



Women Veterans Health
Reengagement Training
— heaRT —

VA Women’s Health Reengagement Training (heaRT)

Participant Handbook



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Table of Contents

- Phase 1: Women Veterans and VA Health Care3**
 - Background of Women’s Health Reengagement Training3
 - Driving VA Transformation for Women Veterans4
- Phase 2: Understanding VA.....5**
 - VA Organizational Overview5
 - VA Health Care Facility Types6
 - Women’s Health Care Team Structure.....7
 - LGBTQ+ Veteran Care8
- Phase 3: VA Health Care Services9**
 - Introduction to Women’s Primary Care.....9
 - Routine Women’s Health Care and Medical Subspecialties..... 10
 - Routine Women’s Health Care: Preventative Screenings 11
 - Contraception and Pre-Conception Planning 12
 - Reproductive Care Policy Changes 13
 - Maternity Care..... 14
 - Newborn Care and Post-Partum Support 15
 - Infertility Services..... 16
 - Incontinence Treatment and Support..... 17
 - Menopause Support..... 18
 - Toxic Exposures: PACT Act, SERVICE Act & Burn Pit Registry..... 19
 - Cancer and Cardiovascular Screenings..... 20
 - Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS) 21
 - VA Mental Health Support – Overview..... 22
 - Interpersonal Trauma and Related Care..... 23
 - Sexual Assault & Violence Occurring in Civilian Life..... 24
 - Suicide Prevention..... 25
 - PTSD and Moral Injury 26
 - Substance Use..... 27
 - Staying Healthy: The Whole Health Approach..... 28
 - Immunizations and Telehealth 29
 - VA Care in the Community 30
 - Care in the Community : Emergency Care and Services..... 31
- Phase 4: Enrolling in VA Health Care 32**
 - Eligibility Basics..... 32
 - Receiving Health Care at VA..... 33
- Phase 5: Resources 34-36**

Phase 1: Women Veterans and VA Health Care

Background of VA Women’s Health Reengagement Training



Why was the VA Women’s Health Reengagement Training (heaRT) created?

This training was created specifically for women Veterans. VA’s Office of Women’s Health (OWH) talked directly with your peers to hear firsthand what was important to cover in this course. After holding focus groups, OWH identified 5 key questions to answer for you during this course:




1. “How does VA support me as a woman Veteran?”
2. “How does VA meet my specific health care needs as a woman?”
3. “How can VA support my mental health as a critical component of my overall health?”
4. “What telehealth services are offered to make my care more accessible?”
5. “How do I enroll in and utilize VA health care?”

Concern	How VA Addresses This Concern
“VA doesn’t offer specific women’s health care”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At VA, you can receive care for all your women’s health needs. Services range from preventive care to gynecology, reproductive care to pre-conception planning to menopause support. • Women’s Health Primary Care Providers (WH-PCP) are specifically trained to care for women Veteran’s needs.
“VA health care is for men”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VA health care is for all Veterans. VA has expanded its services and programs to meet the needs of women Veterans. • VA established the Center for Women Veterans (CWV) and Office of Women’s Health (OWH) to oversee and coordinate VA benefits, services, and programs for women Veterans.
“VA health care is worse than the private sector”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VA offers high-quality health care that is equal to or better than private sector care. Studies have found that care delivered at VA facilities is better than or equal to private sector care (click here for additional research).
“I have to wait too long to get care at VA”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • VA has been working to reduce wait times and improve access. Average wait times for many services at VA (primary care, cardiology) are shorter than in the private sector.
“I have TRICARE, Medicare, and/or private insurance, so I’m not eligible”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having private health insurance or Medicare does not prevent you from being eligible for VA health care.
“It’s too late for me to sign-up for VA health care”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no time limit for signing up for VA health care.
“I didn’t serve in combat, so I’m not eligible”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You did not have to serve in combat to be eligible for VA health care. Eligibility is determined by several factors. (see page 32)

Phase 1: Women Veterans and VA Health Care

Driving VA Transformation for Women Veterans

Research data highlights distinct health outcomes for female Veterans compared to their male counterparts or civilian women. This emphasizes the importance of encouraging women Veterans to utilize VA health care. The data drives policy changes and expanded services for women Veterans. Recognizing the increasing diversity among Veterans, VA is actively working to enhance health equity, specifically addressing women's experiences and needs.

Trend	Supporting Data
 Women Veterans have specific health care needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Women Veterans have higher rates of risk factors for pain, such as untreated injuries in service, and ill-fitting equipment (VHA Pain Management, 2018).• Conditions like osteoporosis and chronic pain are more common in women than men (Int J Environ Res Public Health, 2019).• Women Veterans report not feeling welcome seeking women-specific care in a male-dominated health system (BMC Women's Health, 2017).
 Women's military experiences and outcomes are different from men's	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• About 1 in 3 women report having experienced sexual assault or sexual harassment during their military service (also known as Military Sexual Trauma) (VA Mental Health, 2021).• Women Veterans have higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) than non-Veteran women and men Veterans (Am J of Preventive Medicine, 2018).• Women Veterans have higher rates of depression than male Veterans (American Journal of Public Health, 2010).
 Health disparities exist for Veterans of color, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) Veterans, and rural Veterans	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diabetes and hypertension are more prevalent in rural Veteran communities (VA Office of Health Equity, 2019).• Black women have higher rates of cardiovascular disease risk factors due to chronic stressors such as environmental factors and structural discrimination (Circulation, 2019).• Diabetes is more prevalent amongst Hispanic, Black, Asian, and American Indian/Native American women than white women (CDC, 2018).• LGBT women Veterans are at a disproportionate risk for suicide and substance abuse disorder, largely due to discrimination and stigma (VA Office of Health Equity, 2020).

Women are the fastest-growing segment of the U.S. Veteran population

- The number of women Veterans is expected to increase by 18,000 women per year for the next 8 years. That is an average expected increase from 2 million in 2016 to 2.2 million in 2026.
- VA's Office of Women's Health has launched the "Women's Health Mini-Residency training" to improve the expertise of primary care and emergency care providers to address the full range of women's needs. Over 12,000 providers have completed the residency to achieve the designation of a "Women's Health Primary Care Provider (WH-PCP)." This way VA ensures that their health care providers are specially trained to care for women Veterans.
- The growing number of women Veterans also brings with it greater diversity in race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation. This underscores the importance of efforts to ensure that services are sensitive to age, gender, sexual orientation, culture, and US location (e.g., rural, urban, suburban).

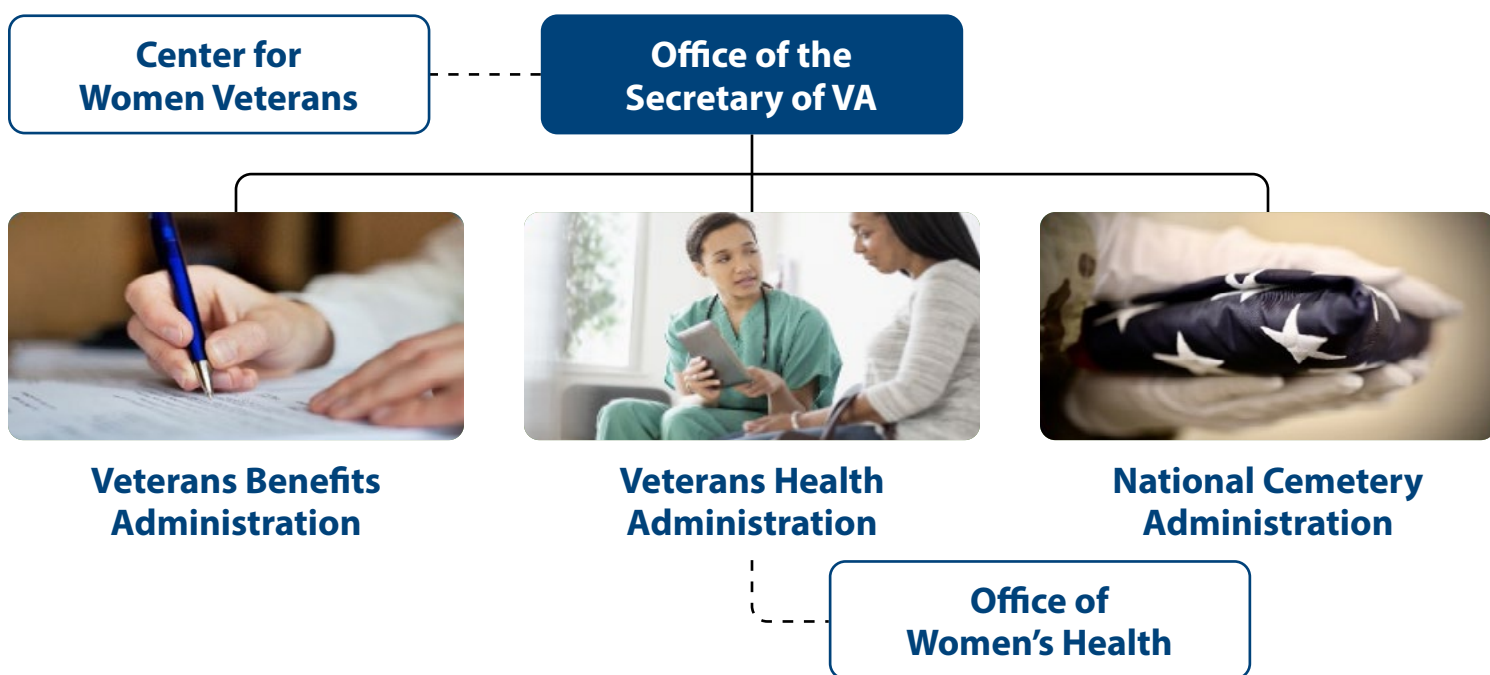
Phase 2: Understanding VA

VA Organizational Overview

VA is made up of three administrations. Each administration supports Veterans in different ways. It is important to understand the differences so that you can go to the right place to get help for different needs.

VA Mission Statement

To fulfill President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors.



Veterans Health Administration (VHA): VHA provides Veteran health care services at VA facilities, and coordinates the community care network.



Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA): VBA administers financial benefits and other forms of Veteran compensation, and determines disability ratings.



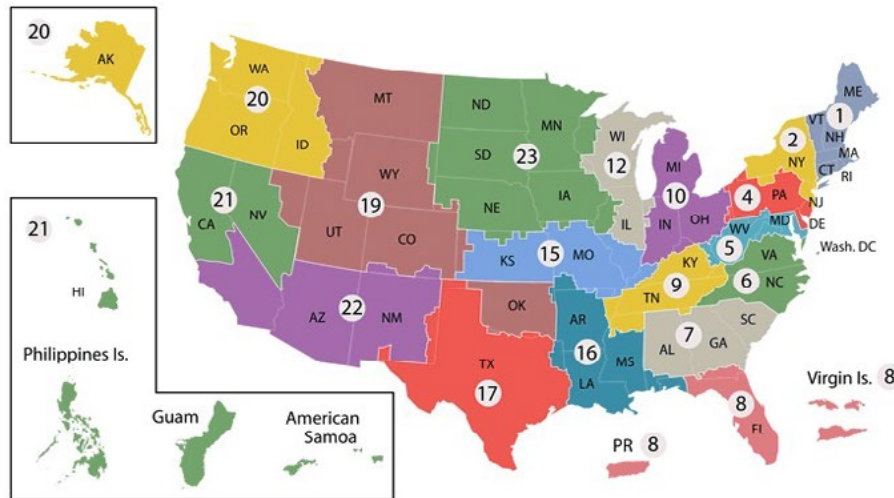
National Cemetery Administration (NCA): NCA provides burial benefits for eligible U.S. military Veterans and maintains Veteran cemeteries across 47 States.



Need Assistance? CWV can help if you need assistance with anything related to VA. You can reach them at <https://ask.va.gov/>

Phase 2: Understanding VA

VHA Organization and Facility Types



Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN)

VA organizes its health care system by regions (VISNs), and each is assigned a corresponding number. Each VISN serves as a regional headquarters office that provide leadership, guidance, and services to the VA medical facilities within their regional boundaries. If you are traveling or moving across the country, let your provider know; you can get health care at any VA facility across the country. There are four types of health care facilities:



Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC): VAMCs (i.e., hospitals) are the largest facility type within the VA system and offer the most services. They provide comprehensive inpatient and outpatient health care to all Veterans. There are 172 VAMCs nationwide.



Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC): VA implemented CBOCs to make access to health care easier. These clinics provide the most common outpatient services—including mental health—without needing to visit a larger medical center or travel as far to see a provider. There are 1241 CBOCs nationwide.



Health Care Center (HCC): HCCs provide comprehensive outpatient care. They operate at least 5 days per week and provide primary care, mental health care, on-site specialty services, and ambulatory surgery and/or procedures which may require moderate sedation or general anesthesia. HCCs are being built in areas with high Veteran populations.



Vet Center: The goal of Vet Centers is to provide a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to Veterans. Enrollment in VHA is not required. There are ~300 Vet Centers nationwide. Mobile Vet Centers extend the reach to Veterans distant from VA facilities, and homeless Veterans.

Locate Your VA Facility

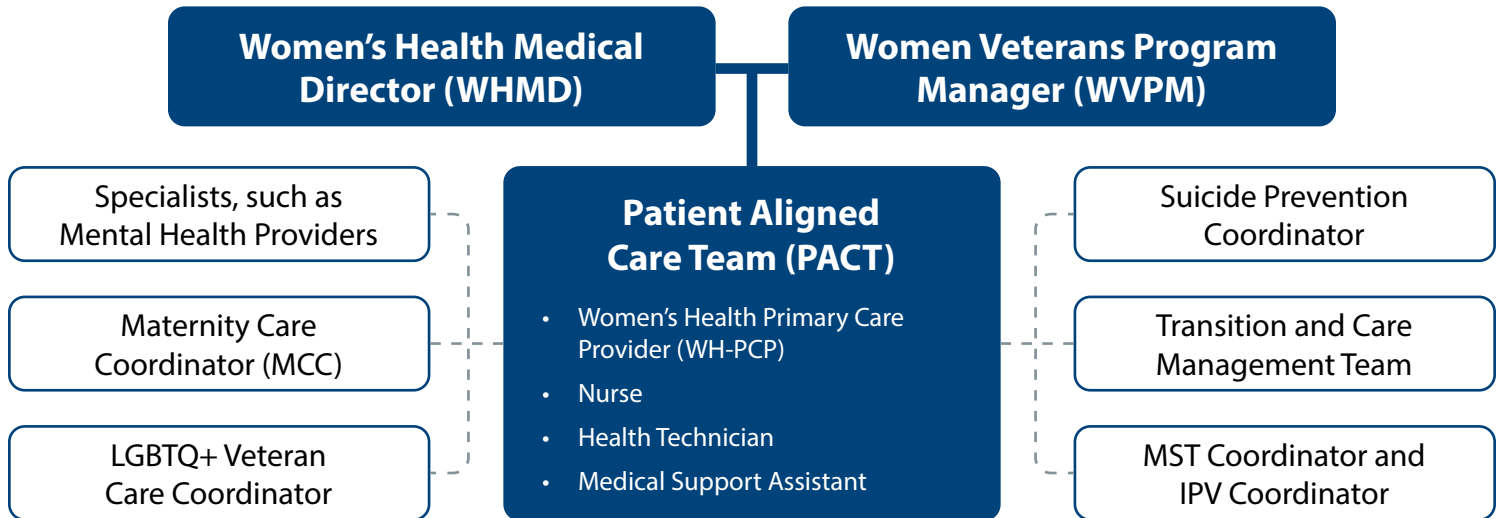
Use the 'Find a VA Location' tool on VA.gov to browse facilities by zip code, city, or state. The interactive map lets you explore options in your local area and choose the facility that suits you best.

To find your local facility, visit: [va.gov/find-locations](https://www.va.gov/find-locations).

Phase 2: Understanding VA

Women's Health Care Team Structure

Women's Care Team Structure



- **Patient Aligned Care Teams (PACTs) provide primary care.** The teams are comprised of a Women's Health Primary Care Provider (WH-PCP), Nurse, Health Technician, and Medical Support Assistant.
 - **The WH-PCP's** role is to provide comprehensive primary care services, including general primary care and gender-specific care.
- The **Women's Health Medical Director (WHMD)** and **Women Veterans Program Manager (WVPM)** work together to oversee the women's health program and the team of Women's Health providers.
 - **Woman Veterans Program Managers (WVPM)** are practitioners with a clinical background, dedicated to assisting women Veterans in accessing VA benefits and health care services. WVPMs serve as advocates and points of contact for questions about health services, enrollment, and general health system navigation at each VA facility. They also ensure compliance with VA women's health regulations.
- **Coordinators** serve as a contact person for specific health care services (e.g., Maternity Care, Military Sexual Trauma Care, Intimate Partner Violence response, or LGBTQ+ support) and can assist you in accessing care.
- The PACT can refer you to specialists, mental health providers, maternity care coordinators, care management teams, and Community Care.
- If you prefer to be seen by general primary care providers and not a Women's Health Primary Care Team, you can request this. You can also request a female provider and are always entitled to a chaperone.



VA established this unique women's care team structure to ensure that women Veterans have **care designed specifically for them.**



VA women's health care is culturally-competent. This means that the VA employees serving you **understand how the military may have affected your health.**



Women's health providers have **further training on women's health** and on conditions that are **connected to women-specific military experiences.**

Phase 2: Understanding VA

Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer+ (LGBTQ+) Veterans

Overview

VA welcomes all Veterans, families, caregivers, and survivor beneficiaries, including those with diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. "LGBTQ+" refers to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer identities. The "+" sign captures identities beyond LGBTQ, including but not limited to questioning, pansexual, asexual, agender, gender diverse, nonbinary, gender-neutral, and other identities.

As a result of stigma, discrimination, and ensuing stress, LGBTQ+ Veterans face increased health risks and unique challenges in health care. VA wants you to be comfortable talking with your VA providers about all aspects of your life so you can receive the best possible care. Information about your sexual orientation and gender identity will prompt your provider to ask specific questions about potential risks to your health and offer appropriate health screens and referrals. As part of routine care, every Veteran should receive a sexual health assessment as part of their annual checkup.

Available Health Care Services

There is an LGBTQ+ Veteran Care Coordinator (LGBTQ+ VCC) at every facility. VA policies require that your health care is delivered in an affirming and inclusive environment and that VA employees respect your identity.

- VA health care includes, among other services:
- LGBTQ+ group therapy and support groups
- Gender Affirming Hormone Therapy
- Gender-Affirming Prosthetics Devices
- Veterans can include their self-identified gender identity, preferred name, and sexual orientation in the VA Electronic Health Record
- VA patients can view, enter and edit their gender identity and preferred name at <https://www.va.gov>.

Lactation Assistance

VHA strives to ensure equitable access to high-quality healthcare for diverse Veteran populations. The Office of Health Equity (OHE) is dedicated to eliminating health disparities, ensuring health equity for all Veterans, including those who are pregnant or lactating. See page #15 for additional information.

Visit <https://www.patientcare.va.gov/lgbt/> for additional information and useful fact sheets.

Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. You may reach out to the LGBTQ+ VCC at any time before speaking with your Women's Health Primary Care Provider (WH-PCP). Any medical treatment must be first discussed with your provider.

Access

Reach out to your local facility's LGBTQ+ VCC for help getting started with any services. VCCs can also answer questions, handle concerns, and advocate for your right to care.

Coordinate with your PCP for necessary assessments and referrals. Referrals are required for all specialty services.



To find the LGBTQ+ VCC at your facility, visit [patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/VAFacilities](https://www.patientcare.va.gov/LGBT/VAFacilities). They will be the most knowledgeable about local resources.

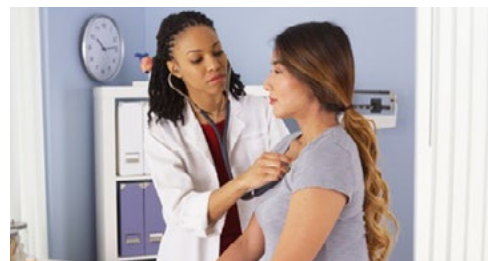
Phase 3: VA Health Care Services

Introduction to Women's Primary Care

How VA uses Research to Improve Care

VA uses research to develop evidence-based strategies to improve care and tailor programs and services to better serve women Veterans. VA looks at research data to create new policies and programs to serve women Veterans. These include:

- Policy for Comprehensive Women's Health
- Policy for Maternity Care Coordination at VA
- Development of the National VA Women's Reproductive Mental Health Consultation Program
- Development of specialized training for VA primary care providers on how to recognize and treat pain and musculoskeletal issues in women Veterans



Comprehensive Primary Care and Women's Health

VA provides comprehensive primary care, which includes general and women-specific care, and a range of other health care services. Your Women's Health Primary Care Provider (WH-PCP) will be assigned when you register, will provide most of your care, and will refer you to any necessary specialty care. Any treatment must be first discussed with your provider.

Comprehensive primary care includes:

- General health care and wellness checks, including routine screenings
- Women-specific care for [reproductive health](#) (including birth control) and menopause
- Management of long-term conditions, like heart disease and diabetes
- Pain management and care related to musculoskeletal injuries
- Mental health services including medications, counseling, and referrals
- Treatment for conditions related to Military Sexual Trauma

Using VA Pharmacy Services

Prescription drugs, over-the-counter-medications, and medical and surgical supplies are available under the VA formulary when prescribed by a VA health care provider. Pharmacies are located **onsite at all VAMCs** (and some larger CBOCs).

- You may **pick up** your prescriptions at your local facility, or have them shipped to your address on file at the VA via **mail order service**
- You can order prescription refills through the [My HealtheVet online portal](#). For additional information, visit the Pharmacy Benefits Management Services website at: <https://www.pbm.va.gov/PBM/index.asp>

Eligibility for Care

You must be enrolled in VA health care and registered at a care facility. If you meet the basic eligibility requirements, you can enroll in VA health care. Please see: [Basic Eligibility for VA Health Care](#):

- **Don't self-exclude!** Even if you think you are not eligible for VA health care, talk with an enrollment coordinator or the Women Veterans Program Manager at your local VA, as you might be eligible for certain services.
- You do not need a disability rating to apply for VA health care.
- Based on your priority group, you may be asked to pay copays for services and medications; however, Veterans with greater than 50% service disability never pay for any medications. For more information on copays and priority groups, visit: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/copay-rates/>.

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services

Routine Women's Health Care and Medical Subspecialties

Overview

Primary care is the foundation of care at VA. Primary care provides long-term, patient-provider relationships, coordinates care across a spectrum of health services, educates, and offers disease prevention programs.

When registered for primary care at VA, you are assigned one **Women's Health-Primary Care Provider (WH-PCP)** at one site to coordinate your care and provide both primary care and women-specific care. You may request a provider of a particular gender when enrolling.

Visit <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/> for additional information on VA's Comprehensive Women's Primary Care.

Routine Care

VA provides women Veterans with a wide range of health routine and specialty care:

- Well-Woman Care
- Breast Health (including Mammograms)
 - Your WH-PCP will refer you for your Mammogram (either in-house or in the community)
- Birth Control Counseling & Management
- Pelvic Exams and Ultrasounds
- Preventive Women's Health Screenings
- Sexual Health
- STI Prevention and Treatment
- HPV Vaccine
 - The HPV vaccine can be administered up to age 45. Get the HPV vaccine before age 26 for optimal effectiveness.

Medical Subspecialties

VA also offers many specialty care services you may need in addition to Primary Care. The list below is not exhaustive, but include:

- Gastroenterology
- Dermatology
- Allergy
- Neurology
- Endocrinology
- Hearing Loss/Audiology
- Orthopedics
- Cardiology
- Optometry
- Urology
- Musculoskeletal Injury
- Pain Management
- Physical Therapy
- Traumatic Brain Injury

Eligibility

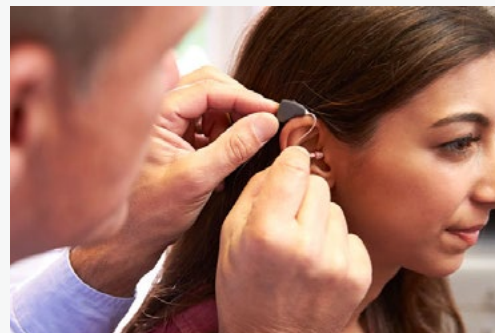
You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment must be first discussed with your provider.

Access

WH-PCPs are assigned when you enroll in VA healthcare and register at a care facility.

- Request assignment to a Women's Health Primary Care Team.
- You may request a provider of a particular gender when you enroll.

The Women Veterans Call Center is your guide to women's health. Call or text 1-855-829-6636 to be connected to a trained representative to help you with questions related to VA care and other VA benefits.





Routine Women's Health Care – Preventive Screenings

Preventive Screenings and Care

Preventive screenings are part of your routine care. These include:

- Cervical Cancer Screening (Pap Smear)
 - Your WH-PCP can conduct your Pap Smear. You will only be referred to a gynecologist if there are abnormalities.
- Cardiovascular risk screening.
- Mental health and physical safety.

Schedule an annual well-woman exam at VA and discuss concerns and care plans with your provider.

In addition to periodic medical exams (including women-specific exams), your health benefits include important preventive care services:

- [Immunization against infectious disease](#)
- Health education, including nutrition education
- Counseling on inheritance of genetically determined disease

A full list of preventive screening services can be found online at www.prevention.va.gov and download [Women's Health: A Guide to Preventing Infections](#).

Gynecology

VA provides routine and specialty gynecology services. Your VA care team will work with you to determine appropriate care. Gynecologists provide specialized medical and surgical care for gynecologic conditions including but not limited to:

- Chronic pelvic pain
- Abnormal uterine bleeding
- Uterine fibroids
- Endometriosis
- Ovarian cysts and masses
- Pelvic organ prolapse
- Incontinence
- Surgical sterilization

Sexual Health

Sexual health and wellness is an important area of overall well-being. Your team will ask you about your sexual health and functioning in an open and nonjudgmental way to support your overall health.

You can find more information at: <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/topics/sexual-health.asp>.

Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment must be first discussed with your provider.

Access

- Coordinate with your WH-PCP for necessary assessments and referrals. Referrals are required for specialty services.
- Screening timelines are determined individually with your provider.
- In all VA health care settings, you have the right to request a chaperone during a sensitive / near sensitive examination, procedure, or treatment. Trauma informed care (TIC) concepts will be utilized.

Your WH-PCP will be able to provide all your primary care and women-specific health services, including well-woman exams. All additional services will be performed by specialists.

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Contraception and Pre-Conception Planning

Contraception

VA provides comprehensive contraception services for women. Services include contraception counseling, birth control prescriptions, and insertion of Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARCs).

Once enrolled in VA health care, you can discuss with your WH-PCP the best contraceptive option for you. The following types of birth control are available through VA:

- **Hormonal Methods:** Pill, Patch, Ring
- **Barrier Methods:** Condoms, Sponges, Cervical Cap, Spermicides.
- **Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARCs):** Implants, Depo-Injection, Intrauterine Devices (IUDs). A Specialist certified in the procedure will perform the insertion.
- **Emergency Contraception (Plan B):** This will require a prescription from your WH-PCP.
- **Sterilization:** Tubal ligation, bilateral salpingectomy (fallopian tube removal).

Pre-Conception Planning

Pre-conception planning is about taking action for a healthy pregnancy and delivery, and VA provides a full range of pre-conception planning services. Your WH-PCP will talk with you about your pre-pregnancy health, reproductive history/life plan, family history, partner's health, and the safety of currently prescribed medications during pregnancy. Genetic screening and counseling is also available.

You will have a physical assessment, and discussions about nutrition, information on creating a healthy environment, immunizations, and any risks that could cause pregnancy complications such as smoking, alcohol and/or drug use, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV).

Reproductive Mental Health

If you are on medication for a mental health condition, such as anxiety or depression, your WH-PCP can submit a reproductive mental health consult to help you create a plan to keep you and your baby as healthy as possible during pregnancy.


Eligibility

- All Veterans enrolled in VA health care are eligible to receive contraception, and pre-conception services, care, and medications. It is part of your routine primary care.
- If you are pregnant when you enroll at VA, your WH-PCP will refer you to a Maternity Care Coordinator (MCC).
 - You will also be referred to an obstetrics provider in the community for maternity care and delivery.
- VA considers "birthing age" as extending up to age 47, so speak with your WH-PCP if you are in your 40s and you wish to conceive or are already pregnant.

Access

- Your Women's Health Provider will write you a prescription.
- Some contraceptives can be mailed to you.



 **If you have any prescriptions from an outside provider, bring it to your VA WH-PCP to review for potential inclusion with your VA prescriptions. VA will not fill prescriptions from outside providers.**



Reproductive Care Policy Changes

Overview

VA has nearly 300,000 Women Veterans of child-bearing age and is committed to providing these Veterans the full range of reproductive health services to ensure their health and well-being.

VA's belief is that Pregnant Veterans and eligible VA beneficiaries (those enrolled in [CHAMPVA](#)), deserve access to world-class, life-saving reproductive care (such as medically necessary care for Veterans presenting with ectopic pregnancy and miscarriage) when they need it most. This includes access to abortion services, abortion information, and counseling on adoption and parenting.

Abortion Services

VA offers abortion counseling, and abortions for pregnant Veterans and eligible beneficiaries when the life or health of the woman would be endangered if the pregnancy were carried to term, and/or when the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest.

Counseling Services Available

- You can receive counseling on your pregnancy options.
- Counseling is provided by VA health care professionals.
- Counseling is tailored to your unique needs and situation.

Explanation of Eligibility

- Your health care provider will make a clinical determination regarding whether your life or health is endangered if you were to carry the pregnancy to term.
- There is no burden of proof in cases of rape or incest. A self-report of rape or incest constitutes sufficient evidence.

Availability of Services

- VA is taking steps to guarantee Veterans and other VA beneficiaries have safe access to abortion-related care anywhere in the country.
- VA employees, when working within the scope of their federal employment, may provide authorized services regardless of state restrictions.

Eligibility

- You must be enrolled in VA health care or CHAMPVA to have access to this type of care.
- Any treatment must be first discussed with your provider.
- Call the Women Veterans Call Center at 1-855-VA-WOMEN for more information. They can connect you with the right staff at your local VA medical Facility for help.

Access

- Schedule an appointment with your WH-PCP to discuss your concerns and whether pregnancy termination is the right option for you.
- For more information, please visit: <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/topics/reproductive-health.asp>

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Maternity Care

Overview

Maternity benefits are part of your VA health care. Maternity care coordination begins once pregnancy is confirmed and continues through the post-partum period until the Veteran is medically released from obstetric care. VA does not provide maternity care or delivery services within VA facilities. Instead, maternity care is delivered in the community and paid for by VA. A Maternity Care Coordinator (MCC) will be assigned to each Veteran to help her coordinate maternity care. Women continue to receive care for other conditions at VA during pregnancy.

Maternity Services include:

- Prenatal care
- Comprehensive Assessment and Pregnancy-related education
- Standard and Special Laboratory Tests
- Prenatal Screening for Genetic Disorders
- Gestational Dating Ultrasounds
- New Specialty Consultations, including Lactation Support and Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy
- Coordination with other VA care
- Screening for and treatment of mental health conditions, such as depression
- Reproductive Mental Health services and support
- Postpartum Care and Contraception
- Pharmacy Prescriptions
- National Cemetery Administration (NCA) services for infant loss
- Pregnancy counseling, including abortion, parenting and adoption counseling

Additional resources

More information is included in [VA Handbook 1330.03](#) and can be accessed at this link: <https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/publications.cfm?pub=1>

The Patient Summary of VA Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Pregnancy can be found at this link: <https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/WH/up/VADoDPregnancyCPGPatientSummary4102018.pdf>.

Eligibility

- [All confirmed pregnant Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are eligible for Maternity Care Coordination.](#)
- Prenatal care and deliveries are delivered in community facilities but are paid for by VA.

Access

- Each VAMC has a Maternity Care Coordinator (MCC) who will reach out to you as soon as you are confirmed pregnant by a referral from your WH-PCP.
- You should work with your MCC and Women's Health PCP team throughout your pregnancy to ensure that your health care needs are being met.
- Your Maternity Care Coordinator (MCC) will provide care coordination services during pregnancy and through 12 months postpartum.
- The MCC is also available to answer questions you may have related to your pregnancy, available maternity care services and VA coverage.



The Purple Book is a complete guide to Department of Veterans Affairs Obstetric care, and can be accessed at this link: <https://www.qmo.amedd.army.mil/pregnancy/purplebook.pdf>

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Maternity Care: Newborn Care and Post Partum Support

Newborn Care

VA provides newborn health care services, both inpatient and outpatient, from date of birth plus the seven consecutive days following birth. All medically indicated post-delivery services are included in this benefit.

Post-Partum Support

VA has expanded maternity care coordination services to cover Veterans for 12 months after their pregnancy ends.

Mental Health

After childbirth, some women feel sad, worried, and anxious. Postpartum depression symptoms are more severe than these initial feelings and can persist for months. If you are struggling with feelings of depression, reach out to your Maternity Care Coordinator to set up mental health support. VA has clinicians with specialized training in reproductive mental health. For more information, please visit: <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/topics/pregnancy-and-mental-health.asp>

- You can use the [Anonymous Screening Tool](#) that screens for symptoms of depression.

Lactation Assistance

- You will also be referred to a Lactation Coordinator. The lactation counseling be helpful if this is your first baby, or if you are having trouble breastfeeding or chestfeeding. This service can be provided through telemedicine.

Services Provided

- Lactation counseling and education
- Breastfeeding/chestfeeding classes
- Support Groups

Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy

Speak with your Maternity Care Coordinator about Pelvic Floor physical therapy. Pregnancy, childbirth, C-sections or hysterectomy, menopause, and physical stress associated with military service may contribute to nerve damage and weak pelvic muscles, leading to overactive bladder or urinary incontinence in women. Help is available – no need to suffer in silence!

Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment must be first discussed with your provider. You must be receiving VA maternity benefits.

Access

Talk to your Women's Health Primary Care Provider or your Maternity Care Coordinator (MCC) at your preferred VA health care facility. The MCC, Social Work Office, and Office of Community Care will work together to provide support around newborn care.

Additional information can be found here: [womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/outreachmaterials/reproductivehealth/breastfeeding](https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/outreachmaterials/reproductivehealth/breastfeeding).



Infertility Services

Overview

Infertility is the failure of a sexually active couple not using contraception, to conceive within one year (six months for women aged 35 and older). All Veterans enrolled are eligible for inclusive health counseling, evaluation, management, and treatment for infertility, irrespective of service connection, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or relationship/marital status.

Approved Services for Infertility Include:

- Genetic counseling, screening, and diagnostic testing
- Laboratory blood testing
- Pelvic and/or transvaginal ultrasound
- Surgical correction of structural pathology
- Reversal of tubal ligation
- Medication (hormonal therapy, oral, injectable)
- Other diagnostic studies, treatments, or procedures
- Intrauterine insemination for medically indicated conditions

Intrauterine insemination (IUI) is a fertility treatment is where prepared sperm is placed directly in the uterus to enhance the chances of pregnancy.

In vitro fertilization (IVF) is a complex process that can help achieve pregnancy. It includes collecting mature eggs from the ovaries, combining them with sperm in a lab, and then placing one or more fertilized eggs (embryos) into the uterus for baby development.

Specific Eligibility Guidelines for IVF

- You must have a service-connected condition that causes infertility.
- You must be legally married to someone of the opposite sex.
- You must be able to use their own (autologous) sperm, eggs, and uterus to achieve pregnancy.
 - If female, the Veteran must have an intact uterus and be able to make eggs or have her own eggs that have been cryopreserved.
 - The male spouse must be able to produce his own sperm.

Defrayment of Adoption Costs

If you meet eligibility for IVF, you are eligible for defrayment of Adoption Costs. The benefit is up to \$2000 per child per year, with a cap of \$5000 per calendar year. For more information on application, visit: <https://news.va.gov/47109/va-now-offers-adoption-reimbursement/>

***NOTE: Availability of VA infertility services is based on current law which VA is obligated to follow.** You can find the Directive 1332 on the VHA Publications site here: <https://www.va.gov/vhapublications/publications.cfm?pub=1>

Eligibility

- All Veterans enrolled in VA health care are eligible to receive infertility treatment.
- IUI is available for all eligible woman Veterans facing fertility challenges.
- In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) benefits are available **only** to Veterans with service-connected disabilities that prevent a Veteran from procreating without the use of IVF.
- Check with CHAMPVA for infertility services available for non-Veteran partners (<https://www.benefits.gov/benefit/318>).

Access

- You should talk to your WH-PCP about clinical infertility evaluation and treatment services.
- You will need a referral from your WH-PCP to receive infertility services.
- The Eligibility Office can provide details regarding eligibility for services. Contact your local VA office or call VA's Health Eligibility Center at 1-877-222-VETS (8837).

Services not Covered

- VA does not cover donor eggs, donor sperm, donor embryos, and surrogacy.
- Costs of obtaining, transporting, or storing sperm/oocyte samples are not covered by VA.
- Except for Veterans who are eligible for IVF, most non-Veteran partners are not eligible for infertility evaluation and treatment through VA.

For more information on VA Infertility Eligibility, please review this [Infertility Brochure](#).



Incontinence Treatment and Support

Overview

Incontinence is the loss of bladder control leading to the unintentional passing of urine. You can have incontinence issues at any age. The physical stresses associated with military service may contribute to pelvic floor disorders.

Pelvic floor disorder (PFD)

PFD occurs when the pelvic muscles and connective tissue weaken or are injured. The most common types of PFDs are:

- Incontinence or loss of urine or/and bowel control.
- Pelvic organ prolapse

Symptoms of urge or stress incontinence include:

- Frequent and sudden uncontrollable need to urinate
- Involuntary release of urine
- Leaking a small to moderate amount of urine when coughing, sneezing, or laughing

For more information about this topic, visit: [the NIH site About Pelvic Floor Disorders](#)

Incontinence Services Available

VA provides a range of support services for incontinence:

- Urogynecology for incontinence evaluation
- Pads from pharmacies
- Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy (PFPT)
 - Improves muscle tone and bladder control.
 - PFPT can help alleviate urinary/bowel incontinence and sexual dysfunction as well as relieve abdominal, lower back, or pelvic discomfort, and chronic tail bone, vaginal, or rectal pain.
- Medications
- Surgery

Surgery can be done on site at some VA facilities, as some locations have Gynecologists, Urologists, and Uro-gynecologists to perform needed surgeries. You do not have to silently suffer. Talk to your WH-PCP for a referral to a specialist.

Eligibility

All Veterans enrolled in VA health care are eligible to receive incontinence treatment and support services. Any treatment must be first discussed with your provider.

Access

- Talk to your WH-PCP about incontinence services and treatment.
- Your WH-PCP will refer you to Urogynecology and/or Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy (PFPT) for specialty care.
- Pelvic floor physical therapy and Surgery is available at some VA facilities but may also be delivered through community care.

Pregnancy, childbirth, C-sections or hysterectomy, menopause, and physical stress associated with military service may contribute to nerve damage and weak pelvic muscles, leading to overactive bladder or urinary incontinence in women. However, incontinence is common and treatable. Let VA help support your recovery!



Menopause Support

Overview

Menopause is the normal change in a woman's life when her body slowly produces less estrogen and progesterone hormones, and her menstrual period stops. This is gradual process, often taking 3-5 years. There is some individual variability, but in general, menopause starts between ages 45-55. Often, menopause will start for you around the same age that it started for your mother.

Menopause symptoms before the age of 40 is considered premature and should be evaluated by your doctor. Checking hormone levels in the blood can verify if you are in menopause.

Menopause happens in three stages, with varying symptoms:

- 1. Peri-menopause:** Menstrual periods become more irregular. Women may experience hot flashes, night sweats, sleep disruption, and/or mood swings. Not all women will experience the same symptoms of menopause.
 - Be careful to consistently use contraception during this stage as pregnancy can still occur.
- 2. Menopause:** Menopause is the permanent ending of menstrual periods. You have reached menopause when you have not had a menstrual period for 12 consecutive months.
- 3. Post-menopause**
 - This is the time after menopause. During post-menopause, a woman's body makes only a very small amount of estrogen.
 - During this time, a woman's risk of heart disease and osteoporosis (weaker bones) increases.

VA Menopause support services can include hormone replacement therapy and non-hormonal treatments for symptom management.

Eligibility

You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment must be first discussed with your provider.

Access

- You can set up an appointment with your WH-PCP to discuss which combination of treatments work best for you.
- Routine menopause support and symptom management can be delivered by your WH-PCP. You may be referred to specialty gynecology if necessary.
- Medical and non-medical treatments are available at VA. For additional information, please visit: <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/topics/menopause.asp>

The average age of menopause is 51, but age has no impact on menopause management. You will be treated regardless of age.

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Toxic Exposures: PACT Act, SERVICE Act & Burn Pit Registry

The PACT Act

The [PACT Act](#) is a new law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits, Agent Orange, and other toxic substances.

- It addresses cancers and other health conditions that VA presumes are caused by exposure to these substances.
- It provides care and benefits to Veterans from multiple generations, and to their survivors. You can find the full legislation here: <https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/>

The SERVICE Act

The SERVICE Act expands eligibility for clinically appropriate mammography screenings to women Veterans of any age, who served in contingency operations during the Vietnam, Gulf War, and Post-9/11 time periods, and who were exposed to toxic substances at such locations. For more information, visit: [The Dr. Kate Hendricks Thomas Supporting Expanded Review for Veterans in Combat Environments Act](#).

Locations and Periods of Active-Duty Service (including for Activated Guard and Reserve personnel):

- **Iraq** between August 2, 1990, and February 28, 1991, and from March 19, 2003, until burn pits (areas used for burning solid waste in open air without equipment) are no longer used in Iraq.
- **Southwest Asia theater of operations, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Qatar**, from August 2, 1990, until burn pits are no longer used in such locations.
- **Afghanistan, Djibouti, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Yemen** from September 11, 2001, until burn pits are no longer used in such locations.

Other locations and time periods as determined by the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry.

*The bill specifies that the listed locations do not include bodies of water around or airspace above such locations.

Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry

If you served in Southwest Asia after August 2, 1990, or in Afghanistan or Djibouti after September 11, 2001, you are eligible to participate in the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry. This is a tool for VA, Servicemembers and Veterans to track and gain understanding of the potential health effects of exposure to airborne hazards during military service. For more information, please visit: <https://veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPitRegistry/#page/home>

You may also utilize the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry Mobile App to get information about <https://mobile.va.gov/app/burn-pit-registry>

Eligibility

- Veterans enrolled in VA health care will receive an initial toxic exposure screening, with follow-up screenings at least every five years. Speak with your WH-PCP about screening.
- Veterans who are eligible, but not enrolled in VA health care, will have the opportunity to enroll to receive toxic exposure screening. **You can call toll-free at 877-222-8387 or apply online.**
- You do not have to be enrolled in VA health care to be eligible for a breast cancer risk assessment and mammogram under the SERVICE Act, but you should contact your local VA medical facility for information.
- Veterans who deployed to the listed locations in the SERVICE Act are eligible for breast cancer risk assessment.

Access

- Contact your WH-PCP to find out how to set up your initial toxic exposure screening in your area.
- You can file a disability claim for any of the presumptive conditions.
- **Veterans previously denied a toxic-exposure related claim** are encouraged to file a supplemental claim.
- Visit [How to File VA Disability Claim](#)
- Contact your primary care provider to set up your assessment. If you don't have a primary care provider, you can contact your local VA facility to schedule a breast cancer risk assessment appointment with the SERVICE Act POC provider.
- **Unenrolled Veterans:** If you are not eligible or do not desire VA health care enrollment, you will be directed to register for screening only. After registration or enrollment, contact your local VA facility to schedule an appointment with the SERVICE Act POC provider.



Cancer and Cardiovascular Screenings

Overview

Preventive Care is a major part of your health care plan. This includes routine screenings and management of chronic conditions.

Cancer Screening

VA uses the latest evidence-based practices for cancer screening. Since 2008, one of VA's major initiatives has been to enhance preventive screening services, specifically for breast and cervical cancer. Through VA, you can expect services including but not limited to:

- **Breast Cancer Screening** – Looks for changes in breast tissue to detect cancer.
 - General Screening Recommendation: Annually for ages 45 – 54 and every two years after age 55
- **Cervical Cancer Screening** – includes Pap Smears to look for precancerous changes on the cervix that might evolve into cervical cancer, and HPV Tests to detect the human papillomavirus (HPV) that can cause cancer cell changes
 - Screening Recommendation: Every 3 - 5 years based on age and risk factors
- **Lung Cancer Screening** – Detects cell abnormalities in the lungs
 - Screening Recommendation: Adults aged 55 - 80 with a history of smoking or military exposure to airborne hazards
- **Colorectal Cancer Screening** – Detects cancerous colon cells through colonoscopy procedures.
 - Screening Recommendation: Annually starting at age 45 – 75

Cardiovascular Screening

Cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of death in women. Heart health is determined by many factors, such as family history and lifestyle. While female Veterans are less likely to have traditional risk factors for heart disease than male Veterans (high blood pressure, high cholesterol, etc.), they may be more likely to have some “non-traditional” risk factors such as depression or anxiety disorders. Further, women with PTSD are at higher risk of developing heart disease compared to women without PTSD.

Heart attacks present differently in women. Although women can experience classic chest pain, they also often experience the following symptoms:

- Uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, or pain in the center of your chest
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Shortness of breath
- Cold sweat, nausea, or lightheadedness

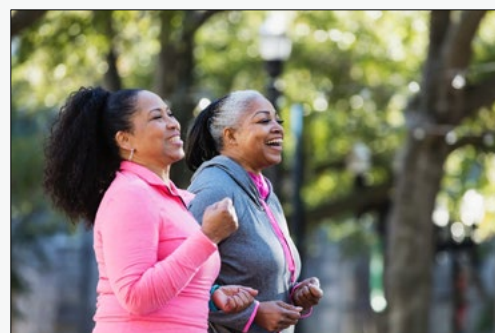
The purpose of [cardiac services for women Veterans](#) is to reduce risks over time: 80% of cardiac events can be prevented with education and action. You may access the [Whole Health program](#) to help you with heart-healthy lifestyle changes.

Eligibility

- All Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are eligible for cancer screenings, and cardiovascular risk assessments, prevention services, and treatment. Specific programs vary by facility.
- Some VA facilities have on-site mammography while others will refer you into the community for your mammography.

Access

- **Referrals for all screenings are coordinated through your WH-PCP.**
- Discuss any questions or concerns with your WH-PCP.
 - Your WH-PCP will place an order for your mammogram.
 - Your WH-PCP will assess your risk of or heart disease, can refer you for Cardiology consultation, and help you identify strategies to reduce your risk.
- All medically necessary prescriptions for treatment are covered by VA.



Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS)

Overview

VA's Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS), Center for Women Veterans, and Office of Women's Health collaborate closely to address the unique needs of women Veterans and provide the most comprehensive and advanced prosthetic devices, sensory aids, and associated services in the world.

The term "prosthetic" includes any medical device that supports or replaces loss of a body part or function. Any specialized, medically-indicated item that is commercially available may be procured based on the Veteran's individualized needs.

For more information, please visit <https://www.rehab.va.gov/PROSTHETICS/factsheet/PSAS-FactSheet-WomenVets.pdf> and <https://www.rehab.va.gov/>

Women-Specific Prosthetics

Women-specific items include but are not limited to:

- Maternity and Postpartum Support Belt Items
- Nursing Bras, nipple shields and creams
- Breast Pumps and Breast milk storage bags
- Pelvic Floor Physical Therapy Devices
- Post-Mastectomy items, including Bathing Suits
- Wigs for Alopecia, post chemotherapy
- Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives (e.g., Intrauterine Devices) after a consultative visit with a GYN or WH-PCP
- Vaginal Dilators
- Adaptive equipment

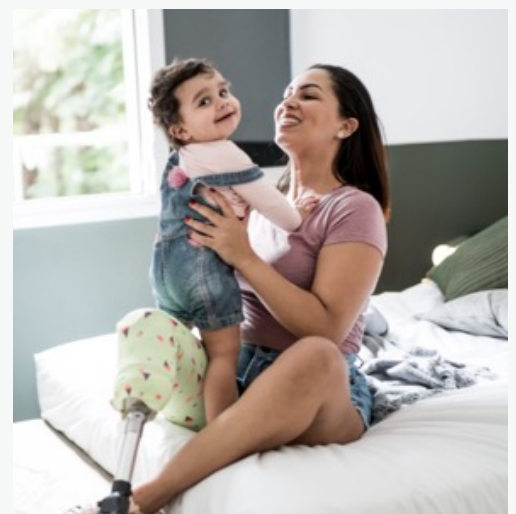
Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS) also provides a wide range of comprehensive services and devices including orthotic and prosthetic services, mobility aids, hearing aids and eyeglasses, communication and assistive devices, home respiratory therapy, recreational/rehabilitative equipment, surgical implants, durable medical equipment, automobile adaptive equipment, home improvement and structural alterations, and clothing allowance.

Eligibility

- You must be enrolled in the VA health care system and have a medical need for a prosthetic service or item.
- Discuss all treatment options with your WH-PCP provider.
- Additional eligibility criteria may apply for certain programs.

Access

- You will need an evaluation from your WH-PCP and/or specialty care clinician/s before receiving any prosthetics, including gender-specific prosthetic devices.
- Your VA Provider will need to submit a consult to Prosthetic and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS) for fulfillment of your prosthetic and sensory aids device.
 - You may be sent to a community provider.
- Work with your VA Providers during your assessment and evaluation to determine the best medical device for your medical needs.



Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Mental Health

Overview

VA takes a patient-centered approach to mental health. Care is tailored to address each Veteran's individual needs and preferences, including gender-related concerns. Over half of VA mental health providers are female, all equipped with specialized training in women's mental health, covering issues like perinatal depression and menopause-related mood changes. Each VA medical center has a dedicated Women's Mental Health Champion, a clinician with expertise in women Veterans' mental health, connecting individuals with local support resources.

Available Services

VA offers individualized therapy based on your unique needs. Therapy (individual, group, and family) using evidence-based methods such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Interpersonal Psychotherapy (IPT)

- General outpatient care (including assessment, therapy, and medications)
- Treatments that address specific types of trauma:
- Military sexual trauma (MST) services
- Intimate partner violence (IPV) services
- PTSD screening and treatment
- Reproductive mental health services
- Eating disorder treatment
- Residential (mixed-gender and women-only) and inpatient treatment options
- Tele-mental health
- Mobile app support services including:



- **PTSD Coach** provides users with education about PTSD, information about professional care, self-assessment, opportunities to find support, and tools to help manage daily stress.



- **The Mindfulness Coach App** provides you tools and guided exercises to help you practice mindfulness. Mindfulness Coach can be used alone but is not intended as a substitute for therapy (iPhone only).



- **Beyond MST** is a free, secure self-help mobile app that was created specifically to support the health and well-being of survivors of Military Sexual Trauma (MST). It has over 30 specialized tools and other features to help you cope with challenges, manage symptoms, and improve your quality of life.

Apps do not replace clinical care. Mental health care is available through Primary Care–Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI) clinics. With PC-MHI, mental health experts work with you and your WH-PCP team on emotional and behavioral challenges that affect your health.

Eligibility

You do not need to be enrolled in VA health care to access many mental health services.

Even if you do not qualify for VA health care, you may still be able to get certain services.

- Call the Women Veterans Call Center at **1-855-VA-WOMEN (829-6636)** for help connecting with your local Women's Mental Health Champion.

or

- **Call the VA Health Benefits Hotline at 877-222-8387** to find out what your care options may be.
 - The call center is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET.
 - If you have hearing loss, call TTY: 800-877-8339.
- All Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care are eligible for mental health services.

Access

- If you are enrolled in VA primary care, speak with your WH-PCP about your mental health concerns and treatment options.
- Mental health support is available at VA medical facilities, and Vet Centers. You may receive care in person or via telehealth.
- **Call or walk into any [Vet Center](#)** during clinic hours.
- To connect with the Veterans Crisis Line:
 - **Call 988, then Press 1**
 - **Text 838255**
 - Start a confidential chat at: <https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/Chat>.
 - If you have hearing loss, call TTY: 800-799-4889.

For more information, visit: <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/topics/mental-health.asp> and [mentalhealth.va.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov)

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Mental Health: Interpersonal Trauma and Related Care

Overview

VA Women's Health Providers are trained in therapies for differing types of interpersonal trauma women Veterans experience, including Military Sexual Trauma (MST), sexual assault during civilian life, and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). Experiencing trauma can have a lasting impact on your short- and long-term health. Interpersonal violence can affect a woman's physical, reproductive, and mental health. Each type of trauma has distinct definitions and health impacts, and there is overlap in the occurrence of various types of traumas and their associated health outcomes.

Military Sexual Trauma

Military Sexual Trauma (MST) is sexual assault or sexual harassment that occurred while you were in the military. Assault can range from harassment, sexual comments, unwanted advances or touching, to coercion, or being physically forced into sexual activity – it is any unwanted sexual contact with another person. MST can affect a person's mental and physical health, even many years later. VA can provide treatment and support to help you cope with how MST has impacted or is impacting your life.

VA Health Care Services for MST

- **Free counseling and treatment** for mental and physical health conditions related to MST, including outpatient, inpatient and residential treatment.
- Every VA medical facility has an **MST Coordinator who can help you access VA treatment programs and services.**
- You can request a clinician of a particular gender if it would make you feel more comfortable.
- MST counseling services are available at VA's community-based **Vet Centers.**

Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is physical, sexual, or psychological harm by a current or former partner or spouse. It does not require sexual intimacy or cohabitation. IPV can include physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, and/or psychological aggression, and withholding economic resources.

VA mandates screening, danger assessment, intervention, and safety planning for all types of IPV. Each facility must offer IPV screening, with an IPV Assistance Program Coordinator on hand for assistance. Speak with your WH-PCP, who will provide IPV screening, safety information, and resources for relationship concerns. VA offers various intervention and prevention resources, including education, community referrals, consultations, assessments, and treatment through your WH-PCP.

Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) for 24-hour confidential support.

Eligibility

MST Care:

- You can receive MST-related care even if you are not eligible for any other VA Care.
- You do not need to have ever reported MST or have documentation to receive MST-related care.
- There are no length of service, time-period, or income requirements.
- **You do not need a disability rating to receive care.**
- For more information, visit: <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/topics/military-sexual-trauma.asp>

IPV Services:

- You must be enrolled in VA health care to receive IPV services.
- All women enrolled in VA health care can be screened for IPV at a VA facility.
- Screening, resources, and referrals are available to Veterans' intimate partners, regardless of partners' Veteran status.

Access

MST Care:

- Contact the MST Coordinator at your nearest VA medical facility, www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome/vha-mst-coordinators.asp
- Call the [Women Veterans Call Center](#) to help you connect with your local MST Coordinator: 1.855.829.6636
- You can be seen at a [Vet Center](#) for MST even if you are not eligible for other VA health care. Current Service members can also receive MST counseling at [Vet Centers for confidential, non-DoD referred care](#)

IPV Services

- All VA facilities have an IPV Assistance Program Coordinator to support you. You can locate your IPV coordinator at: socialwork.va.gov/IPV/Index.asp
- Speak with your existing VA health care provider, or
- Contact your local [Vet Center](#)
- Additional information about VA's MST-related health care services is available at mentalhealth.va.gov/mst

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Mental Health: Sexual Assault & Violence Occurring in Civilian Life

Overview

Sexual violence refers to all crimes that include a sexual act such as sexual assault, intimate partner sexual violence, incest, and drug-facilitated sexual assault.

Sexual assault ranges from rape, attempted rape, forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, or any type of penetration of the victim's body, to unwanted sexual touching such as grabbing, hugging, patting, stroking, pinching, and brushing/rubbing against. **It is any sexual contact or behavior that occurs without explicit consent of the victim.**

Whether sexual assault or violence occurred while during military service, or in a civilian context, the VA has providers and support services to assist Veterans who are or have been victims of this type of trauma.

Services

If you have experienced sexual assault, you can seek immediate care at a VA facility. Your VA care team will offer comprehensive support when you arrive and coordinate your care. If necessary, you may be transferred to the emergency department, urgent care clinic, or a local emergency facility.

VA will:

- Provide support during your course of care
- Deliver emergency treatment for physical and emotional trauma
- If indicated, provide preventive measures for pregnancy and STIs
- Refer you for immediate mental health services
- Coordinate a forensic exam to obtain evidence, if consent is given

If a forensic exam is consented to, VA will coordinate services from a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). SANE nurses are specifically trained for forensic exams and understand legal issues and are aware of state laws.

All VA medical facilities can assist you in obtaining a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE) to collect evidence and provide any treatment needed after sexual assault.

Eligibility

- You can receive MST-related care even if you are not eligible for any other VA Care.
- There are no length of service, time-period, or income requirements.
- Contact the MST Coordinator at your nearest VA medical facility, www.mentalhealth.va.gov/msthome/vha-mst-coordinators.asp

Access

- If you have experienced a sexual assault, go to your nearest Emergency Department, call 911, or reach out to the MST Coordinator at VA.
- The Emergency Department will provide immediate care for your physical and mental health.
- For more information on Emergency care, see page #31.

Resources Spotlight

- The Women Veterans Call Center can connect you with the Women Veterans Program Manager or MST Coordinator at your local VA medical center.
 - Call, text, or [chat online](#) with the Women Veterans Call Center (WVCC) at 855-829-6636.
- Make The Connection shares stories of strength, recovery and useful information and local mental health resources:
 - <https://www.maketheconnection.net/>

You can call the National Sexual Assault Hotline at 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or via Live Chat for 24-hour confidential support. Call 911 if you are in immediate danger.

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Mental Health: Suicide Prevention

Overview

Preventing Suicide is one of VA's top priorities, and VA prioritizes prevention by helping you recognize warning signs and by providing resources to address emotional distress. Women Veterans experience of military service and other related trauma, such as MST and PTSD, may increase their risk of suicide. In 2020, women Veterans had a suicide rate which was 116.2% higher than non-Veteran women*.

Every VA facility has mental health experts who specialize in care for women Veterans.

Available resources include:

- VA Suicide Prevention Coordinators
- Women's Mental Health Champions
- Evidence-based psychotherapies and interventions for gender-sensitive suicide prevention
- Free treatment for mental and physical health conditions related to Military Sexual Trauma (MST)
- Specialty treatment for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Outpatient, inpatient, and residential mental health services

For more information, visit the VA Women Veterans Mental Health Page (<https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/women-vets/index.asp>) and the VA Mental Health Suicide Prevention Page (https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/index.asp)

The Veterans Comprehensive Prevention, Access to Care, and Treatment (COMPACT) Act expands emergency suicide prevention care for Veterans.

Veterans in suicidal crisis may seek care at any VA or non-VA health care facility for free emergency health care. This benefit covers:

- Free emergency health care for Veterans in crisis
- Transportation costs
- Inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days
- Outpatient care for up to 90 days, including social work support

In the event of an emergent suicidal crisis:

- Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room
- Notify the medical facility staff that you are a Veteran
- The staff will take you in and provide treatment

Complete a Free Self Check

VA and its partners have developed a safe, easy, and confidential resource to help you learn if stress and depression might be affecting you. You can take the voluntary Self-Check Quiz at: vetselfcheck.org

*Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, Office of Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. 2022 National Veteran Suicide Prevention Annual Report. 2022. Retrieved (7 July 2023) from https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/suicide_prevention/data.asp

Eligibility

- All Veterans enrolled in VA health care can access all VA suicide prevention services.
- If a health care provider determines you are at risk of immediate self-harm, VA can provide or cover the cost of your mental health care if:
 - You were the victim of a physical assault or battery of a sexual nature, or sexual harassment while serving in the armed forces (Military Sexual Trauma - MST).
 - Served on Active Duty for more than 24 months under conditions other than dishonorable.
 - Served more than 100 days under a combat exclusion, or in support of a contingency operation either directly or by operating an unmanned aerial vehicle from a remote location and were discharged under conditions other than dishonorable.

Access



- Text 838255 to connect to a VCL responder or start a free, confidential online chat session at www.Veteranscrisisline.net/chat
- Find resources and assistance close to you: veteranscrisisline.net/get-help/local-resources
- Engage with Veterans who share their recovery stories and establish a connection with available resources tailored to meet your needs at: <https://www.maketheconnection.net/>

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Mental Health: PTSD and Moral Injury

Overview

PTSD is a mental health condition that can develop after exposure to a traumatic or life-threatening event. Normal reactions may include upsetting memories, heightened anxiety, and sleep disturbances. If these symptoms persist for over a month, it could indicate PTSD. Behavioral risk factors such as smoking, physical inactivity, poor diet, obesity, and insomnia may be associated with PTSD symptoms. Women often experience trauma differently than men, and about 5 out of every 10 women have encountered traumatic events. VA can offer referrals to PTSD specialists, therapy, or prescribe medications for treatment.

PTSD Services and Treatments

- **Mental health assessment and screening**
- **Therapy:** VA offers Trauma-focused psychotherapies which are highly effective treatments for PTSD. “Trauma-focused” means they focus on working through your memory of the trauma. They may include:
 - Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
 - Prolonged Exposure (PE) therapy
 - Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- **Peer Specialists (availability varies by VA location):** Peer specialists are Veterans who have experienced and recovered from a mental health condition. Peer specialists help you design your own recovery plan using tools such as personal goal setting and targeted coping skills training. You can request a referral from your VA health care provider (Women’s Health Primary Care or Mental Health provider) to work with a peer specialist.

Moral Injury

Moral injury is the psychological, behavioral, social, and sometimes spiritual distress that follows exposure to traumatic or unusually stressful circumstances. It is the distress related to actions that violate deeply held moral or ethical beliefs.

Women Veterans encounter unique moral challenges in the military, including gender discrimination, minority group stresses, sexual harassment, and dealing with a traditionally misogynistic military culture. Even without combat roles, women Veterans often face moral challenges linked to combat environments.

Moral Injury Services and Treatments

- Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)
- Prolonged Exposure (PE) therapy
- Acceptance and Commitment Therapy
- Adaptive Disclosure
- The Impact of Killing Intervention
- Trauma Informed Guilt Reduction Therapy
- Building Spiritual Strength

Eligibility

- All Veterans enrolled in VA health care are eligible for mental health services and can access PTSD care.
- All former Service members and Veterans are eligible for one year of free mental health care services, regardless of discharge status.
- Eligible service members, Veterans and family members can visit their [local Vet Center](#) or call 1-877-927-8387 (1-877- WAR-VETS) for free individual and group counseling.

Access

- If enrolled, make an appointment with your WH-PCP or VA mental health provider to discuss treatment options.
- Call the Women Veterans Call Center at **1-855-VA-WOMEN (829-6636)** for help connecting with your local Women’s Mental Health Champion.
 - Many types of counseling are available via the telehealth program on computer, tablet, or mobile phone.
 - The PTSD Coach (online or through the app) was designed as a tool to help manage stress symptoms. You can use it to augment your therapy. Visit: [Safety Planning in PTSD Coach App](#)
- If in crisis or an emergency, call the **Veterans Crisis Line at 988 plus 1.**
- **Visit the National Center for PTSD at https://www.ptsd.va.gov/gethelp/care_women_vets.asp for more information and resources.**
- **For more information on VA’s research on Moral Injury, please visit: <https://www.research.va.gov/currents/0420-PTSD-and-moral-injury-linked-to-pregnancy-complications.cfm>**

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Substance Use

Overview

Often referred to as “addiction,” **substance use disorder (SUD)** is a disease that causes people to have difficulty controlling their use of alcohol and drugs, including prescription drugs. Untreated, SUD can negatively affect many aspects of life. It is very common for women to experience SUD and mental health conditions at the same time. Studies show that it is important that both sets of concerns receive attention in treatment.

Treatments are provided in a continuum of care that may include:

- Counseling and/or medicine in primary care, general mental health, PTSD outpatient clinics, and pain clinics
- Support groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA) or Rational Recovery
- Specialty SUD treatment programs, including inpatient and residential programs (including some women’s only programs)
- Medication

Learn more about the VA treatments available at: [mentalhealth.va.gov/substance-use/treatment](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/substance-use/treatment) and <https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/topics/substance-use.asp>

Learn how to take the next step at: [mentalhealth.va.gov/substance-use/next-step](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/substance-use/next-step)

VA Offers Women-Only Treatment Options:

VA recognizes that many women with SUD have trauma histories that may make it difficult to be in treatment groups with men. As a result, many larger VA medical centers have women-only group treatment options for women Veterans with SUD concerns. Virtually all VA facilities also offer individual counseling or case management, as well as telemedicine options.

VA provides Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Programs to women Veterans who might benefit from a 24/7 therapeutic setting. Care is provided using both professional and peer supports. Treatment will focus on your needs, abilities, strengths, and preferences.

Women-only residential treatment is available to provide time-limited, intensive treatment for PTSD, substance use disorders, and other mental and behavioral health concerns.

For additional information on SUD Residential Programs at VA, please visit: <https://www.va.gov/directory/guide/SUD.asp>

Eligibility

- You must be enrolled in VA health care. Any treatment must be first discussed with your provider.
- Talk with your WH-PCP to discuss your concerns and treatment options.
 - Treatment decisions are made collaboratively between Veterans and their VA providers.
- All former Service members and Veterans are eligible for one year of free mental health care services, regardless of discharge status.
- Even if you are not eligible to receive other VA health care, you may still be able to get certain health care services.

Access

- Talk to your WH-PCP or VA mental health provider to get a referral for care.
- Veterans and Family members can call the Vet Center for free individual or group counseling: 1-877-927-8387 (WAR-VETS).
- Telehealth: Speak with your provider about the treatment through the VA tele-mental health program.
 - You can connect with a VA mental health provider via computer or mobile-phone.
- To ensure that Veterans can attend VA treatment services, programs may offer evening and weekend hours.

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Staying Healthy: Whole Health Approach

Overview

Whole Health is VA's cutting-edge approach to care that supports your health and well-being. Start a conversation with your health care team about your needs and priorities. You can also participate in an Introduction to Whole Health class. VA staff and Veteran peers can guide you through the Personal Health Inventory (PHI) as the first step in setting goals based on what is important to you. You can start your PHI on-line at va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/phi.

More information can be found at: <https://www.va.gov/wholehealth/>

Complementary and Integrative Health (CIH)

VA has developed policy [VA Directive 1137](#): Complementary and Integrative Health) to improve access to CIH services that have evidence showing that they are safe and have a benefit to patient care. Your VA Whole Health Team may recommend CIH services as part of your overall care plan, alongside conventional treatments. The following approaches are covered by VA benefits if deemed appropriate by your care team:

- Acupuncture
- Biofeedback
- Clinical hypnosis
- Massage therapy
- Meditation
- Guided imagery
- Tai Chi and Qigong
- Yoga

Nutrition

VA Nutrition and Food Services (NFS) develops and provides comprehensive evidenced-based nutritional guidance. These services include access to registered dietician consultations, as well as cooking classes at some facilities. Explore the wide range of online resources at www.nutrition.va.gov

MOVE! Weight Management Program

The MOVE! Weight Management Program is a weight management and health promotion program designed to improve Veteran lifestyles. Options include group sessions, telephone lifestyle coaching, and telemedicine. Availability varies by facility. Download the MOVE! Coach app at: move.va.gov/MOVE/moveCoach

Smoking Cessation

VA offers tailored and evidence-based services to help Veterans quit smoking or tobacco use. Studies have shown that quitting smoking may be more difficult for women than men. Combining FDA-approved medication with behavioral counseling is crucial for effective treatment and increasing the chances of successfully quitting. Online resources are available at smokefree.gov/Veterans.

Eligibility

- You must be enrolled in VA health care to receive Whole Health care and services.
- Consult your WH-PCP for additional Whole Health care information and recommendations.

Access

- **Whole Health Care**
 - VA's Live Whole Health app is a free, easy to use tool created to help you take the next step in your Whole Health journey.
 - Download the app at: mobile.va.gov/app/live-whole-health
- **CIH Care**
 - Referrals are required for CIH Services.
- **Nutrition**
 - Work with your WH-PCP to determine how NFS can best support your nutritional goals. Provider referrals are needed for nutrition services.
- **MOVE!**
 - Talk to your WH-PCP to learn how to get involved in the MOVE! Weight Management Program.
 - Complete the MOVE Getting Started Questionnaire at <https://www.move.va.gov/apps/MOVE11> and bring the report to your VA provider.
 - All Veterans, regardless of enrollment status, can use the MOVE! Coach mobile app and the MOVE! Veteran workbook.
 - You can download the Workbook and supporting materials at: move.va.gov/move/vetworkbook
- **Smoking Cessation Care**
 - For smoking cessation, call the VA Quitline, 1-855-QUIT-VET to talk with a quitline counselor. The counselor can help you create a plan to quit and will support you with follow-up calls. Counselors are available Monday to Friday, 9am to 9pm EST.
 - Stay Quit Coach is a source of support and information for adults who are in treatment to quit smoking. Download at: mobile.va.gov/app/stay-quit-coach

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Staying Healthy: Immunizations and Telehealth

VA offers vaccinations against a range of infectious agents such as:

- Influenza
- COVID-19
- Pneumococcus
- Hepatitis A and B
- Polio
- Shingles
- Tetanus, Diphtheria, Pertussis (Tdap)
- Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)
- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)

For more information, visit <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/vaccines.asp> and <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/infectiondontpassiton/womens-health-guide/index.asp>

Influenza

Influenza – ‘the Flu’ - is a respiratory illness that spreads easily. Although the flu season generally begins in the fall, anyone can get the flu at any time. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that everyone over the age of 6 months receive an annual flu shot. Talk to your WH-PCP or your local VA facility for information on getting your flu shot. No-cost flu vaccines are available to eligible Veterans at more than 70,000 in-network community providers nationwide. Visit <https://www.va.gov/communitycare/flushot.asp> for more information.

- **Pregnancy:** If you are pregnant or planning to become pregnant this flu season, consider getting your vaccine now. The shot is safe in all trimesters of pregnancy and may help prevent a trip to the hospital. An additional benefit of the flu shot is that it helps to protect the baby for a few months after birth. This is very important because infants are not able to get a flu shot until they are 6 months old.

Shingles (Herpes Zoster)

Shingles is a painful, rash-like illness. The Shingrix vaccine provides strong protection from shingles and long-term nerve pain and is recommended for women who are 50 and older. Your risk of shingles and related complications increases as you age. Even if you’ve already had Shingles, it’s important to receive the vaccine because you can get the disease more than once. For more information, see [Shingles Vaccine Fact Sheet for Adults](#).

Vaccines for International Travel

If you are traveling abroad, you are likely to encounter diseases not common in the United States. To learn more, visit VA’s National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention page on [recommended vaccines and screening tests](#), or go to travel.state.gov or Vaccines.gov.

Telemedicine

VA offers the largest telehealth program in the US and was one of the first national health systems to offer the technology. VA offers telehealth services in over 60 specialties including physical therapy and pain management, mental health and well-being are available. Speak with your WH-PCP about available services and visit telehealth.va.gov for more information.

- **Mobile Apps:** VA has designed mobile apps to supplement available services and complement your health journey. For more information, including other VA Apps, visit mobile.va.gov. **Applications should not be used for diagnostic purposes.**
- **Help with Access to Telemedicine:** VA can help with access to technology, internet connection, and cellular data to help you use telehealth services. For more information visit: telehealth.va.gov/digital-divide.

- Physical Therapy
- Pharmacy Services
- Women’s Health
- Care Coordination
- Well-Being
- Mental Health

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



VA Care in the Community

Overview

VA provides care to Veterans through community providers when a VA facility does not have a needed service or provider available. Community providers are private health care providers who have a contract with VA provide care to eligible Veterans. These providers are “in the VA network”.

Veterans must be enrolled in VA health care or eligible for VA care to be eligible for community care. Visit: [About VA community care network and covered services.](#)

Veterans may be referred to a community provider if:

- Services or a provider are not available at a VA medical facility.
- It is in the Veteran’s best interest.
- VA cannot provide care within certain time/distance standards.
- You live in a U.S. State/ territory without a full-service VA medical facility.

What does Community Care Cost?

Cost and copayments for care or services will be based on your information on file with VA health care and your priority group. Co-pay rates can be found at: [va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/revenue_ops/copays](https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/revenue_ops/copays)

Important - Prior Authorization is Required



Your VA provider must provide a referral to use community care. Receiving prior authorization ensures you are not billed incorrectly.

For more information and all the details on community care eligibility, please visit <https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/index.asp>

Eligibility

- Enrolled in the VA health care system, and
- Have received care through VA from either a VA or community provider within the past 24 months
- Family members are not eligible for this benefit
- Urgent and After-hours care is part of this benefit. To verify your urgent care eligibility, call: **MYVA411 (800-698-2411), select option 1, and then select option 1 again**

Access

- **For Primary or Specialty care, a referral from your WH-PCP or Specialist is required.**
- Call your Care in the Community Office for your authorization number and dates of care.
- **For Urgent Care, find an in-network urgent care provider or pharmacy near you:**
 - Use the [VA Facility Locator](#)
 - Contact your local VA medical facility
 - Call the [VA Women Veterans Call Center](#) for help, or
 - Call 877-881-7618 for other questions about Community Care

Phase 3: VA Health Care Services



Community Care: Emergency Care and Services

Emergency Care

Emergency care is part of the VHA Community Care benefit. The VA encourages Veterans to seek immediate care in the event of a medical or mental health emergency. You do not need to notify VA before calling an ambulance or going to an emergency department.



Emergency Care providers should report your treatment to the VA within 72 hours. This allows VA to coordinate your care or transfer.

- Use the VA Emergency Care Reporting (ECR) portal:
 - <https://emergencycarereporting.communitycare.va.gov/#/request>
- Or call 844-72hrva (844-724-7842)
- You, your family or friends, or authorized agent should verify VHA notification within 72 hours for the VA to cover the billing

Mental Health Emergencies

- **Under the new [COMPACT Act](#) any Veteran in suicidal crisis can go to any VA or Community facility for free emergency mental health care, regardless of enrollment status.**
- **[The Veterans Comprehensive Prevention, Access to Care, and Treatment \(COMPACT\) Act](#) expanded [emergency suicide prevention care for Veterans, as of 17 January 2023](#).**
 - This benefit covers:
 - Free emergency health care for Veterans in crisis
 - Transportation and related prescription costs
 - Inpatient or crisis residential care for up to 30 days
 - Outpatient care for up to 90 days, including social work support

Billing

- If you receive a bill for treatment, contact your local WVPM or VA patient advocate. **Calling the telephone number on the bill can initiate this process.**
- To help resolve adverse credit reporting and debt collection issues resulting from community care services, **Veterans can also call the [VA Adverse Credit Helpline](#) at 877-881-7618.**

If you believe your life or health is in danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department right away.

To find the nearest VHA or in-network emergency facility to you:

1. Visit the website: <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>
2. Enter an address, city and state, or zip code
3. Filter by “VA Emergency Care” under “Facility Type”
4. Select “All in-network emergency care” under “Service Type”
5. Click Search Button

Foreign Medical Program (FMP)

VA offers medical care, services, medications and equipment for eligible Veterans living or traveling overseas. This benefit supports only conditions that are service-connected, and those participating in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.

For information please visit: <https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/fmp/index.asp>

Phase 4: Enrolling in VA Health Care

Eligibility

Eligibility 101

Many different factors affect a veteran's eligibility to enroll in the VA health care system and register at a care facility. Each veteran situation is different, and this information should be used as resource to help you navigate the eligibility and enrollment process.

- **First, you must meet the definition of a Veteran** per Title 38 of the Code of Federal Regulations to be eligible for VA health care.
 - A Veteran is defined as: a person who served in the active military, naval, air, or space service, and who was discharged or released under conditions **other than dishonorable**.
- Next, you must meet minimum service requirements. Minimum service requirements do not apply if you served prior to 1980.
 - **Active Duty**
 - If you enlisted after September 7, 1980, or entered active duty after October 16, 1981, you must have served on active duty for 24 consecutive months.
 - **Reserves**
 - Title 10 Orders: Active duty defined as full-time duty in the Armed Forces, such as individual or unit activation for deployment during war, travel to and from such duty, or some other periods of active-duty service. For example, Active Guard or Reserve status (AGR). This does not include active duty for training (ADOS).
 - **National Guard**
 - Title 10 or Title 32 Orders with Federal pay: Active duty defined as duty performed for which you are entitled to receive pay from the Federal government, such as responding to a national emergency, unit activation for deployment during war, travel to and from such duty, or some other periods of active-duty service. For example AGR status, where pay is from the Federal Government.
 - Please note: These orders do not have to be a certain length; the requirement is that you serve for the full timeframe for which you were called to active duty.

Exceptions

- **Military Sexual Trauma (MST) Care:** Individuals do not need to have served on Active Duty for 24 continuous months to receive care related to sexual assault or sexual harassment experienced during military service. Most individuals with an Other Than Honorable discharge can also receive MST-related services.
- **VA Adjudicated Service-Connected Disability:** If you have a VA adjudicated service-connected disability, then you automatically gain Veteran status, regardless of the amount of time you served on active duty. This disability must have incurred or was aggravated during active duty or active duty for training. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) determines [service-connected disability ratings](#). See the video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4vKqUlrdys> for more information on service connection.
- **There are exceptions to certain eligibility requirements and each situation is assessed individually.**
 - Visit va.gov/health-care/eligibility or call 1-877-222-VETS (8387) for additional information on eligibility for VA health care.



Phase 4: Enrolling in VA Health Care

Receiving Health Care at VA

Overview

Once you are confirmed for VA health care, registered at the facility where you will receive care, and are assigned to a Women's Health Primary Care Team, you may begin making appointments with your Primary care Provider. Visiting your WH-PCP is the first important step to accessing the full range of VA health care services. Your WH-PCP will be able to refer you to additional services and specialties.

1. Locate and register at your facility

- After enrolling in VA health Care, you will need to register at the facility where you will receive your primary care. You can locate facilities near you by using the [VA Find Locations tool](#). You can be seen at a VA Medical Center (VAMC) or at the nearest VA clinic (CBOC).

2. Make your first appointment with your Women's Health-Primary Care Team

- This is the first medical service you will receive through VA. You must see your WH-PCP for the first time before you can be referred for other VA health services.
 - **You can receive mental health services immediately.**
- Ask about obtaining your Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC) when you check in for your first visit. It may be helpful to bring your eligibility letter.

3. Enroll in My HealtheVet (Recommended)

- My HealtheVet is VA's online patient portal. You can enroll online here: <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/home>.
- This tool allows you to:
 - Communicate with your providers via secure messaging
 - Schedule appointments
 - Request medication refills
 - Access your medical records and view lab and imaging results
 - Print reports or summaries to share with VA or Non-VA providers
 - Add information to a personal health journal about over-the-counter medications, allergies, military health history, medical events, and tests
 - Record and track personal information such as contact information, emergency contacts, health care providers, and health insurance information
 - Include your self-identified gender identity or preferred name and sexual orientation in the VA Electronic Health Record
 - View more than 18 million pages of health information from the site's Health Education Library

4. Schedule Further Appointments

- Your WH-PCP will refer you for any specialty care, additional mental health services, Integrated Health, and more. Ask your provider about options available for your unique health journey, including telehealth and utilizing community care.

Copayments

The amount you pay for VA care depends on your disability rating, income level, the type of care you receive, and other eligibility factors. Learn more about copays at: [va.gov/health-care/copay-rates/](https://www.va.gov/health-care/copay-rates/)

Priority Groups

You should receive your Priority Group assignment within 1-2 weeks. If you apply in person, you may immediately receive a temporary assignment. Priority groups affect how much you pay for care. For more information about priority groups, visit: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility/priority-groups/>

Phase 5: Resources

VA Support Services



The Women Veterans Call Center: Staff is trained to provide women Veterans, their families, and caregivers with information and assistance about VA services and resources. They are ready to respond to your concerns. You can call, text or chat.

- Learn More by visiting the website: womenshealth.va.gov/programoverview/wvcc

Nurse Triage Line:

Call your local VA for the number in your area

Nurse Advice/Triage Line: Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you need non-emergency care, call the after-hours telephone advice care line to get advice about your health concerns. The advice, or triage line is staffed by registered nurses who will help you determine the care you need. The call will be documented in your electronic medical record.

- Call your local VA for the number in your area

Caregiver
Support
855-260-3274



The Caregiver Support Program (CSP): offers clinical services to caregivers of eligible and covered Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system. Caregiver Support Program (CSP) teams are available at each VA Medical Center (VAMC) to help caregivers find the right support to meet their needs and to enroll in caregiver programs and services.

- For more information, visit: <https://www.caregiver.va.gov/>

FIND YOUR CAREGIVER
SUPPORT COORDINATOR



The Caregiver Support Line: Licensed clinical social workers are available to answer your questions, listen to your concerns, and directly link you to the Caregiver Support Coordinator at your local VA Medical Center.

- Call 855-260-3274



VA Assault and Harassment Prevention Office: VA is committed to a culture where everyone is treated with civility, compassion, and respect. Everyone should feel welcome and safe when doing business with VA. The Assault and Harassment Prevention Office offers Bystander Intervention Techniques and Training.

- For more resources and information visit <https://www.va.gov/stop-harassment/policy/>

Phase 5: Resources

VA Support Services



New number. Same support.
Dial 988 then Press 1

The Veterans Crisis Line: A free, anonymous, confidential resource available to Veterans in Crisis. You do not have to be registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care. The caring, qualified responders at the Veterans Crisis Line are specially trained and experienced in helping Veterans of all ages and circumstances. This service is available **24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.**

→ Call TTY if you have hearing loss: 800-799-4889

PSYCH/ARMOR®



Psych/Armor: VA has collaborated with Psych/Armor Institute to produce the S.A.V.E. online suicide prevention training. Psych/Armor is a national nonprofit providing online education and support to those who work with, live with, or care for Service members, Veterans, and military and Veteran families.

→ Visit learn.psycharmor.org/courses/va-save to view the training video.

VA's Homeless Programs: Provide services to eligible Veterans including women Veterans. These services include:

- Clinical outreach
- Safe and supportive emergency shelter and transitional housing
- Medical and mental health treatment
- Support to obtain and sustain permanent housing



National Call Center for Homeless Veterans: Veterans who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, can call or chat online with the, trained counselors who are ready to talk confidentially 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Family members, friends and supporters can also make the call on behalf of a Veteran.



Supportive Services for Veteran Families: For very low-income Veterans. Provides case management and supportive services to prevent the imminent loss of a Veteran's home or identify a new, more suitable housing situation for the individual and her family. SSVF can help to rapidly re-house Veterans and their families who are homeless and might remain homeless without this assistance.

→ For more information about these programs, please talk to the Homeless Coordinator at your VAMC or visit: va.gov/HOMELESS/for_women_veterans.

Phase 5: Resources

VA Support Services

Service Member Resources

If you are still serving (e.g., National Guard and Reserves or transitioning Active Duty), please contact your family support function to access transition resources available to you.



Women's Health Transition Training (WHTT)

This course helps transitioning Service women and recently separated women Veterans understand the VA health care benefits and services available to them, including women's health enrollment, and other transition assistance tools and resources.



Transition Assistance Program (TAP)

This training curriculum is a cohesive, modular, outcome-based program that bolsters and standardizes the opportunities, services and training that Service members receive to better prepare them to pursue their post-military goals. The curriculum is available in-person and online.



VA Benefits 101

This course highlights VA benefits and services to include education, home loan guaranty, health care, and insurance and memorial benefits.

These VA videos provide additional information on Women's Health and other VA services.



She Wore These

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F_MxASC8UHU



Women Veterans Call Center

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkEDQJCW4S8>



VA Mental Health for Women

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTzSy_EtseA



VA Telehealth for Women Veterans

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UDPmGou-cho>



Veteran Community Care: Indian Health Service/Tribal Health Program

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8MzDeO3OQtg>



You Belong at VA

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9_CZ0oDLhc



IB 10-1764
P 97209
March 2024

VA



**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**