Events

Friday, November 20 & December 18 (Noon-2 p.m.)—**Southwestern Minnesota Veterans Law Clinic** at the Montevideo CBOC. Free legal consultation for Veterans for Social Security Law, Housing, Consumer, Child Support, Family Law, and Employment. No criminal issues will be discussed. Please call 320-403-1051 to schedule an appointment.

Thursday, November 26—**Outpatient Clinics Closed for Federal Holiday.** St. Cloud VA Health Care System outpatient clinics and administrative offices, including VA Clinics in Brainerd, Montevideo and Alexandria will be closed in observance of Thanksgiving, a federal holiday. The Urgent Care Clinic at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center will be open. Hours of operation for the Urgent Care Clinic are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days a week, including federal holidays. The Community Living Center and residential treatment programs will be open.

Tuesday, December 1 (9-10 a.m.); Wednesday, December 23 (2-3 p.m.); or Wednesday, December 23 (6-7 p.m.)—**VA Caregiver Support Line.** Free education and support for Caregivers—right from your home phone! Topic for December is *Finding Comfort in the Healing Gifts of the Season*. To register, call Jess Behrends at 320-252-1670, ext. 7283.

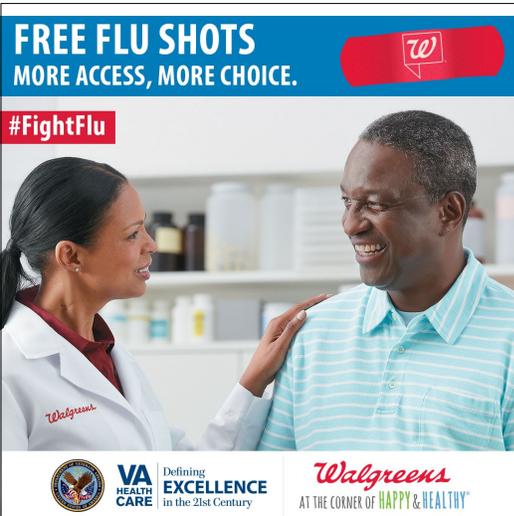
Tuesday, December 1 (Noon-1 p.m.)—**VA Caregiver Support Group** at the St. Cloud VA in Building 48, Room 204, and Brainerd CBOC via Vtel. Support group for family Caregivers of Veterans from all eras. Contact Jessica Behrends at 320-252-1670, ext. 7283, for more information.

Monday, December 7 (9:10-9:30 a.m.)—Listen to the **Veterans Affairs Radio Show** on KNSI AM 1450/FM 103.3.

Tuesday, December 8 (4:30-7:30 p.m.)—**Holiday Extravaganza**, Town Hall of Madden's Resort, CR 77, Lakeshore, MN. Representatives from the St. Cloud VA will be available to discuss health care services and eligibility.

Saturday, December 19 (9 a.m.-5 p.m.) & Sunday, December 20 (9 a.m.-3 p.m.)—**Brainerd Gun Show**, National Guard Armory, 1115 Wright Street, Brainerd, MN. Representatives from the St. Cloud VA will be available to discuss health care services and eligibility.

Friday, December 25—**Outpatient Clinics Closed for Federal Holiday.** St. Cloud VA Health Care System outpatient clinics and administrative offices, including VA Clinics in Brainerd, Montevideo and Alexandria will be closed in observance of Christmas, a federal holiday. The Urgent Care Clinic at the St. Cloud VA Medical Center will be open. Hours of operation for the Urgent Care Clinic are 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., seven days a week, including federal holidays. The Community Living Center and residential treatment programs will be open.



VA-Walgreens Partnership Gives Vets 8,000 More Locations for Flu Shots

Flu season is here, and getting your flu shot is the single best way to protect yourself, as well as your loved ones, against the flu virus. If you haven't had an opportunity to get your shot in conjunction with other scheduled appointments at your VA or at one of the many mobile flu clinics recently offered, there is still an easy option available to get your vaccination. Over 8,000 locations are now offering free flu shots for eligible Vets through a VA-Walgreens partnership.

Studies show that if you plan when and where to get your flu shot, you are more likely to get one. So what are your options? You may opt to get a free flu shot at your local VA health care facility by appointment. Or, you may choose to go to your neighborhood Walgreens. Your choice of either a VA medical center or clinic or a Walgreens drug store is virtually the same – the record of your flu shots from Walgreens will be included in your VA electronic health record. So, you don't have to remember where and when it was done and report it to your doctor. The information will be seamlessly accessible to your VA clinicians. As an enrolled VA patient, you can get a no-cost flu shot at Walgreens through March 31, 2016. To learn more call **1-877-771-8537**.

If you choose a VA health care facility: You can receive a **no cost flu shot** during any scheduled appointment, or if you are admitted to one of our VA health care facilities.

If you choose a Walgreens* drug store: If you are a Veteran patient, you may choose to get your flu shot at a local Walgreens. You can walk into any Walgreens to get your flu shot. No appointment is required. Your immunization record will be updated electronically in your local VA electronic health record. Participation is strictly voluntary, and all you have to do is show your Veterans Identification Card and another form of ID. **Note that no-cost flu shots are available at Walgreens nationwide through March 31, 2016. To get a no-cost flu shot at Walgreens during this time, enrolled Veterans must tell the pharmacist that you receive care at a VA health care facility, show your VA ID and Photo ID. Use Group Code # 5933XBAYV.**

If you choose Non-VA Providers and Pharmacies: Many local retail pharmacies offer flu shots that may be covered by private insurance or programs such as Medicare. If you do not have insurance, there will usually be a charge.

Wherever you choose to get vaccinated, the best choice for your health is to get a flu shot.

Note: *Reference to non-VA pharmacies, including Walgreens, does not constitute or imply endorsement of these organizations, their services or products. If your local pharmacy is currently not participating in the VA Retail Immunization Program, they may participate in the future as the program expands. Vaccine is subject to availability. State and health-related restrictions may apply. If you do not have insurance coverage, there may be a charge for a flu shot after March 31, 2016.

Intimate Partner Violence: Let VA Help

Intimate partner violence (IPV), which is often called domestic violence, occurs when a current or former intimate partner (e.g., boyfriend, girlfriend, spouse) harms, threatens to harm, or stalks their partner. While domestic violence does include IPV, it refers to any



violence that occurs in the home. Domestic violence includes child abuse, elder abuse, and other forms of interpersonal abuse. IPV refers specifically to violence between intimate partners. IPV can happen to anyone. It can happen no matter your age, income, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or disability.

IPV is prevalent among women Veterans, active duty women, and women living in the U.S. overall. One third of women Veterans experience IPV in their lifetime compared to less than a

quarter of civilian women. Women who have experienced IPV may have short and long-term health effects. They may experience short-term health effects such as physical injuries like stab wounds or broken bones or sexually transmitted infections. They may also experience long-term health effects such as obesity; problems with their heart, stomach, or digestive systems; difficulties with pregnancy or unwanted pregnancies; chronic pain; and other stress-related difficulties such as headaches. They may also experience mental health issues such as depression, substance abuse, posttraumatic stress disorder, and thoughts of hurting themselves.

Emotional IPV is when a person tries to hurt his/her partner's self-worth. It is common for emotional IPV to begin before the other types of IPV. Examples include:

- Name calling
- Controlling your money or spending
- Keeping you from friends and family
- Bullying
- Stalking
- Putting you down
- Controlling where you go/what you wear
- Trying to manipulate your actions
- Embarrassing you in front of others to prove a point
- Saying you are "crazy" or "worthless"

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Physical IPV is when a person tries to hurt his/her partner by using physical force. Examples include:

- Hitting
- Shoving
- Punching
- Hair-pulling
- Choking
- Slapping
- Biting
- Kicking
- Restraining
- Pinching
- Using force in any way that intimidates



Sexual IPV occurs when a person forces or tries to convince his/her partner to engage in sexual activities when the other partner does not want to or is unable to consent. Someone may not be able to consent if they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Stalking occurs when a person frequently or continuously contacts, follows, talks to, or sends things to his/her partner when the other partner does not want them to do these things. Examples include:

- Knowing your daily schedule
- Showing up at places you go
- Sending mail, e-mail, texts, or pictures
- Calling or texting repeatedly
- Contacting you or posting about you on social networking sites (such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Creating a website about you
- Sending gifts
- Tracking you via GPS devices in your phone or car
- Gaining access to your email or social networking accounts
- Using force in any way that intimidates
- Monitoring your online behavior or cell phone communication (texts and phone calls)

Threats of violence are ways to cause fear through words, actions, or weapons to harm the partner, their possessions, their pets, or their loved ones.

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Ask yourself these questions:

Has your partner:

- Emotionally mistreated you (e.g., called you names, tried to embarrass, or intimidate you)?
- Tried to control where you go, who you talk to, what you can wear, or what you can do?
- Told you that you are “crazy” or “worthless”?
- Stolen or tried to control your money?
- Looked at you or acted in ways that scare you?
- Threatened you, your possessions, your pets, or loved ones?
- Physically hurt you or tried to hurt you?
- Forced you to engage in sexual activities?
- Threatened to commit suicide or kill you if you left them?

If you answer yes to any of the questions above or identify with any of the behaviors detailed above, VA can help.

Some people experience only one of these forms of violence while others may experience more than one. IPV can be a single event or can last for many years. No matter what, no one deserves to be treated this way.

Resources

- If you are in immediate danger, call 9-1-1.
- Contact the National Domestic Hotline at 1-800-799- SAFE (7233) or on the web at <http://www.thehotline.org> for 24-hour confidential support, local referrals, safety planning, housing options, and legal resources.
- Contact your local VA hospital and ask to speak with the Women Veterans Program Manager. Find your local VA hospital [here](#).
- Develop a safety plan [here](#).
- VA employees who are impacted by IPV can contact their Employee Assistance Program or visit it on the web at <http://www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/worklife/employee-assistance-programs/>.
- Talk to your primary care provider, who can refer you to a specialist if needed.



Tobacco and Health: The Great American Smokeout November 19

Each year, the third Thursday in November is the Great American Smokeout, a day initiated by the American Cancer Society to encourage smokers to quit for a day in the hopes that they may decide to quit for a lifetime. Four decades after the 1964 U.S. Surgeon General Report on the health consequences of smoking, smoking still remains the leading cause of preventable death and disease. Each year, approximately 440,000 Americans die of smoking-related illnesses. An estimated 50,000 non-smokers die of illnesses related to secondhand smoke.

Quitting smoking may be one of the most difficult and important behavioral changes that someone can make, and even the most motivated smokers may attempt to quit 5 or 6 times before they are finally successful. However, Veterans are more successful than ever at quitting smoking. Almost 70% of Veterans who have ever smoked have successfully quit, and VA has more available to support them in quitting smoking than ever before.

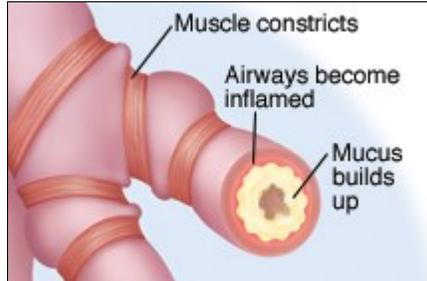
How to Quit for Good

Over 3 million Americans are successful in quitting each year. At any given time, 70% of all smokers will say that they want to quit. And more than ever, there are numerous effective treatment options to help support any tobacco user in his or her attempt to quit using tobacco for good. These treatment options include brief counseling by a health care provider, nicotine replacement therapy or other smoking cessation medications, smoking cessation specialty clinic services, VHA's quitline for Veterans (1-855-QUIT-VET), and SmokefreeVET, a mobile text messaging service available to Veterans.

November is COPD Awareness Month

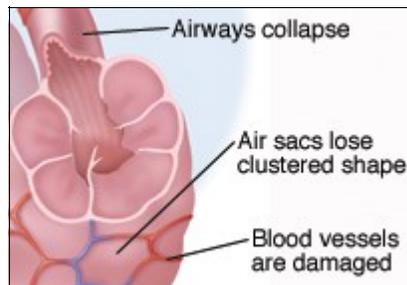
What is COPD?

COPD stands for **chronic obstructive pulmonary disease**. The airways in your lungs are blocked (obstructed). Because of this, breathing takes more effort. You may have started limiting your activities to avoid shortness of breath. Without treatment, you may not be able to do as much for yourself and need to rely more on others. This can make life less enjoyable.



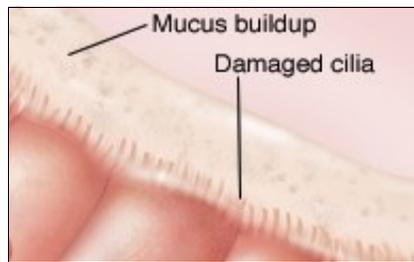
When Airways Are Blocked (Chronic Bronchitis or Chronic Asthma)

When cells in the airways make more mucus than normal, blockages sometimes result. The mucus builds up, narrowing the airways. This means less air travels into and out of the lungs. The lining of the airways may also become inflamed (swollen), and the muscle surrounding the airways may constrict (tighten). These problems cause the airways to narrow even more.



When Airways Collapse (Emphysema)

When airways are damaged, they lose their stretchiness and become baggy and floppy. Damaged airways may collapse when you exhale, causing air to get trapped in the sacs. This trapped air makes breathing harder. Over time, the air sacs lose their clustered shape. This may mean that less oxygen enters the blood vessels.



A microscopic view of damaged cilia

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When Cilia Are Damaged

Smoking harms the cilia that line the airways. Damaged cilia can't sweep mucus and particles away. Some of the cilia are destroyed. This damage makes the problem described on this sheet even worse.

How Did I Get COPD?

Most people get COPD from smoking. Cigarette smoke causes lung damage, which can develop into COPD over many years. You may be diagnosed with COPD if one or more of these problems is preventing air from flowing normally through your lungs:

- **Chronic bronchitis** occurs when damaged lungs produce more mucus than they should.
- **Emphysema** occurs when damaged lung passages collapse as you breathe out.
- **Chronic asthma** occurs when substances in the air cause the lung passages to become inflamed. Asthma can sometimes be reversed with medication. But with chronic asthma, the passages stay inflamed all the time.

How COPD Affects Breathing

COPD makes you work harder to breathe. Air may get trapped in the lungs, which prevents your lungs from filling completely the next time you inhale (breathe in). So, it's harder to take a deep breath. Over time, your lungs may become enlarged. This makes it more difficult for the lungs to expand fully in the chest. These problems can lead to shortness of breath (also called dyspnea). You may also experience wheezing (hoarse, whistling breathing) and fatigue (feeling tired and worn out).

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"To avoid situations in which you might make mistakes may be the biggest mistake of all." —Peter McWilliams, *Life 101*



Being Your Own Health Care Advocate: Talking About Your Symptoms

Part of many physician visits include a discussion about symptoms you are experiencing; quite likely the reason for at least one of those visits. This discussion is in fact very important to the diagnostic process and is when your physician or other health care provider actually learns a good bit about you. Describing how you feel and your concerns

about how your symptoms affect your day-to-day life is not always easy. Following are some suggestions to help make this discussion easier for you, while enabling your physician in diagnosing and treating your symptoms:

- Provide a very basic explanation of your problem, for example, “I’m having a pain in my back.”
- Describe when the symptom began, and perhaps what was happening when it began, for example, “It started one week ago after lifting a piece of furniture.”
- When describing pain, use adjectives to describe intensity and, since providers often use a scale of 1-10 to evaluate the severity of it, it’s helpful that you do as well and also indicate how long the pain lasts (e.g., “The pain is a gnawing sensation, about a 3 on a scale of 1-10. It has been pretty constant since it began, but gets worse when I’m walking...about a 6.”).
- Explain if you’ve ever experienced this symptom in the past and perhaps what you’ve done to get relief (e.g., “I had this kind of pain two years ago after shoveling snow, but it went away after a few days. This time, it’s not getting any better even after using Icy Hot crème and aspirin a few times a day.”).
- Describe how your symptoms are affecting your daily life. Instead of saying, “I used to be able to do everything.” Say, “I’m not able to walk more than one block without having pain and I’m having difficulty sitting for more than a few minutes without changing my position, and I need to sit at my computer to work.”

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While the symptoms above concern pain, the suggestions provided can be applied to other symptoms as well. Whether you're experiencing nausea, difficulty breathing, unexplained weight loss or gain, or other problems, describe how you're feeling as descriptively as possible, and how it's impacting your life. Remember, that doctors want to hear how you're feeling and not what you think your diagnosis is. So, instead of saying that you think you have asthma, let the doctor know that you're "out of breath" or "wheezing". And because people experience conditions in different ways, you may have to try to explain just how you are feeling several times in order for your doctor to have a real understanding of what's bothering you.

Sometimes the symptoms you have may make you feel embarrassed or result in a more uncomfortable conversation. Try to keep in mind that there is really nothing that your doctor hasn't heard before. In these situations, you might start by saying words like, "This is difficult for me, but I need your help with something." An open, honest conversation will allow your physician to begin the process of getting you feeling better sooner.

DID YOU KNOW

- **The name Jeep came from the abbreviation used in the army. G.P. for 'General Purpose' vehicle.**
- **If you have three quarters, four dimes, and four pennies, you have \$1.19, the largest amount of money in coins without being able to make change for a dollar.**
- **40,000 Americans are injured by toilets each year.**
- **It takes about 142.18 licks to reach the center of a Tootsie pop.**
- **The serial number of the first MAC ever produced was 2001.**

Construction Update

Rehabilitation Center



Work on the new Rehabilitation Center is close to being completed. This view shows the main (south) entrance with completed landscaping. Photo taken on 10-20-15.



View of the main entrance facing south. The large entry way will provide Veterans ample space to enter and exit the Rehabilitation Center. The flooring will assist in keeping snow and debris from entering the building. Photo taken 10-20-15.

Food Service Building

View from the east showing the concrete foundation and cement pillars. The water tower in the back shows the Food Service Building's location on campus. The building on the right of the photo is the Auditorium (Bldg. 8). Photo taken 10-20-15.



Construction Update

Buildings 115 and 9 connecting corridor



Buildings 115 and 9 construction on a connecting corridor. This view taken from the southeast shows the corridor with Bldg. 115 on the left and Bldg. 9 on the right of the photo. Photo taken on 10-20-15.



This view taken from the north shows the other side of the corridor with Bldg. 115 on the right and Bldg. 9 on the left of the photo. Photo taken on 10-20-15.

Building 28



Mental Health Building 28 is being remodeled to increase the number of Veterans this facility can accommodate for our inpatient programs. Photo on the left shows inside where the area will become patient rooms. The photo on the right is taken from the north to show the “back fill” of the “h-shaped” building. Photo taken on 10-20-15.

Clearwater American Legion Riders Donate to St. Cloud VA

On October 31, the Clearwater American Legion Riders donated \$3,000 to the St. Cloud VA Health Care System. The donation will be used to help meet the needs of homeless Veterans to include warm clothing and boots, transportation, household kits for those Veterans moving into permanent housing, and other needs identified by the VA's Homeless Veterans Team. The Riders have also established a fund to provide assistance to Veterans who present at the VA after hours and have emergent needs. Thanks to the Riders, many Veterans will be warmer this winter.

Contact the Voluntary Service office to learn how you can volunteer or donate to help Veterans served by the St. Cloud VA. Call 320-255-6365 or e-mail Patricia Aljets, program manager, at patricia.aljets@va.gov.



Patricia Aljets, left, Voluntary Service Director, St. Cloud VA, accepts check from the Clearwater American Legion Riders.

A Recipe for Health

Jambalaya

Ingredients

3¼ c. chopped tomato	10 oz. andouille sausage, cut into ¼-inch slices
¾ c. (¼-inch thick) slices celery	1 (14-oz.) can fat-free, less sodium chicken broth
½ c. water	1 garlic clove, minced
⅓ c. chopped onion	1¼ c. uncooked long-grain brown rice
½ tsp. paprika	½ lb. med. shrimp, peeled and deveined
½ tsp. dried thyme	
½ tsp. dried rubbed sage	
¼ tsp. ground red pepper	
¼ tsp. Cajun seasoning	

Directions

Combine the first 12 ingredients in a Dutch oven; bring to a boil. Stir in rice; cover, reduce heat and simmer 45 minutes or until rice is tender. Add shrimp, cook 3 minutes or until shrimp is done. Makes 8 (1-cup) servings.

Nutritional Information

245 calories, 8g fat, 15.2g protein, 28.2g carbohydrates, 451mg sodium



Take care of your buddy!

Help a fellow Veteran enroll
for VA healthcare.
Contact your County Veteran
Service Officer, call the St.
Cloud VA at 320-255-6340,
or apply online at
www.1010ez.med.va.gov

www.facebook.com/StCloudVAHCS



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