



# HealthWatch

WORKING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHIER YOU

For Veteran patients of the VA Maryland Health Care System

FALL 2014

Visit us on the web: [maryland.va.gov](http://maryland.va.gov)

## The Importance of Mental Health Care

**F**or **Aliyah Hunter**, an Army Veteran who had been deployed to Iraq, returning home proved to be less smooth than she had anticipated. In fact, she was home for two years before she opted to try VA health care to address the residual impacts of the war. She's glad she did. "The VA was the first to help me understand that something was a little different ... —that a change had occurred and that I was suffering from some post-traumatic symptoms from the war," Hunter says. With help from the VA Maryland Health Care System, she began to embrace the transition of being home more openly.

Just like physical health, optimum mental health enables us to live our lives to the fullest and translates into being free of depression, anxiety, excessive stress, worry, addictions, and other psychological problems that interfere with our ability to function at our complete potential. The National Consensus Statement on Mental Health Recovery defines mental health recovery as, *"a journey of healing and transformation enabling a person with a mental health problem to live a meaningful life in a community of his or her choice while striving to achieve his or her full potential."*

At the VA Maryland Health Care System, eligible Veterans can embark on a mental health recovery journey

through a broad range of mental health services. These programs span a full, comprehensive spectrum embracing levels of care from inpatient psychiatric services, through recovery-focused residential programs, vocational rehabilitation and outpatient mental health treatment at all VA Maryland Health Care System facilities, including our three inpatient facilities and six outpatient clinics (see back cover for full listing of locations).

The Mental Health Clinical Center treats thousands of Veterans each year, and proudly offers state-of-the-art, evidence-based mental health services addressing the full range of psychiatric, psychological and psychosocial issues, including Serious Mental Illness (e.g., schizophrenia and bipolar disorders), Addictive Disorders, and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders. The Center also offers Trauma Recovery Programs for residential and outpatient levels of care (including Military Sexual Trauma assessment and treatment), Mental Health Clinics, Mental Health-Primary Care Integration and Clinical Health Psychology, Clinical Neuropsychology, Geriatric Mental Health, Psychiatry Consultation-Liaison, etc. Veterans can receive services on site, or through Telemental health, enabling them to conveniently receive care in their homes or at a VA outpatient clinic through telephone or audio-video technology.



**“The VA was the first to help me understand that something was a little different ... ”**

**For additional information about any of these programs, please call:**



# Addressing Patient Wait Times

A Message from Dennis H. Smith, Director of the VA Maryland Health Care System

**In June, the Department of Veterans Affairs** released results from the Nationwide Access Audits, along with facility level patient access data, for all VA health care facilities throughout the country in response to the ongoing allegations of inappropriate scheduling practices at some VA medical centers. I am pleased to report that the Access Audit for the VA Maryland Health Care System found no inappropriate scheduling practices and had no significant recommendations. As an organization that is dedicated to high ethical standards, this is something we can all celebrate.

As you might have already seen in the press, the VA Maryland Health Care System was cited for needing to improve the wait time for new Veteran patients to receive a primary care appointment. While we did well in the wait times for other clinics, it is obvious that we need to improve the wait times for new patients to receive a primary care appointment. To improve these wait times and to better serve the needs of our new Veteran patients, we have implemented the following actions:

- ▶ **We are hiring additional primary care providers and support staff to improve the wait time for new patients to receive a primary care appointment throughout our health care system.**
- ▶ **We have re-introduced Saturday primary care clinic appointments at the Baltimore VA Medical Center.**
- ▶ **We have contacted all new patients who are waiting more than 30 days for a primary care appointment to offer them an earlier clinic appointment in a VA Maryland Health Care facility or with a community partner.**
- ▶ **We are reviewing, evaluating and prioritizing patient needs on a daily basis to ensure that we are addressing any urgent clinical needs of our Veteran patients.**

I am pleased to announce that the VA Maryland Health Care System, as part of its aggressive action plan to immediately improve the wait time for new Veteran patients to receive primary care appointments throughout the state, has awarded a one-year contract to Evergreen Healthcare for up to \$485,000. This new partnership with Evergreen Healthcare, a Maryland-based non-profit organization, will provide new Veteran patients with a choice to receive primary care services from the VA or in the community.

The contract enables the VA Maryland Healthcare System to refer new Veteran patients to Evergreen Healthcare for general outpatient care, preventive health and education services, various medical screenings and to coordinate referrals for specialized programs and inpatient services throughout the VA health care system. New Veteran patients who are waiting more than 30-days for a primary care appointment are currently being contacted and offered an earlier appointment with Evergreen Healthcare.

As the Director of the VA Maryland Health Care System, I apologize for the wait times for new primary care patients to receive an appointment throughout our organization and any wait time that our Veteran patients may have experienced. I recognize the stress that these wait times may have caused for new Veteran patients and we will do whatever it takes to ensure that patients are seen in a timely manner. Please know that we will continue to work to correct systemic problems in accessing VA health care for all Veteran patients throughout the state. It is our duty and privilege to provide Veterans the care they have earned through their service and sacrifice. This is a duty we take very seriously.

While we are proud of the quality health care we provide to those who served in the armed forces and the commitment of our dedicated employees, we recognize that there are always opportunities to improve. As a reminder, here are some of the ways you can provide feedback, suggestions and input to help improve the services we offer to Maryland's Veterans and to maintain a safe environment throughout our health care system:

## Patient Advocates

If you have a problem receiving health care services, or you have a concern, compliment or suggestion about the customer service provided by any of our staff members, please contact one of our Patient Advocates:

- ▶ **Baltimore VA Medical Center, Baltimore VA Annex or the Glen Burnie VA Outpatient Clinic – 800-463-6295, ext. 7099**
- ▶ **Perry Point VA Medical Center and the Cambridge & Pocomoke City VA Outpatient Clinics – 800-949-1003, ext. 5097**
- ▶ **Loch Raven VA Community Living & Rehabilitation Center and the Loch Raven, Fort Howard & Fort Meade VA Outpatient Clinics – 800-463-6295, ext. 7542**



## Sign-Up to Receive Email Updates About the Veterans Access to Care Act and Other Important VA Announcements

To keep abreast of what is happening with the rollout of the new Veterans Access to Care Act of 2014, which is being implemented to improve access to health care services for Veterans, or to receive other important updates about VA health care benefits, consider enrolling for the E-News Subscription Service. As an E-News subscriber, you will receive email messages about new programs and services, special events, educational programs, health tips, and changes in clinic hours throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System. To enroll for the E-News Subscription Service, simply visit the VA Maryland Health Care System website at [www.maryland.va.gov](http://www.maryland.va.gov). At the lower right portion of the website, enter your email address under "Subscribe to Receive Email Updates" and then click on the "Signup" button. Your email information will be kept private and you can unsubscribe from the E-News Subscription Service at any time.

### Safety Hotline

To report any patient or environmental safety issues throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System, please call the Safety Hotline at **800-949-1003, ext. 7233 (SAFE)**.

### Virtual Help Desk

If you need information about the VA Maryland Health Care System or you would like to ask a question or make a suggestion about our programs and services, you can send an e-mail to the Virtual Help Desk at [virtualhelpdesk@va.gov](mailto:virtualhelpdesk@va.gov).

Thank you for providing your feedback to help us improve the services we offer to Maryland's Veterans. Please know that we remain committed to providing quality, safe and compassionate health care to all Veterans.

Thank you for allowing us to serve your health care needs.

**Dennis H. Smith**

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## New Patient Check-In Kiosks...



### IMPROVING YOUR CHECK-IN PROCESS

Have you noticed the new equipment in the hallways and clinics at our medical centers and outpatient clinics and wondered what they are? The VA Maryland Health Care System is pleased to announce the addition of new and updated patient check-in kiosks at the Baltimore and Perry Point VA Medical Centers, and the Cambridge, Fort Howard, Loch Raven and Pocomoke City VA Outpatient Clinics.

These new self-service, touch screen kiosks allow Veterans to update personal information, view upcoming appointments, review insurance information and check their account balances--all in addition to checking-in for each clinic appointment. The new kiosks will improve access to care and help to reduce the amount of time Veterans spend pre-registering prior to scheduled clinic appointments. Veteran patients who need to make changes to their demographic information that cannot be handled by the kiosk will be instructed where to get

the information corrected.

To use the kiosk, Veterans will need to use their Veterans Identification Card. Once they have checked in, the kiosk will print out the Veterans' appointment time and location. VA staff can track the Veteran's check-in status in real time via a VetLink desktop application. The VetLink system is secure and designed to ensure Veteran privacy. Additionally, the new kiosks do not store patient information and they are equipped with a privacy screen and a proximity sensor to reset when a user walks away.

Please note that Veteran patients are not required to use the new kiosks and can still opt to check-in for their clinic appointments at the appropriate desk. We do encourage all Veteran patients to give the new check-in kiosks a try during their next clinic appointment because we think they will find the kiosks are faster and more convenient.

# Keeping Safe

the VA Maryland Health Care System  
for Veteran Patients and Visitors

**A**s a health care organization and a federal agency, the VA Maryland Health Care System is committed to protecting the safety of Veteran patients, employees, volunteers and visitors. Every VA Maryland Health Care System facility is dedicated to providing a welcoming and healing environment where patients feel confident that their protection is everyone's first concern. Bringing prohibited items into VA Maryland Health Care System facilities directly threatens that commitment.

There have been a few recent incidences of prohibited items being brought into VA Maryland Health Care System facilities—including illegal drugs, alcohol and weapons—which is a safety risk for everybody. As a result, patients and visitors are reminded that such items are never permitted anywhere on VA Maryland Health Care System property.

As is often the case, the actions of a few impact the safety and comfort of the many. Every employee, patient and visitor wants the VA Maryland Health Care System to be a safe and welcoming environment, and it is up to everyone to help maintain that environment. "Our message to patients and visitors alike is, 'If you see something, say something.' By being our eyes and ears, you are doing a good deed and helping make the VA Maryland Health Care System a safer place," says Jerry David, Deputy Chief of Police for the VA Maryland Health Care System.

Indeed, it can be easier for a visitor, a patient or an employee to spot a prohibited item because offenders often conceal their actions in the presence of uniformed police. In this way, everyone has a role to play in maintaining the safety of the VA

**"...everyone has a role to play in maintaining the safety of the VA Maryland Health Care System."**

Maryland Health Care System.

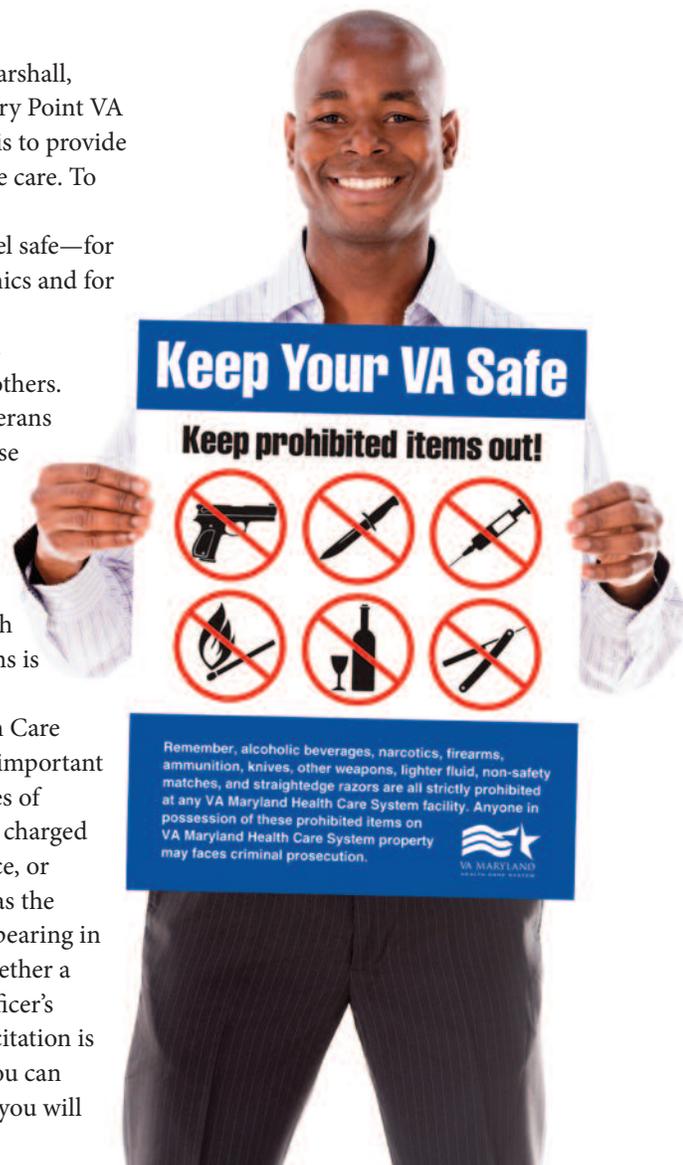
According to Dr. Sandra Marshall, deputy chief of staff for the Perry Point VA Medical Center, "Our mission is to provide high quality and compassionate care. To do this, we need to provide an environment where patients feel safe—for those coming to outpatient clinics and for inpatients."

Some inpatient populations demand greater security than others. For example, programs for Veterans recovering from substance abuse and addiction require an environment where they will not be tempted by the presence of drugs, tobacco or alcohol. In locked mental health units, the list of prohibited items is more extensive.

As the VA Maryland Health Care System steps up vigilance, it is important to understand the consequences of prosecution. Violators who are charged receive a federal violation notice, or citation. The individual then has the option of paying the fine or appearing in federal court in Baltimore. Whether a violator is cited is "up to the officer's discretion," says Mr. David. A citation is the same as a federal ticket: "You can either pay it in three weeks, or you will

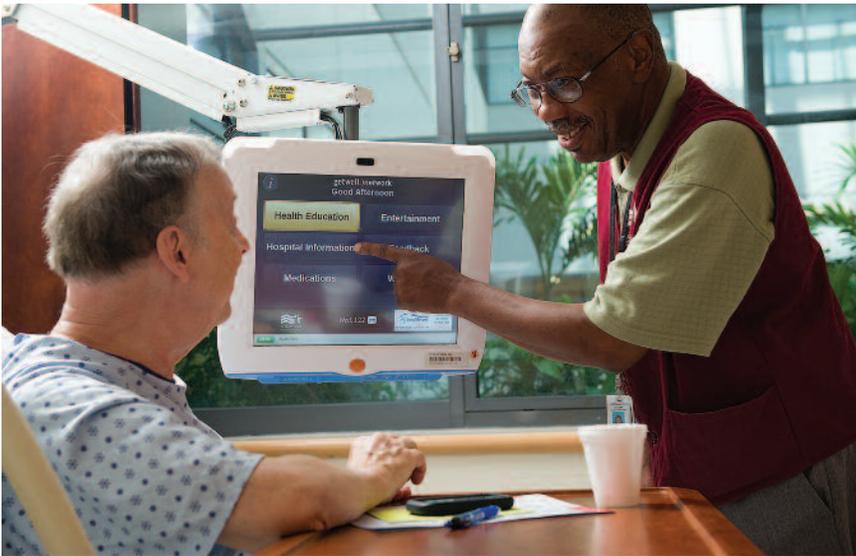
be summoned to appear in court and the judge will make the decision."

Throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System, "we are promoting wellness," says Dr. Marshall. "It is incumbent upon all of us to try and provide the kind of environment that will help our Veterans heal."



## FREE FLU SHOTS

Free flu shots are available for enrolled Veterans throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System. For locations and times of the flu shot clinics, visit our website at [maryland.va.gov](http://maryland.va.gov).



## A New Kind of Bedside Resource – getwell:)network

The VA Maryland Health Care System recently introduced the GetWellNetwork, which is a new service available to Veteran inpatients at the Baltimore VA Medical Center. The GetWellNetwork is an interactive, patient-centered service that enables Veterans to use their bedside televisions for entertainment, patient education and to access the Internet to check e-mail and to use *M Health Vet*. Veterans will still be able to enjoy all of their favorite television shows and movies, but they will also be able to use the same TV screen to access games, patient education and the Internet. Treatment teams will be able to schedule Veteran inpatients to watch specific education videos related to their care, and to learn more about their medications. The GetWellNetwork, which is easy to use, also provides an opportunity for Veteran inpatients to answer questions about their stay and to review information about their discharge plan. The VA Maryland Health Care System is excited to offer this new technology for Veterans at their bedside.

# TELL A VET

VA MARYLAND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

### TO APPLY FOR VA HEALTH CARE:

**Phone** Call 800-463-6295, ext. 7324

**Online** Visit [maryland.va.gov](http://maryland.va.gov) and click on "Become a Patient"

**In Person** At any VA Medical Center or Outpatient Clinic

## How is Our Service?

The VA Maryland Health Care System uses two tools to obtain direct feedback from Veteran patients about their care and the services they have received.

**The first tool is called TruthPoint.** Equipped with portable laptop computers, Consumer Relations staff members travel to all inpatient units and outpatient clinics every day throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System to speak with Veteran patients about their health care experience. The staff members use the portable laptop computers to log answers from Veterans in response to a series of customer service questions. The TruthPoint surveys are anonymous and the results are shared with leadership throughout the health care system for review and to take action on any deficiencies that are noted by Veteran patients. In response to feedback from Veterans as part of the TruthPoint survey, the VA Maryland Health Care System made it a priority to provide wireless Internet access at all inpatient facilities. The Baltimore VA Medical Center added free Wi-Fi service for the benefit of Veterans and visitors a few years ago. The Perry Point VA Medical Center and the Loch Raven VA Community Living & Rehabilitation Center just launched their free Wi-Fi service this summer.

**The second tool—the Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients—** is the formal feedback mechanism that is administered by the Department of Veteran Affairs. After an inpatient stay or a primary care appointment, Veterans are randomly selected to receive a survey in the mail. The surveys are confidential and VA staff members are not able to see a Veteran's name associated with their responses. The surveys are used to measure our performance in serving the needs of our Veteran patients, with the results being reviewed and analyzed on a monthly basis to help identify areas that are in need of improvement or that are serving as an example of a best practice.

Please help us to improve the services we offer to Veterans throughout Maryland by taking the time to complete the in-person TruthPoint survey or the Survey of Healthcare Experiences of Patients that you might receive in the mail after your next primary care appointment or inpatient stay. Our goal is to exceed your expectations by providing exceptional customer service. We value your loyalty and selection of the VA Maryland Health Care System as your health care provider.

# Services for Pregnant Women Veterans



**Women Veterans who are pregnant or are planning to become pregnant should contact the Women's Health Clinic for the VA Maryland Health Care System by calling 800-463-6295, ext. 4981.**

**P**regnant women Veterans can look to the VA Maryland Health Care System for the coordination of their health care services. The Maternity Veteran Program coordinates the care for pregnant women Veterans and shares information between the woman Veteran's health care providers, including non-VA and VA providers. This coordination is critical to patient safety, particularly for medication management and monitoring for medications known to be unsafe during pregnancy.

"Maternity benefits have been included in the VA medical benefits package since 1996," says Zelda McCormick, program manager for the Women Veterans Health Care Program for the VA Maryland Health Care System. "Generally, these benefits begin with the confirmation of pregnancy (preferably in the first trimester), and continue through the postpartum visit between six to eight weeks after delivery or when the Veteran is medically released from obstetric care."

Even though pregnant women Veterans and newborns receive maternity care from non-VA

clinicians, they continue to receive VA health care for the management of coexisting medical or mental health conditions, or for acquiring laboratory tests or medications during their pregnancy. When the pregnancy is confirmed, Women's Health providers and nurses facilitate the coordination of maternity care for Veterans with the obstetrical provider of their choice. Approved maternity services/items include, but are not limited to:

- clinical assessments
- diagnostic testing
- pregnancy related education
- screening for genetic disorders
- depression screening, assessment and counseling
- hospital delivery
- postpartum care
- newborn care routine medical cost are covered for the first seven days of life for the newborn
- prosthetic items: breast pumps, nursing bras, maternity belts

While the VA Maryland Health Care System does not provide direct obstetric or prenatal care to pregnant women Veterans, VA providers and staff still encounter pregnant Veterans in the course of their work, either at the time of pregnancy diagnosis or during management of chronic or acute medical and mental health problems during pregnancy. The Women's Health Clinic routinely makes contact with Veterans under the care of a non-VA obstetrician to ensure that their post-delivery plans are in place and are current, that anticipated needs are met, and that all questions are answered.

# Sleep Hygiene Education

## Can Help Curb Sleeping Problems

**E**ither you can't sleep and are awake all night watching the digital clock tick off the seconds, or you're struggling to stay awake at work during the day. Sleep troubles can be a passing annoyance, indicate a sleep disorder or point toward a more serious health concern.

Aside from a comfortable mattress, pillows and bedding, good sleep hygiene contributes a great deal to a good night's rest. What is sleep hygiene? "Sleep hygiene refers to a set of rules to help get a good night's sleep," says Dr. John Brown, pulmonary co-director of the Sleep Program at the Baltimore VA Medical Center. "It essentially describes good sleep habits."

Brown says that two common problems with sleep include insufficient sleep and insomnia. In the first group, patients with insufficient sleep are trying to stay awake, doing other things rather than getting enough sleep. In the second group, patients with insomnia have problems falling asleep, staying asleep or both. Many of these problems are caused or worsened by poor sleep hygiene, but Brown says that, "education can help!"

Good sleep hygiene can help you stay healthy by keeping your mind and body rested and strong. Brown says it is important to be aware of how gadgets and light can impact the ability to sleep. "The bright light coming from the screens of smart phones, computers and video games within an hour of bedtime can interfere with our ability to fall asleep. Learn to turn off the technology," he says. "Our bodies rely on powerful cues of light and darkness to tell us it's time to rest."

**"Sleep hygiene refers to a set of rules to help get a good night's sleep..."**



### Here are some tips for good sleep hygiene:

1. Try to keep a regular bedtime and wake-up time, including holidays and weekends.
2. Begin rituals that help you relax each night before bedtime. These can include things like taking a warm bath, having a light snack, or reading for a few minutes.
3. Make your bedroom quiet, dark and a little bit cool (not cold).
4. The bed should be reserved for sleeping. Your body will then associate the bed with sleep.
5. If you are not asleep within 20 minutes of going to bed, then get out of bed. Try to do something relaxing in another room, and avoid bright light from a TV screen or computer. Once you feel sleepy again, go back to bed.
6. Avoid taking naps. If you must take a nap, limit it to - 30-35 minutes. -
7. Keep a regular schedule. Regular times for medicines, meals, chores and other activities keep the body's clock running smoothly.
8. Avoid caffeine, including coffee, tea, and chocolate six hours before bedtime. Try to avoid beer, wine or other alcohol four to six hours before bedtime.
9. Avoid going to bed hungry, but also avoid a big meal - near or before bedtime. -
10. Regular exercise, particularly in the afternoon, can deepen sleep. It's not a good idea to exercise within two hours of going to sleep.

**If you need more help with your sleep problems, speak with your primary care provider about a referral to the Neurology Sleep Clinic at the Baltimore VA Medical Center.**

# How to Reduce Your Pharmacy Waiting Time

To help reduce your pharmacy waiting times, please use one of the following three options to refill your prescriptions: phone, mail or online. New prescriptions, if needed on the day they are issued by your provider, can still be filled at the outpatient pharmacy window at the Baltimore or Perry Point VA Medical Centers.



## REFILL BY PHONE

- Step 1** Call the Prescription Refill Line at **800-463-6295, ext. 7395**.
- Step 2** After hearing the greeting, enter your full nine-digit Social Security number followed by the “#” (pound) sign.
- Step 3** Press option “2” for Pharmacy Information.
- Step 4** Press option “1” to order prescription refills (press option “2” if you want to check on the status of your prescription).
- Step 5** Enter your prescription number, followed by the “#” (pound) sign.



## REFILL BY MAIL

If a Veteran obtains an initial prescription from the VA Maryland Health Care System and is eligible for refills, they will be issued a refill request and a return mailing label with their prescription. Simply fill out and sign the refill slip and use the label provided to mail the slip back to one of our two outpatient pharmacies:

Pharmacy Service  
VA Medical Center  
10 North Greene Street  
Baltimore, MD 21201

Pharmacy Service  
P.O. Box 1015  
VA Medical Center  
Perry Point, MD 21902

*P allow 14 days*



## REFILL ONLINE

The VA's *M Health Vet* system offers a secure online prescription refill service. The refill is sent directly to your home. To access the prescription refill service, users must register for *M Health Vet* at [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov).

## TIMELY REFILLS



### Be Proactive

You must order your refills at least 14 days before your medicine runs out to receive your medications on time. It is recommended that you order your refills as soon as you receive your medication in the mail so that the next refill will be shipped to you before you are scheduled to run out.



## Prescription Updates

### NO REMAINING REFILLS

In the event that you have no remaining refills on your prescription, you may:

1. Call your Primary Care team at the number provided on your Clinic Check Out Sheet.
2. Use the Secure Messaging option on the *M Health Vet* online service. To use this option, you must complete the In-Person Authentication (IPA) process at any VA medical facility or community based outpatient clinic.
3. Call the Telephone Care Line for the VA Maryland Health Care System at **800-865-2441** and select the option for “Prescription Refills or Questions About Your Medications” using a touch tone phone.
4. If the medication was prescribed by a specialty clinic provider, contact the specialty provider listed on the prescription label.

### NEW PRESCRIPTIONS

If you were seen by a non-VA physician and need a new prescription, please obtain documentation and/or records from that physician's office and then contact your Primary Care Team Nurse.

### PRESCRIPTION BILLS

If you have any questions about prescription bills or charges, please contact a billing representative at 866-393-0006.

### MEDICATION SAFETY

Please note that each prescription is handled with individual care and concern. To maintain accuracy, the VA Pharmacy staff uses state-of-the-art technology and system safety checks.

# Radiation Oncology Will Soon be Available at the Baltimore VA Medical Center



Maryland's Veterans.”

Another unique feature of the new Radiation Oncology Department is the state-of-the-art TrueBeam linear accelerator, which is a radiation treatment device that uses noninvasive tumor-destroying radiation to treat cancers throughout the body while minimizing the exposure to surrounding healthy tissue. Known for being precise, accurate and fast, the TrueBeam linear accelerator allows doctors to tailor the treatment specifically for a particular cancer. The linear accelerator can also shape the radiation beam it delivers to accurately match the size and form of just about any tumor, regardless of its shape. It also boasts tools that enable it to focus a radiation beam that

**I**n the basement of the Baltimore VA Medical Center, the newly-constructed Radiation Oncology Department offers an oasis for Veterans struggling with cancer. The Zen-like 10,000 square-foot department, which is slated to open in the near future, was designed to offer a peaceful environment that will help enhance the healing and recovery process for Veteran patients.

“The mission of the Radiation Oncology Department is to provide comprehensive and coordinated care to all cancer patients,” said Dr. William Jackson, II, who joined the VA Maryland Health Care System specifically to oversee the operation of the new Radiation Oncology Department. “By integrating the multiple disciplines involved in caring for cancer patients, we can maximize the care and service offered to

compensates for motion (such as breathing), which decreases radiation exposure to healthy tissue.

“The TrueBeam’s precision is measured in millimeters,” said Jackson. “Plus, there is a continuous two-way audio and video that allows Veteran patients to communicate with the radiation therapist. Because the TrueBeam runs smoothly and quietly, doctors and radiation therapists can focus on the patient’s care and comfort. We can play music during the treatment session, which can help patients feel more relaxed as the radiation treatments are delivered,” Jackson added.

With this advanced technology, Veterans battling cancer will benefit from the latest treatment techniques with the opening of the new Radiation Oncology Department at the Baltimore VA Medical Center.

# New Secure Veteran Health Identification Cards

The Veterans Identification Card (VIC) is being replaced with a redesigned, more secure Veteran Health Identification Card (VHIC). It looks and feels different, and it's distinguished by additional security features to protect your personal information. How do you receive a new Veterans Health Identification Card?

- Beginning in March 2014, if you are already enrolled for VA health care and currently have a VIC card, you will automatically be mailed the new VHIC card. There is no need to come in to a VA Maryland Health Care System facility and request a new card.
- If you have enrolled, but have not yet received a VA identification card, you may contact the Enrollment Center at 800-463-6295, ext. 7324 to arrange to

have your picture taken for a VHIC, or you can request a new VHIC at your next VA health care appointment. Please be sure to bring one primary form of identification (such as a U.S. passport (undamaged); valid driver's license, current government ID, current military ID, or a naturalization certificate) and one secondary form of identification, such as an employee ID together with a social security card or a credit card.

- If you are not currently enrolled for VA health care, you may contact the Enrollment Center at 800-463-6295, ext. 7324 or visit our website at [maryland.va.gov](http://maryland.va.gov) and click on "Become a Patient" on the left menu bar. After your eligibility has been verified, you can contact the Enrollment Center to arrange to have your picture taken or

you can request your new VHIC at the time of your first VA health care appointment.

While you are not required to have a VHIC to receive health care, the VA encourages all enrolled Veterans to have the card because it helps to identify you as a Veteran patient and is helpful when checking in for your VA clinic appointments.

The Veteran Health Identification Card is to be used for your VA health care and does not serve as a Veteran ID for discounts at local restaurants and retail stores. You may contact your local Motor Vehicle Administration office about having your Veteran status added to your driver's license to be eligible for store and restaurant discounts.

## HELP A FELLOW VETERAN

If you cannot make a scheduled appointment, please call to reschedule so that another Veteran can fill that appointment spot. Call the Appointment Call Center Monday – Friday, from 7 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at 800-463-6295, ext. 7333.

## VA Partners with Local Community for Welcome Home Event



Barnes & Noble, Northrop Grumman, Towson University and Maryland's Commitment to Veterans were just a few of the organizations ready to provide employment and other resources to Maryland's Veterans at this year's **Welcome Home Information & Job Fair** that was sponsored by the VA Maryland Health Care System and held at the Essex campus of the Community College of Baltimore County earlier this spring.

"The purpose of the Welcome Home is to express our gratitude to returning Veterans for their service, and to introduce them to the VA benefits that they have earned," said Christopher Buser, Chief of Social Work Service for the VA Maryland Health Care System. "We also want to empower returning Veterans to take charge of their health and well-being and help facilitate a smooth transition by linking them with employers looking to hire Veterans and local colleges and universities that accept the Post 9/11 GI Bill."





## Patient Safety is Our Priority

The VA Maryland Healthcare System is committed to providing safe, quality and compassionate care for our Veterans. As we strive to make your hospital visit a positive experience, we invite you to become an active participant in your care. Please consider the following measures to help promote patient safety during your hospital visit:

- Make sure the treatment you receive is for you. Ask your doctor or nurse - about the treatments you receive and why. -
- If you do not understand something, do not be afraid to ASK questions.
- Know about your illness and treatment plan.
- Ask a family member or friend to help you and become your advisor or - supporter during your hospital visit. -
- Make sure staff ask for your name and verify your personal identification - before procedures or treatments. -
- Make the health care team aware of any allergies and changes to medications. Know your medications and why you are taking them.
- To reduce the spread of infection; wash your hands frequently, cover your - mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, and avoid close contact with - others when you are sick. -
- Ensure your immunizations are up-to-date to help fight the spread of - infection. Get your flu shot annually. -
- Make sure any medical information you receive is correct and current. - Review it with your health care provider. -
- Use your assistive devices properly to help prevent falls. Assistive devices - include eye glasses, special shoes, canes and walkers. -
- Ask about your test and procedures. Make sure you are knowledgeable of - forms you are asked to sign. -
- Remember, **YOU** are the most important person when receiving care. - **BE INVOLVED IN ALL DECISIONS** regarding your care. -

To report any patient safety concerns throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System, please call the Patient Safety Hotline at 800 949 1003, ext. 7233.



## My HealtheVet Launches Healthliving Assessment

My HealtheVet recently launched the new healthliving assessment, which allows Veterans to review their family health history and lifestyle to show their current health age. Anyone can use this feature with a basic My HealtheVet account, including friends and family members. The healthliving assessment includes reports that show an individual's current health status and provides recommendations for improvements, in addition to offering suggestions on how to lower risk of diseases that could impact longevity and quality of life.

Did you know that My HealtheVet benefits can also be reached from your eBenefits account using the Department of Defense Self-Service (DS) Logon? Remember to sign up for My HealtheVet and to get a PREMIUM account allowing Single Sign. Once Veterans have eBenefits and My HealtheVet, they will be able to access features of their My HealtheVet account by clicking on services within eBenefits or clicking the eBenefits link from My HealtheVet.

### In eBenefits:

- ▶ Click on My HealtheVet logo
- ▶ Click on Download Your Own VA Medical Records using the Blue Button
  - ▶ Click on Manage my Prescription Refills using My HealtheVet
  - ▶ Click on View VA Appointments using My HealtheVet
  - ▶ Click on Secure Message allowing communication with your VA Health Care Team using My HealtheVet takes you to the Secure Messaging page or a display message, if you have not signed up for a premium account

If you need assistance, please contact your local My HealtheVet Coordinator Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at **800-463-6295, ext. 7045.**



# Important Phone Numbers

Please report change of address to the Enrollment Center at 1-800-463-6295, ext. 7324

**Appointment Call Center**  
800-463-6295, ext. 7333

**Automated Appointment Line**  
800-463-6295, ext. 7395  
(Press Option 1)

**Beneficiary Travel**  
800-463-6295, ext. 7318

**Billing Information**  
866-393-0006

**Burial Information & Benefits**  
410-644-9696

**Eligibility & Enrollment Center**  
800-463-6295, ext. 7324

**Family Caregiver Support Line**  
855-260-3274

**Long-Term Care Information Line**  
800-949-1003, ext. 1121

**Medical Records/Release  
of Information**

Baltimore VA Medical Center  
800-463-6295, ext. 7348

Perry Point VA Medical Center  
800-949-1003, ext. 6028

**My HealthVet Coordinator**  
800-463-6295, ext. 7045

## Patient Concerns & Complaints

Baltimore VA Medical Center,  
Baltimore VA Annex and Glen Burnie  
VA Outpatient Clinic  
800-463-6295, ext. 7099

Perry Point VA Medical Center and  
Cambridge & Pocomoke City VA  
Outpatient Clinics  
800-949-1003, ext. 5097

Loch Raven VA Community Living &  
Rehabilitation Center and Fort  
Howard, Fort Meade and Loch Raven  
VA Outpatient Clinics  
800-463-6295, ext. 7542

## Toll-Free Numbers for VA Maryland Health Care System Facilities

Baltimore VA Medical Center  
800-463-6295

Loch Raven VA Community Living  
& Rehabilitation Center  
800-463-6295

Perry Point VA Medical Center  
800-949-1003

Cambridge VA Outpatient Clinic  
877-864-9611

Fort Howard VA Outpatient Clinic  
800-351-8387

Fort Meade VA Outpatient Clinic  
410-305-5300 (Not Toll-Free)

Glen Burnie VA Outpatient Clinic  
410-590-4140 (Not Toll-Free)

Loch Raven VA Outpatient Clinic  
800-463-6295, ext. 7650

Pocomoke City VA Outpatient Clinic  
866-441-0287

**Prescription Refill Line**  
800-463-6295, ext. 7395  
(Press Option 2)

**Returning Veterans**  
800-463-6295, ext. 7259

**Telephone Care Line**  
800-865-2441

**VA Benefits**  
800-827-1000

## Vet Centers

Baltimore Vet Center 410-764-9400

Elkton Vet Center 410-392-4485

**Veterans Crisis Line**  
800-273-8255

**Women Veterans Services**  
800-463-6295, ext. 7275

CLIP AND SAVE

HealthWatch

VA Maryland Health Care System

Public & Community Relations (135) -

10 N. Greene Street -

Baltimore, MD 21201 -

Published for the Veteran patients of the VA Maryland Health Care System.  
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