

Healthy Living for Veterans

*Messages for a
HealthyLife®*



Be Involved in Your Health Care

There's no greater advocate for your health than YOU! Take an active role – partner with your health care team to find the best treatment.

Plan – Research and write down any questions you have. Ask a friend or family member to come with you to your appointment. Bring a list of medicines and supplements you take.

Speak Up – Share your ideas and feelings about your condition and treatment plan. Talk about barriers that keep you from living a healthy life.

Participate – Be actively involved in any decisions about your care – talk about your concerns. Get the results from any tests you receive. Ask your health care team to go over the results with you.



My SMART Goal: Set a goal to take an active role in your health care. Make sure it's SMART: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, timetable to complete.

Things that might get in my way: (Example: lack of knowledge)

What I can do to overcome these things: (Examples: write down any questions, ask a friend for help, talk to a VA Patient Advocate)

I believe that I can reach my goal:

(Circle the number that matches how confident you feel.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Not At All Sure			Somewhat Sure				Very Sure		

Find a local resource from your PACT team or local facility website:

A class or group on this topic is on _____

at _____ Clinic.

Get Your Recommended Tests & Vaccines

Vaccines and screening tests help to prevent some serious diseases. Or, treat conditions early when they're easier to cure. Ask your health care team about what you need each year. Use this chart to track some of the more common tests and vaccines you may need.



SCREENING/VACCINE	WHEN & HOW OFTEN
Blood pressure	
Body Mass Index (BMI)	
Blood cholesterol	
Colon and rectal cancer	
Prostate cancer (men)	
Abdominal aortic aneurysm (men)	
Cervical cancer (women)	
Mammogram (women)	
Seasonal flu vaccine	
HPV vaccine	

You can also register with My HealtheVet to get reminders and keep a record of what you receive. Visit www.myhealth.va.gov.

My SMART Goal: Set a goal for getting the tests and vaccines you need. Make sure it's SMART: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, timetable to complete.

Things that might get in my way: (Examples: time, poor planning, fear)

What I can do to overcome these things: (Examples: sign up for My HealtheVet, talk about my fears to my health care team)

I believe that I can reach my goal:

(Circle the number that matches how confident you feel.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not At All Sure Somewhat Sure Very Sure

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Be Tobacco Free

Quitting tobacco is one of the healthiest things you can do. The VA can help! START today:

- **S**et a quit date. Mark it on this calendar.
- **T**ell family and friends so they can support you.
- **A**nticipate that you will have challenges.
- **R**emove tobacco (in any form) from your life.
- **T**alk to your health care team about prescribed and over-the-counter medicines.

Free VA Tobacco-Cessation Services:

- Ask about your VA facility's Tobacco Free Program
- Call 1-855-Quit VET (1-855-784-8838), visit www.Smokefree.gov/VET, or text VET to 47848 from your mobile phone
- Get the Stay Quit Coach App at www.mobilehealth.va.gov/appstore



My SMART Goal: Set a goal to quit tobacco. Make sure it's SMART: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, timetable to complete.

Things that might get in my way: (Examples: addiction, habit, friends and family, embarrassment, urges)

What I can do to overcome these things: (Examples: sign up for a VA tobacco-cessation program, replace bad habits with healthier ones)

I believe that I can reach my goal:

(Circle the number that matches how confident you feel.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
Not At All Sure Somewhat Sure Very Sure

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Limit Alcohol

	If You Choose to Drink Alcohol*	Binge Drinking Is:
Men	Limit it to 2 drinks a day; Limit it to 1 drink a day age 65+	More than 4 drinks on one occasion
Women	Limit it to 1 drink a day	More than 3 drinks on one occasion
One Drink =	 12 ounces beer (5% alcohol)  5 ounces wine (12% alcohol)  1 1/2 ounces (80 proof) spirits	

*See limit alcohol guidelines at www.prevention.va.gov.

If you think you have a problem:

- Talk to your health care team about treatment options and resources available at your VA facility.
- Visit www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Limit_Alcohol.asp for tips and resources on limiting how much you drink.
- Get help from your nearest Vet Center: www.vetcenter.va.gov.



My SMART Goal: Set a goal to limit the alcohol you drink. Make sure it's SMART: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, timetable to complete.

Things that might get in my way: (Examples: addiction, habit, friends and family, others' expectations)

What I can do to overcome these things: (Examples: get support from my health care team, try non-alcoholic drinks, avoid drinking situations)

I believe that I can reach my goal:

(Circle the number that matches how confident you feel.)

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Be Safe

There are actions you can take now to protect yourself and others from harm.

- Check for food recalls. Visit www.foodsafety.gov.
- Take caution when moving – remove obstacles to prevent falls. Stay healthy. Avoid outside dangers.
- Childproof your home to make it safe for children.
- Install smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

- Use protection when you have sex. Make sure to get regular screenings for sexually-transmitted infections (STIs).
- Drive with caution, never drive under the influence, and make sure everyone is wearing a seatbelt.



My SMART Goal: Set a goal to protect yourself and others. Make sure it's SMART: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, timetable to complete.

Things that might get in my way: (Examples: habit, poor observation skills, lack of resource, laziness)

What I can do to overcome these things: (Examples: think ahead, take precautions, be observant, exercise for strong muscles/bones)

I believe that I can reach my goal:

(Circle the number that matches how confident you feel.)

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Strive for a Healthy Weight

Maintaining a healthy weight can help you do more in life, and reduce your health risks. If you're overweight, losing just 5-10% of what you weigh can also lower your risks. Some tips for slimming down:

- Fill half of your plate with fruits & vegetables.
- Eat whole-grain foods.
- Replace sugary drinks with water.
- Choose lean proteins and low-fat dairy.
- Sign up for the **MOVE!** weight management program – visit www.move.va.gov.

- If you need to lose weight, aim to lose no more than 1-2 pounds per week.
- Get 7-9 hours of sleep each night.
- Reduce your stress.
- Set a daily limit for how many calories you consume. Then, track what you eat.



My SMART Goal: Set a goal to achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Make sure it's SMART: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, timetable to complete.

Things that might get in my way: (Examples: laziness, weather, habit)

What I can do to overcome these things: (Examples: sign up for the **MOVE!** program, join an indoor fitness class, aim for 10,000 steps a day)

I believe that I can reach my goal:

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Be Physically Active

Regular physical activity decreases risks for depression, diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, stroke, and some kinds of cancer. Be as active as you can. Every 10-minute session counts.

Physical Activity Guidelines PER WEEK*

- A. Aim for at least 2½ hours of moderate activity, such as brisk walking, dancing, or hard housework **OR**
- B. At least 1¼ hours of vigorous activity, such as jogging, aerobic dancing, or swimming laps **OR**
- C. Enough of A and B to give the same total effect

At least two days a week, do strengthening activities, such as lifting weights.

** You may need to do more than this if you need to lose weight or prevent weight gain.*

Physical Activity Checklist

- Check with your health care team about an activity program that is right for your needs.
- Walk, roll in your wheelchair, and/or do other activities you enjoy. Start slowly. Build gradually. Wear your pedometer (or odometer) every day to track your progress.
- Pair exercises with other things you like, such as your favorite music, being with friends, etc.



My SMART Goal: Set a goal to start moving more. Make sure it's SMART: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, timetable to complete.

Things that might get in my way: (Examples: laziness, weather, time, health concerns)

What I can do to overcome these things: (Examples: talk to my health care team about exercises I can physically do, run/walk on an indoor track)

I believe that I can reach my goal:

(Circle the number that matches how confident you feel.)

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Eat Wisely

Eating healthier starts with having a wide variety of foods. Eat lots of fruits & vegetables, less of meat and other fats, and very little sugar. Keep these tips in mind when you shop:

- Choose fruits & vegetables with a wide array of colors. Eat 2-1/2 cups of vegetables and 2-1/2 cups of fruit a day.
- Eat 3 ounces or more of whole-grain cereals, breads, pasta, etc., per day. Avoid refined (white) grains.
- Have only 3 cups a day of fat-free or low-fat dairy.
- Eat lean proteins a few times a week.
- Choose mono- and polyunsaturated fats, like olive oil, over saturated fats, like butter.
- Visit www.prevention.va.gov/Healthy_Living/Eat_Wisely.asp for more recommendations.

My SMART Goal: Set a goal to start eating healthier. Make sure it's SMART: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, timetable to complete.

Things that might get in my way: (Examples: food preferences, dietary restrictions, time)

What I can do to overcome these things: (Examples: stick to the outside aisles of the grocery store, keep a food diary, choose delicious healthy snacks)

I believe that I can reach my goal:

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Manage Stress

Life can be demanding – which leads to stress. But it doesn't need to overwhelm you. Take steps today to deal with the stress in your life!



Relax –

Try some mindfulness exercises. Take a warm bath

or shower. Draw or paint. Do a hobby. Check out the “Mindfulness Coach” app at www.mobile.va.gov/appstore.

Eat well, be active, get

rest – a healthy body leads to a healthy mind. A 30-minute walk around your neighborhood can be a great way to de-stress!

Reach out – getting help for stress is a sign of strength. If you're in an emotional crisis, call the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255, press 1. Or, send a text to 838255. Chat online at www.veteranscrisisline.net.

My SMART Goal: Set a goal to do better stress management. Make sure it's SMART: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, timetable to complete.

Things that might get in my way: (Examples: time, health issues, embarrassment)

What I can do to overcome these things: (Examples: get support from a friend, sign up for a yoga class, talk to your health care team)

I believe that I can reach my goal:

(Circle the number that matches how confident you feel.)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
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Prevent Veteran Suicide

Every day, 22 Veterans die from suicide. This accounts for 20% of suicides in the U.S. It takes only one person — you or someone who cares — to help prevent a suicide. Contact the:



**Send a text message
to 838255.**

Reasons to get help NOW:

- Thinking about hurting or killing yourself
- Looking for ways to kill yourself
- Talking about death, dying or suicide
- Taking part in self-destructive behavior, such as drug abuse or reckless use of weapons

**Have an online chat, in confidence, at
www.VeteransCrisisLine.net.**



My SMART Goal: Set a goal to reduce your risk for suicide. Make sure it's SMART: specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, timetable to complete.

Things that might get in my way: (Examples: embarrassment, lack of knowledge, lack of support, fear)

What I can do to overcome these things: (Examples: call, online chat or text the Veterans Crisis Line, talk to family, a friend, or your health care team)

I believe that I can reach my goal:

(Circle the number that matches how confident you feel.)

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VA Resources	Website
Veteran Benefits	www.va.gov and www.ebenefits.va.gov
Health Care Benefits	www.va.gov/healthbenefits
VA Facility Locator	www.va.gov/health
Burial & Memorials	www.cem.va.gov
Center for Minority Veterans	www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans
Education & Training	www.benefits.va.gov/gibill
Homeless Veterans	www.va.gov/homeless
Life Insurance	www.insurance.va.gov
Mental Health	www.mentalhealth.va.gov
Military Exposures (Agent Orange, Gulf War Illnesses, etc.)	www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/index.asp
MOVE!® Program	www.move.va.gov
MyHealtheVet	www.myhealth.va.gov
National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder	www.ptsd.va.gov
Survivor Benefits	www.va.gov/survivors
Traveling Veterans Coordinator Program	www.va.gov/healthbenefits/access/seamless_care.asp
VA Caregiver Support Line	www.caregiver.va.gov
VA Mobile Health	https://mobile.va.gov
VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention	www.prevention.va.gov
VA National Center for Patient Safety	www.patientsafety.va.gov
Veterans Choice Program	www.va.gov/opa/choiceact
Veterans Health Library	www.veteranshealthlibrary.org
Women Veterans Call Center	www.womenshealth.va.gov

My Health Care Team

My Health Care Team: _____

My VA Facility: _____

Name: _____

Phone #: _____

My Provider: _____

My Nurse: _____

Phone #: _____

My Pharmacist: _____

Pharmacy Refill: _____

Follow-up Date: _____

Follow-up Method: ☐ Phone ☐ In-person ☐ Other

Healthy Living for Veterans

Messages for a HealthyLife®

Taking steps now to live a healthy life is important for lowering your risks for any serious health-related issues down the road.

These evidenced-based Healthy Living messages will help put you on the road to better well-being. Each section also provides space for you to set goals, and confront any obstacles that keep you from living a healthier life. Start now on your road to wellness!

