



VETERAN HEALTH NEWS

VA SAN DIEGO HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

January 2021

COVID Vaccinations are Underway



Currently, we are vaccinating Veterans in congregate living situations, those with extremely high-risk conditions (e.g. those undergoing hemodialysis or receiving chemotherapy), and those who are elderly. As of January 21, we have notified Veterans aged 75 and older of their eligibility and are actively scheduling vaccinations for that age cohort. We will be opening vaccination to other age groups and tiers of enrolled patient as we receive more vaccine.

As with most services and care we provide, we are unable to administer vaccinations to ineligible Veterans, or unenrolled spouses or other family members. We will, however, be able to offer vaccination to designated caregivers of Veterans who are in the Program of Comprehensive Assistance for Family Caregivers (PCAFC) when supplies allow and when the Veteran they are caring for is in a cohort eligible for vaccination.

To help us provide the best service possible to all Veterans we serve, we ask that Veterans please wait for us to contact them. We are using a combination of email, phone and text messages to notify individual Vets of their eligibility to schedule an appointment. Please be aware that as we send out invitations to receive vaccine, have seen dramatic increases in call volumes that have resulted in longer than normal hold times.

She Wears the Boots Podcast



When it comes to your own health, you want high quality options and reliable, convenient sources of information. “She Wears the Boots” is an official VA sponsored podcast that focuses on topics relevant to women Veterans and recognizes the many diverse roles they take on in their life. The episodes feature VA physicians, leadership and other experts who share details about eligibility and the variety of women-specific health care services available. The podcast is a trusted, accessible resource on topics that matter to women Vets and can improve their well-being. Find more information on the podcast here:

<https://www.womenshealth.va.gov/WOMENSHEALTH/LatestInformation/swtb.a>

75th VHA Anniversary





VA health care turns 75 this year. In 1946, in order to deliver high-quality health care to 16 million World War II Veterans, VA established the Department of Medicine and Surgery—which later became today’s Veterans Health Administration (VHA).

For 75 years, Veterans have trusted VHA to meet their unique health care needs. VA’s world-class health care professionals and researchers have worked together to make sure that VA health care keeps up with the changing nature of service-related injuries and illnesses.

VA San Diego Healthcare System is honored to share in VA’s 75-year legacy of service to America’s Veterans. We look forward to serving Veterans for the next 75 years and beyond.

On behalf of our employees and volunteers, we are humbled and proud to serve our Veterans.

Wear Red the first Friday in February



National Wear Red Day is Friday, February 5, 2021. Wear red to raise awareness for women Veterans to understand their number one health threat - heart disease. We encourage women to know their blood pressure, HDL cholesterol and total cholesterol levels, as well as their body mass index (BMI) to better understand their health risk for heart disease.

What are the symptoms of heart attack for women? It’s the same in women as it is in men - some type of chest pain, pressure or discomfort that lasts more than a few minutes or comes and goes. Chest pain is not always severe or even the most noticeable symptom, particularly in women. Women often describe it as pressure or tightness and it’s possible to have a heart attack without chest pain.

Women are more likely than men to have heart attack symptoms unrelated to chest pain, such as neck, jaw, shoulder, upper back or abdominal discomfort, shortness of breath, pain in one or both arms, nausea or vomiting, sweating, lightheadedness or dizziness, unusual fatigue and indigestion.

Because women don’t always recognize their symptoms as those of a heart attack, they tend to show up in emergency rooms after heart damage has occurred. Also, because their symptoms often differ from men, women may be diagnosed less often with heart disease.

If you have symptoms of a heart attack or think you're having one, call 9-1-1 immediately. Don't drive yourself to the emergency room unless there are no other options.

Are you Pre-Diabetic?

Are you looking to be part of a Veteran group that will help you build new habits, improve your health and reduce your risk for type 2 diabetes?

If so, you're in luck! The Diabetes Prevention Program at the VA San Diego is proud to offer Veterans tools, education, and support to help lower your risk of type 2 diabetes.

The Diabetes Prevention Program is a six-month program starting April 14, 2021 and will meet for 18 sessions through September. Small groups will be offered both virtually and in-person. Over the 6-month period, the program will cover such topics as eating healthy, physical activity, managing stress and more! In addition to education, attendees will be provided a fitness and nutrition tracking device. Group benefits include individualized goal setting and guidance from a Diabetes Educator!

If you would like to learn more or enroll in the Diabetes Prevention Program, please call Diabetes Education:

Dana Palermo, RDN, CDCES

858-552-8585 x 7338

Janet Dingsdale, RN, CDCES

858-552-8585 x 7245

Day/Time: Starting April 14th on Wednesdays from 4:30 – 6:00 PM

Location: La Jolla Medical Center, Patient Classroom #1493 or virtual using WebEx

All in-person meetings follow CDC social distancing guidelines

VHA Observes 75 years of Academic Affiliations



The 75th anniversary of VA’s academic mission and successful partnerships with academic affiliates will be recognized by VA San Diego Healthcare System on January 30, 2021. We will honor this important milestone year-long as it is a unique opportunity to raise awareness of our “Passion to learn. Power to heal.” achievements and engage key stakeholders in the mission: “To educate for VA and the Nation.”

Our local academic affiliate program began in 1972 with University of California San Diego. We currently have 17 partnerships and have trained 1,693 students. Just a few of our many accomplishments include:

- Over 1,600 trainees each year including active duty Navy physicians.
- Funding for 125 stipend-paid trainees and Advance Fellowships yearly
- Training for over 130 nursing students yearly
- In 2020, the San Diego VA program had 120 physicians complete their residencies, 52 completed their fellowships and helped 152 students graduate medical school.

It is an honor to be a part of positive advancements and cutting-edge efforts serving those who served our nation. We look forward to continuing the passion to learn and power to heal. Please join us in celebrating our partnerships.

More information:

<https://www.va.gov/oa/>

https://www.va.gov/OAA/75th_anniversary.asp

Non-VA Emergency Care Notice

Veterans who receive Emergency care in a community hospital (non-VA) are required to notify the VA within 72 hours of the visit. Contact:

- Email: VHAEmergencyNotification@va.gov
- Phone: 1-844-72HRVHA or (844-724-7842)

VA San Diego COVID-19 Resource Guide

Times can be challenging for Veteran families right now and we’d like to help. Please check out this [collection](#) of resources to help families who are having difficulties.

Get Instant Updates Through GovDelivery



Get all the latest in VA San Diego feature stories, newsletters and information by registering with our GovDelivery service. To participate, go to our internet homepage and enter your email in the box “Connect with VA San Diego Healthcare System.”

Research Opportunities

Help us advance the science of health care by volunteering for a human subject research project at VA San Diego Healthcare System. More information can be found [here](#).

**Comments and suggestions about our newsletter? Send them to
Christopher.menzie@va.gov**

Please Take Our Patient Satisfaction Surveys

We need feedback on your health care experience to continue improving the high-quality care and customer service we provide. We send our patient satisfaction surveys via mail and email on a regular basis and If you receive one, please take a moment to complete it. We are listening and want to improve – if you have a good or bad experience, we want to hear from you. We want you to

About VA San Diego Healthcare System



The VA San Diego Healthcare System (VASDHS) provides a wide range of inpatient and outpatient services at the medical center in La Jolla; and at six community clinics located in Chula Vista, Escondido, Imperial Valley, Mission Valley, Oceanside, Sorrento Valley and at the Rio Clinic. We provide medical, surgical, mental health, geriatric, spinal cord injury and advanced rehabilitation services. VASDHS has 296 authorized hospital beds including skilled nursing beds and operates several regional referral programs including cardiovascular surgery and spinal cord injury care.

We are affiliated with the University of California, San Diego School of Medicine and provide training for 1,256 medical interns, residents and fellows as well as 526 other health profession trainees in areas such as nursing, pharmacy, dental and dietetics. VASDHS has one of the largest research programs in the VA nationally with a budget of \$44.3 million, >250 principal investigators and 677 projects.

Number of Veterans who received care from VASDHS in FY 2020: 84,572
***Number of Veterans in San Diego County:**255,315
***Number of Veterans in Imperial Valley:**5,694
Total Veterans living in SD & Imperial Valley Counties:261,009

**from VetPro, 3/2020*

Important Phone Numbers:

VASDHS Main Line: (858) 552-8585
VASDHS Patient Call Center
(Appointments/Questions): ... (858) 552-7475
Health Benefits & Enrollment: (858) 552-7523
Billing (Copays, etc.): (866) 802-6381
Community Care Authorization Line: (858) 623-1879 option #3
Billing/POM (Community Care):.... (858) 623-1879 option 2
Billing (TriWest):(855) 722-2838
Request your Records: (858) 642-3661
Suicide Prevention: ... (800) 273-8255, press 1

VA Secretary Wilkie's Priorities:

- Customer Service
- Implementing the MISSION Act
- Electronic Health Record
- Transforming our Business Systems