Go Further with Food

Did you know that nearly 30% of all edible food is wasted in the United States, and American households throw away nearly this much of the fruits and vegetables we purchase? This year’s message to “Go Further with Food” focuses on several of the ways we can fuel ourselves with nutritious foods while also making healthier choices easier throughout the week, saving money, and reducing our impact to the environment.

Start with taking inventory of what is in your cupboards and refrigerator. Using these items first will prevent food waste, and help generate meal ideas or be a jumping off point for finding a recipe. If you have any doubts about a food being safe to eat, toss it.

Consider visiting your local farmer’s market to add fresh, local foods into your week’s meals. If you’re not sure when or where the nearest one is for you, visit the San Diego Farm Bureau. You’ll be sure to find produce that is in-season, and the vendors are often very helpful with providing ideas for how to use them!

Estimate how many pieces of fruit you will need for your week’s snacks and meal additions. By keeping these in a visible spot in your refrigerator you will be more likely to enjoy them when they are fresh and prevent waste.

Plan ahead when visiting the grocery store by bringing a shopping list. You will be sure to stock your pantry with the essentials and prevent having to make a return trip because you’re missing a key ingredient for a recipe or meal.

One investment of your time that can pay dividends throughout your week is preparing several meals on the weekends or whenever it is you have a spot of free time. By chopping veggies, preparing a pot of soup, or cooking chicken or fish to add to your salads, you will be setting yourself up for healthful meals rather than the head-scratching conundrum of figuring out dinner at seven o’clock in the evening. When reheating foods in the microwave or oven, stay safe by checking with a thermometer to be sure they have reached an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit.

This National Nutrition Month®, consider at least a few small changes to help nourish your body, reduce food waste, and save time and money.
Camp LeJeune Exposure

Did you know that eligible family members who lived at Camp Lejeune from 1957 to 1987 can now apply for out-of-pocket reimbursement of medical expenses related to 15 health conditions? Veterans are already eligible for VA health care; care for qualifying health conditions is at no cost (including copayments). Veterans are also eligible for disability compensation for eight diseases. Learn more here: www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune/

Parking Memo

With the opening of parking garage 2, we added an additional 167 parking spaces for Veterans. For your convenience, parking garage 1 is now for Veteran parking only. We continue to offer valet parking for Veterans on weekdays between 6:30 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

Take the Patient Survey of Healthcare Experiences

If you want to shape the future of your care, then we encourage your participation in our Patient Survey of Healthcare Experiences (SHEP). The surveys are sent out at random a month after a patient’s appointment in either an email or through regular mail and is used to rate your experience with us. Improving Veteran experience is one of the VA’s strategic priorities leading to improved outcomes and overall health. With your input, we can get a better measure of how to serve you!

Emergency Care in Non-VA Facilities

In some situations, VA can pay for emergency care for a Veteran’s service connected (SC) condition. VA is authorized to pay emergency care claims for a:

- VA-adjudicated, SC condition
- Non-service connected (NSC) disability associated with and held to be aggravating a service connected condition
- Condition of a Veteran who is considered permanently and totally (P&T) disabled from a service connected disability
- Condition of a Veteran participating in a Chapter 31 Vocational Rehabilitation program
- Non-Service Connected conditions under certain circumstances
(To potentially be eligible for Emergency Care in non-VA Facilities, you must be enrolled in the VA health care system)

If admitted to a non-VA hospital, you, a friend, or a family member must contact the closest VA medical center within 72 hours of your arrival at the non-VA facility.

For more information, please visit: https://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/programs/veterans/Emergency_Care.asp

**Appointment Scheduling**

To improve access to care at VA San Diego Healthcare System, Veterans can now schedule their appointments directly – you don’t need a referral from your primary care provider.

Direct scheduling services include:

- Audiology (858) 623-1891
- Optometry (858) 552-7474
- Nutrition (858) 552-7475
- Podiatry (858) 552-7475
- Wheelchair Clinic (858) 552-8585 ext. 7410
- Amputee Clinic (858) 552-8585 ext. 7410
- Mammography – appointment or walk-in (858) 642-3226

We are trying to improve access for Veterans every day.

**Tobacco Cessation Tip**

Quitting smoking is hard but can be easier with the right resources and plan. Here’s a tip from smokefree.gov on how you can help to let go of tobacco:

Before you quit, it’s important to know why you’re doing it. Do you want to be healthier? Save money? Keep your family safe? If you’re not sure, ask yourself these questions:

- What do I dislike about smoking?
- What do I miss out on when I smoke?
- How is smoking affecting my health?
- What will happen to me and my family if I keep smoking?
- How will my life get better when I quit?

Still not sure? Different people have reasons for quitting smoking.
Appointment Access

**Appt. wait times:**
(completed appts as of 11/30/17)
- Primary Care: 1.94 days
- Specialty Care: 6.76 days
- Mental Health: 3.32 days

**Choice referrals:**
In fiscal year 2017, VASDHS referred **35,891** Veteran episodes of care to the community for a total cost of **$69,891,170**.

Calendar

- National Nutrition Month
- St. Patrick’s Day: Mar. 17
- First Day of Spring: Mar. 20
- Good Friday: Mar. 30

Facebook Question

We’d like to hear from you on Facebook. Here’s this month’s question:
**What medical service would you like to know more about?**

**Other Newsletter Comments/Suggestions?** Christopher.menzie@va.gov
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 1,440 medical interns, residents and fellows as well as 751 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 $41.3 million, 210 principal investigators and 698 projects.

Number of Veterans who received care from VASDHS in FY 2017: .................................................. 83,014
*Number of Veterans in San Diego County: .....................243,369
*Number of Veterans in Imperial Valley: ............................6,225
Total Veterans living in SD & Imperial Valley Counties: ...249,594

*from VetPop, 9/30/2017

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
Billing (Community Care): .................. (858) 657-1313
Billing (Choice Program): ..................... (855) 722-2838
Suicide Prevention: ......................... (800) 273-8255, press 1

VA’s Top 5 Priorities:

1. Greater Choice for Veterans
2. Modernize Our Systems
3. Focus Resources More Efficiently
4. Improve Timeliness of Services
5. Suicide Prevention