Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being

Your diet. Your exercise routine. Your sleep patterns. Your relationships and work environment. They are all connected — and they are all important parts of what you can do to enhance your own self-care.

The Components of Proactive Health and Well-Being model lays out eight key areas of self-care, illustrating how they fit in with other critical elements of your personal health plan. Improving one area can benefit other areas in your life and influence your overall physical, emotional, and mental health and well-being. The human body and mind have tremendous healing abilities and we can strengthen these healing abilities.

The inner circle represents you, your values and what really matters to you. Being in a state of mindful awareness helps you see what matters to you. The next circle is your self-care. These are the circumstances and choices you make in your everyday life. The next ring represents professional care you receive. Professional care may include tests, medications, supplements, surgeries, examinations, treatments, and counseling.

This also includes complementary approaches such as acupuncture and mind-body therapies. The outer ring represents the people and groups to whom you are connected.
Message from VAMC Director

Dear Colleagues:

The Veterans Health Administration is undergoing one of the largest transformations in its history, and we are proud to say that the efforts of the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center is pivotal to this transformation.

MyVA Access is focused on providing Veterans with timely access to care, especially Veterans with needs for care right away. Known as Same-Day Services, it means that a Veteran with a need for care right away will have that care addressed the same day. According to VA Under Secretary for Health Dr. David Shulkin, this means, “When you contact us, we will address your need that day or schedule appropriate follow up care, depending on the urgency. We may address your health care needs by providing a face-to-face visit, returning a phone call, arranging a telehealth or video care visit, or scheduling a future appointment.”

Basically, when a Veteran requires primary care assistance right away, during regular business hours, he/she is able to get services the same day, or if after hours, by the next day from a VA Medical Center. Additionally, if a Veteran is in crisis or has another need for care right away in behavioral health service, he/she will receive immediate attention from a health care professional and any Veteran new to mental health with a non-urgent need will receive an initial screening evaluation by the next calendar day.

We have same-day appointments in our clinics when a provider determines they need to see the Veteran. Veterans can also use systems like secure messaging through MyHealthVet to contact their providers if they need help or have a question about their health care needs. We are also pioneers in the world of telehealth, which allows our Veterans to work with a specialist, oftentimes without the need to travel past their local clinic.

Thank you for being a part of the team that helps us care for the health and well-being of our nation’s heroes.

Sincerely,

Charles Becker
Acting Director
VA Applications for Smart Phones

VA has developed more than a dozen applications that Veterans can download onto smart phones to assist in managing health care. VA Mobile Health aims to improve the health of Veterans by providing technologies that will expand care beyond the traditional office visit. As part of VA Mobile Health, VA is releasing a series of secure applications (apps) that will leverage the popularity of wireless technologies to support Veterans and VA care teams.

As a security measure, Veterans will need a DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) Account before they can log into any VA app that connects to VA’s Electronic Health Record (EHR). DS Logon is meant to act as a strong and secure logon ID that is easy to use and maintain throughout the DoD and VA. There are currently two types of DS Logon accounts. A DS Logon Level 1 (Basic) Account provides limited access to features on some websites. However, a DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) Account is required before users can view personal data in VA and DoD systems, including VA’s mobile apps. For more information, visit mobile.va.gov/dslogon or contact the eBenefits helpline at 1-800-983-0937.

Some of the apps that are currently available include:

**ACT Coach** - ACT Coach was designed for Veterans, Service-members and others who are in Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) with a mental health professional and want to use an ACT App in conjunction with their therapy. The App is designed to improve rates of patient participation in treatment and, as a result, treatment outcomes. Additionally, the App is designed to help providers adhere to published treatment protocol.

**Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry** - If you are a Veteran or Servicemember who served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations after August 2, 1990, or in Djibouti, Africa or Afghanistan after September 11, 2001, you are eligible to participate in the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry.

**Ask a Pharmacist** - If you are a Veteran, the Ask a Pharmacist App enables you to access information about VA pharmacies and medications easily – with the comfort of knowing the information is valid and from trusted sources. If you have a verified My Health.eVet account (credentials for VA’s personal health record), you can link to VA pharmacy and Secure Messaging services via the app, allowing you to quickly go to your personal medication and health information as well as learn about pharmacy-related topics.

**Caring for Women Veterans** - Whether you are a VA or non-VA care team member, the Caring4WomenVeterans App has useful information to help you serve the unique physical and mental health needs of women Veterans.

Women Veterans often have health needs that are different from both those of male Veterans and the general female population. Whether you are a VA or non-VA care team member, the Caring4WomenVeterans App offers comprehensive information targeting the specific health care needs of women Veterans. You will find facts and statistics about women Veterans’ health, an overview of common issues they face, questions to guide conversations with your patients and links to additional resources.
Altoona VAMC to roll out Veteran Appointment Request App – Making Access to Health Care Easier for Veterans

Veteran Appointment Request App

If you are a Veteran enrolled in VA health care, the Veteran Appointment Request (VAR) App allows you to request and view primary care and mental health appointments at VA facilities where you already receive care. VAR will also allow you to schedule and cancel selected primary care appointments directly through the app at facilities where you have a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT).

What is a PACT?

If you are receiving VA Medical Care, your PACT will consist of the clinical staff you see at the VA facility where you normally receive care. If you have received care at other VA facilities previously, you may be able to request appointments at those facilities through the app, but those appointments will need to be booked by a VA scheduler.

Why Should I Use the VAR App?

The VAR App is an easy and convenient way to request a primary care or mental health appointment at your local VA facility. Instead of having to call your VA facility to speak directly with a scheduler, you can submit a request at any time of day. You can clearly designate your preferred times, dates, locations and providers for appointments. You can also directly schedule certain primary care appointments at facilities where you have a PACT. You can track the status of your requests and view your upcoming appointments, which can help you stay organized.

Where Can I Find Additional Information?

Additional information about other available VA apps can be found on http://mobile.va.gov/appstore as well as http://mobile.va.gov in the VA Mobile Apps General FAQs.

Coming in Spring 2017 to Altoona.

Access to Health Care is Our Highest Priority

Patients report high satisfaction

Patients were asked to rate their satisfaction with receiving appointments for care. Below are the percentage of patients who answered that they ALWAYS got an appointment as soon as they wanted it. Altoona VAMC exceeds our network (VISN) and the national scores in every area.
You can help protect yourself and others against seasonal flu and other vaccine-preventable diseases by getting immunized.

Vaccines are some of the safest medical products. But, like any other medical product, there may be risks. Talk to your health care provider about the value of vaccines and their side effects.

**Vaccines to Consider**

**Influenza (flu):** People who are 6 months and older should get the flu vaccine (flu shot). Get the vaccine each year because flu virus can change from one year to the next.

**Pneumococcal:** Older people and those with certain medical conditions are most susceptible to pneumonia. People under 65 will need a booster shot when they reach 65 if more than five years have passed since the initial dose.

**Hepatitis A:** Recommended for those who travel to other countries or live in a U.S. community with high rates of hepatitis A; or who have chronic liver disease, engage in male-to-male sex, or inject drugs.

**Hepatitis B:** More contagious than HIV, hepatitis B is the type of hepatitis most often spread through sexual contact. It can also be passed from an infected mother to newborn, the sharing of needles or personal items with an infected person, and other contact involving bodily fluids. The hepatitis B vaccine can prevent the disease.

**Measles, mumps, rubella (MMR):** People born after 1956 and all women of childbearing age who have not had these diseases or been vaccinated against them need to get the shots to be protected.

**Chickenpox (varicella):** Protection is necessary for those born in the U.S. after 1966 and have not had this disease and have not been vaccinated. Adults are at a far greater risk of complications.

**Shingles (herpes zoster):** Shingles is caused by the same virus that causes chickenpox. People who are over the age of 60 may receive a single dose of the shingles vaccine. Consult with your physician first.

**Tetanus, diphtheria, pertussis:** Booster doses of tetanus-diptheria (Td) are needed at 10-year intervals. In place of the Td booster, people age 19-64 and those 65 and older who are in contact with infants should get a one-time dose of tetanus-diptheria-pertussis (Tdap) to also protect against whooping cough.

**Vaccines for international travelers:** Many Veterans and other Americans traveling abroad are likely to be exposed to diseases common in those countries.

To learn more, visit VA’s National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention page on recommended vaccines and screening tests, or go to [Vaccines.gov](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/vaccines.asp#sthash.62gOVSY3.dpuf).
If You Have Common Flu Symptoms

- Stay home
- Rest
- Drink fluids
- Take medicines for fever such as acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) or ibuprofen (e.g., ADVIL® or MOTRIN®)
- Call your healthcare team within 48 hours for advice about what to do next
- Antiviral medicines may reduce flu symptoms if started within 48 hours of your first symptoms

Helpful Supplies

- Thermometer
- Fever reducers such as acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) or ibuprofen (e.g., ADVIL® or MOTRIN®)
- Cough drops or cough syrup
- Drinks: water, fruit juices, soda, tea, or fluids with electrolytes (GATORADE® or PEDIALLYTE®). Avoid caffeine
- Light foods: clear soups, crackers, applesauce
- Blankets or warm covers
- Face masks and disposable gloves

Caring for a Person with Flu

- Know the common symptoms of flu and when to seek care (see page 2).
- Have the sick person rest and lie down if running a fever.
- Allow the sick person to judge what bed covers are needed; when fever is high the person may feel very cold and want more blankets.
- Use fever reducers such as acetaminophen (e.g., TYLENOL®) or ibuprofen (e.g., ADVIL® or MOTRIN®); follow the package label or your healthcare team’s direction to reduce fever, headache, and muscle, joint, or eye pain.
- Allow the sick person to drink as much as he or she can.
- Give light foods as the person wants; fluids are more important than food in the first days when the fever may be highest.
- Do not smoke around a sick person.
- Have the sick person gargle; use lozenges or hard candy for a sore throat.
- Clean your hands before and after caring for a sick person, and after coughing or sneezing. Wash your hands with soap and water or use hand sanitizers. Sick people should clean their hands too!
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth. Germs often spread this way.
- Consider wearing a mask when giving care to a sick person.

When to Seek Medical Care

Call your healthcare team within 48 hours:

- If you have common flu symptoms or
- If you have moderate flu symptoms:
  - Not able to drink enough fluids (Dark urine or feeling dizzy when standing are signs that you are not drinking enough fluids)
  - Fever of 100°F or higher for 3 or more days
  - Feel better, and then get a fever or sore throat again

Go right away for medical care:

- If you have severe flu symptoms:
  - Shortness of breath or wheezing
  - Coughing up blood
  - Pain or pressure in your chest when breathing
  - Chest pain, especially if you have heart disease like angina or congestive heart failure
  - Trouble with balance, walking or sitting up, or becoming confused

It is NOT too late to get your flu shot. Call your Primary Care Team today at 877-626-2500.
Investing in Infrastructure to Improve the Veteran Experience

One component of good health care is the healing environment. At VA we want our facilities to be every bit as modern and convenient as community medical centers and physician offices. As part of our strategic goal to improve the Veteran experience, the Altoona VAMC is committed to creating safe, clean and efficient buildings and grounds. Veterans deserve no less than this.

Over the last several years, we have improved and enhanced all of our community outpatient clinics, the physical medicine and rehabilitation building, the behavioral health building and our specialty clinics.

Looking to the Future

Based on data available through VA’s planning experts, we anticipate that by 2020 we will have increased Veteran utilization of Behavioral Health (20.43%), Primary Care (11.88%) and Specialty Care (19.72%). Building and improving for our future is part of our commitment to Veterans. It is the goal of VA to have facilities that are poised to address the needs of Veterans for decades to come.

Projects currently underway include a new parking garage, a second (and eventually third) floor on the physical medicine and rehabilitation building, and the expansion and reconfiguration of the Patient Aligned Care Team spaces (Red, Yellow, Blue Teams).

Parking Garage

The new parking garage will open completely in the spring and will feature 324 spaces in the garage, and an additional 79 spaces of surface parking in the front of the VAMC. There will be three tiers and two elevators. The garage will offer a covered walkway to the entrance of the building for increased convenience and safety. In keeping with our “green” building initiatives, the garage will be surrounded by native plantings. For future needs, the garage can be expanded by an additional three tiers if needed. Serving over 25,000 Veterans per year, some with multiple appointments per week, has increased the need for parking. The garage enables us to offer convenient, safe and free parking for patients, volunteers and employees.

Administrative Offices

The second floor of the physical medicine and rehabilitation building will serve as administrative office space for VA employees who have been working in an annex office across Pleasant Valley Boulevard for several years. There are nearly 100 employees who provide administrative, financial and other supports to the organization who will have offices on the second floor. This project is currently under construction and we anticipate completion in about 12 months.

Specialty Services

Following that expansion, we plan to add a third floor to the same building which will feature a bridge walkway to the current specialty clinic areas. This new area will allow our specialty clinic space to expand to assist with the growth of telehealth and specialty clinics such as cardiology, GI/Endoscopy, Optometry and Pulmonology/Respiratory.

Changing Models of Health Care Delivery

The Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) project will likely begin in Fiscal Year 2018. The three PACT areas in Altoona have all needed expansion and remodeling for several years, and this project will offer more examination rooms, women’s health rooms, Primary Care/Mental Health Integration, clinical pharmacists, dietitians and other specialists that are incorporated into the PACT model of primary care. The new design will be “patient centered” and will allow all practitioners, nurses and other specialists to come to the patient, rather than the patient moving from room to room for care.

Staying True to Our Mission

Maintaining and improving our buildings is just one way we are participating in the transformation of VA and committing to our mission of “caring for those who shall have borne the battle.” This mission was handed down to us by President Lincoln in 1865 when he signed legislation to establish a national network of facilities for Veterans to receive health care and other benefits.
Vietnam War Commemoration

Thirty eight percent of enrollees for VA health care in the United States are Vietnam era Veterans. At the Altoona VAMC, we are committed to giving honor and recognition to this generation of Veterans who did not receive a Welcome Home all those years ago. This is why we joined the United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration and we held several events in 2016 to honor this group of our Nation’s Heroes. We will continue to hold events and ceremonies that will honor these Veterans through Veterans Day 2025.

The 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (Public Law 110-181 § 598) empowers the Secretary of Defense to conduct a program on behalf of the nation that commemorates the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. This law also authorizes the Secretary to coordinate, support and facilitate federal, state and local government commemorative programs and activities. To that end, “The United States of America Vietnam War Commemoration” was formed.

Published: August 2016
www.vietnamwar50th.com