# VETERAN HEALTH NEWS

VA SAN DIEGO HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

Nov. 2019

## A Veteran's Day Message from Our Director

On behalf of our VA San Diego Healthcare System staff, we thank all Veterans for their service and sacrifice for our nation. At VA, every day is Veterans Day. We provide comprehensive health care to more than 86,000 Veterans in San Diego and Imperial Counties. If you need heath care, we are here for you. Choose VA!

Happy Veterans Day!

Robert M. Smith, MD
Director, VA San Diego Healthcare System

## Movember in November

MOVEMBER®

Gentleman: sport your facial hair this November to raise awareness for men's health issues such as prostate cancer, testicular cancer and men's suicide. Let's work together to help men live happier and healthier lives by encouraging men to get their annual check-up.

## Come See the Veteran's Day Parade

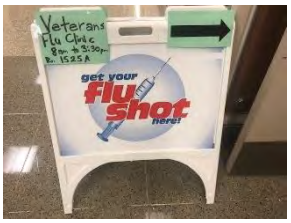
VETERANS DAY PARADE
SAN DIEGO

This Veterans Day, we honor all who have served in our armed forces and we thank their sacrifice to keep our nation safe.

Please come see VA San Diego Healthcare System staff as we march in 2019 Veterans Day Parade on Saturday, Nov. 10 at Harbor Drive/Grape St./Pacific Hwy in downtown San Diego. The parade begins at 10 a.m. See you there!

https://www.sdvetparade.org/

## Get Your Flu Shot Today




The walk-in flu shot clinic is still available until Dec. 13. If you haven't already, come get your FREE flu shot today!

**Patients with a scheduled appointment will be given flu vaccine during their clinic appointment.** (*Patients with 3rd party insurance may be charged for this service)

See link for all locations, dates and times.

## Annual Care and Share Holiday Drive

Every year, VA San Diego Healthcare System employees get together to provide meals to help Veterans who are in need during the holidays. While efforts are employee-centered, we invite the community to get involved in the activities. Here's a schedule of upcoming events:

Adopt-A-Family: Accepting donations until Dec. 2
Bake Sale – Nov. 21 @ 8 a.m. – 1 p.m. multipurpose room
Baked Potato Sale – Nov. 21 @ 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. multipurpose room
Silent Auction – Dec. 11 @ 9 a.m. – 1 p.m. multipurpose room
Gulls Hockey Games – Nov. 1, Dec. 7 and Jan. 11. https://www.fevo.com/discovery/VA-San-Diego-Employee-Association-Night-at-the-Gulls-vQDJbJnK

Also, if you can't make these events, you can also donate through https://www.gofundme.com/f/vasdea-care-amp-share-2019

For more information on all these programs, please contact Shannon Slama at x8161

## Manage Your Appointments with VEText

Did you know more than 9 million VA health care appointments go unutilized each year due to missed appointments? To increase access to health care for all Veterans, the Veterans Health Administration VHA) has developed VEText, an interactive mobile solution to remind Veterans of upcoming appointments via text messaging. Our goal is to offer Veterans a quick and easy way to confirm and/or cancel appointments.

Veterans throughout the nation are receiving interactive VEText appointment reminders on their mobile devices. Every enrolled Veteran with a cell phone number listed in their health record is automatically enrolled in the program, so it is very important for Veterans to ensure that their local VA medical center (VAMC) has their current phone numbers. Veterans may update their phone numbers during check-in at their next appointment, or use the self-service kiosks located throughout VA facilities. Veterans should review the date and time of each appointment and use the prompts provided in the message to either confirm or cancel the appointment. Veterans with multiple appointments on the same day will receive multiple text message appointment reminders.

In addition to text message appointment reminders, VEText now offers earlier appointment slots for Veterans. This feature is called Open Slot Management (OSM). This feature allows Veterans to reschedule their appointment for an earlier available appointment. By using the prompts provided in the message, the Veteran can either reschedule or keep their current appointment. If the Veteran chooses to reschedule their current appointment, VEText will book/schedule the Veteran into the earlier slot and cancel the previously scheduled appointment.

## Three Eating Tips for your Thanksgiving

The holidays are rapidly approaching and it's easy to get carried away with eating temptations. Your San Diego VA Nutrition team would like to invite you to enjoy holiday meals but also provide you with some tips and strategies from the Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics to support a healthier and mindful celebration.

**Tip #1: Don't Skip Meals**

Are you avoiding eating the day of Thanksgiving so that you can save your appetite for the big meal? This is *not* recommended. Skipping meals during the day may result in overeating. We suggest having a balanced breakfast to start the day, such as: whole grain toast with nut butter or oatmeal with fruit and nuts, or low-fat yogurt sprinkled with fruit, cinnamon, walnuts, or a vegetable omelet with toast.

**Tip #2: Eat Small Portions**

Focus on moderation. As difficult as this is when the food is on the table, try to eat smaller portions. Holiday meals tend to be large, buffet-style and include second and third helpings. While one might not eat an entire pumpkin pie, a common mistake is eating large portions of foods that are perceived as healthy (i.e. green bean casserole, cranberry sauce, regular or sugar free pumpkin pie, mashed potatoes, turkey, etc.). It's important to include nutrient-rich foods in your diet, but also remember that these foods have fat, carbohydrates, and sodium as well and should be eaten in moderation. Using this approach at the Thanksgiving table will allow you to maintain a healthful eating plan — one that can also include dessert.

**Tip #3: Pick a Strategy to Avoid Overeating — and Use It!**

There are many strategies to help you avoid overeating such as using a smaller plate that allows you to put less food on your plate and encourages proper portion sizes. Also, start by filling your plate with some of the vegetable options, like salad, before going to the entrees and desserts. Eating a salad before your meal can help you eat fewer calories overall. Be mindful by eating slowly and savoring every bite, and before you go back for seconds wait 10 minutes to see if you really are still hungry.

## 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.

## Appointment Access

**Appt. wait times:**
(completed appts as of 9/30/19)

| | |
|---|---|
| Primary Care: | 4.55 days |
| Specialty Care: | 8.41 days |
| Mental Health: | 3.60 days |

**Choice referrals:**

In fiscal year 2019, VASDHS referred Veterans to the community for care at a total cost of **$113,415,012**.

## Calendar

**Veterans Day:** Nov. 11, parade at 10 a.m.
**Great American Smokeout:** Nov. 21
**Thanksgiving**: Nov. 28
**Care and Share Events:** Various, see post of page 2 for dates.

**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 Choose VA!

## 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 1,399 medical interns, residents and fellows as well as 676 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 $42.2 million, >200 principal investigators and 611 projects.

**Number of Veterans who received care from VASDHS in FY 2018:** ..... 84,712
***Number of Veterans in San Diego County:** .....240,926
***Number of Veterans in Imperial Valley:** .....6,148
**Total Veterans living in SD & Imperial Valley Counties:** ...247,074

**from VetPop, 9/30/2018*

## 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 Secretary Wilkie's Priorities:

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