

VA Maryland Health Care System

Virtual Town Hall, July 21, 2016

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: If I am enrolled with the VA, what benefits will I receive?

A: Veterans enrolled in the VA health care system are eligible to receive necessary hospital and outpatient services, including preventive and primary care. These services include: diagnostic and treatment services; rehabilitation; mental health; substance abuse treatment; prosthetic equipment, respite and hospice care; and medications in conjunction with VA treatment.

Q: If I enroll for VA health care, what cost will there be for me?

A: There is no monthly premium required to use VA care. However, you may have to agree to pay some co-payments depending on your priority group and income level. If you have insurance, it may cover the cost of the co-payments. VA will bill and receive payment from your insurance company (if you are covered) for care received for your nonservice-connected conditions. For more information about VA co-payments, please contact the Eligibility & Enrollment Center for the VA Maryland Health Care System at 1-800-463-6295, ext. 7324, or visit the VA Copay website at: <http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/cost/copays.asp>.

Q: If I am enrolled for VA health care, must I use VA as my exclusive health care provider?

A: No. You can maintain your health care providers in the community while also utilizing VA health care services, but please be aware that the authority to pay for non-VA care is extremely limited.

Q: Are there any special benefits for returning combat Veterans?

A: Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn (OEF/OIF/OND) combat Veterans can receive cost free medical care for any condition related to their service in the Iraq/Afghanistan theater for five years after the date of their discharge or release. In order to take advantage of these benefits, OEF/OIF/OND Veterans need to enroll in the VA health care system. For additional information about the benefits available for returning combat Veterans, please contact the OEF/OIF/OND Program Office for the VA Maryland Health Care System at 1-800-463-6295, ext. 7259.

Q: If I have private health insurance can I keep my insurance and use VA health care?

A: Yes. VA recommends that you retain any health coverage that you currently have to provide you with options and flexibility in the future.

Q: Are there any restrictions on getting care in private facilities at VA expense?

A: Yes. Care in private facilities at VA expense is provided only under certain circumstances. To determine if you are eligible for private care at VA expense, you will need to contact your local VA medical center or outpatient clinic, or Fee Services for the VA Maryland Health Care System at 1-800-949-1003, ext. 6980.

Q: What is the coverage for emergency care services?

A: VA provides urgent and limited emergency care in VA facilities. However, VA's ability to pay for emergency care in non-VA facilities is limited to Veterans receiving care for a service-connected condition, or for a nonservice-connected condition only if *all* of the following conditions are met:

- The episode of care cannot be paid under another VA authority, and
- Based on an average knowledge of health and medicine you reasonably expected that delay in seeking immediate medical attention would have been hazardous to your life or health, and
- A VA or other Federal facility/provider was not feasibly available, and
- You received VA medical care within a 24-month period preceding the non-VA emergency care, and
- You are financially liable to the health care provider for the emergency care, and
- The services were furnished by an Emergency Department or similar facility held out to provide emergency care to the general public, and
- You have no other coverage under a health plan (including Medicare, Medicaid and Worker's Compensation), and
- You have no contractual or legal recourse against a third party that would, in whole, extinguish your liability.
- For information about VA's emergency care benefits, please contact Fee Services for the VA Maryland Health Care System at 1-800-949-1003, ext. 6980.

Q: What if I get sick while on travel?

A: You may receive health care at any VA health care facility in the country. To minimize any "out-of-pocket" expenses while traveling, you should familiarize yourself with the location of any VA health care facilities in the area where you will be traveling. For a listing of VA health care facilities throughout the country, you can contact the VA Health Benefits Service Center at 1-877-222-8387 or visit the VA website at www.va.gov and click on "Locations."

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Now, Veterans planning to travel seasonally to a location away from their primary residence can participate in the new Veterans Healthcare Traveling Program. Initiated in 2015, the designated Traveling Veteran Coordinators (TVC) work to ensure that Veterans can travel for extended periods without any disruptions to their medical care, prescription refills, and even prosthetic equipment checks. The TVC workers have replaced the referral care managers, and now the team of coordinators consists of registered nurses, physician assistants, or other licensed clinicians. To participate in this program, Veterans must alert the TVC at their preferred VA facility of their travel plans. The specific information that the TVC requires includes the dates of travel, a temporary address in the new location, and the local contact information (including a valid phone number).

Q: Will VA take care of my nursing home care needs?

A: The following Veterans will be offered nursing home care when appropriate:

- Veterans requiring nursing home care for a service-connected disability
- Veterans with service-connected disabilities rated 70 percent or greater
- Veterans rated 60 percent service-connected and unemployable

Otherwise, Veterans may be placed, if clinically indicated, based on space and availability. Additionally, some Veterans may be required to pay a co-payment for nursing home and other long-term care services. To determine if you are eligible for VA nursing home care or to inquire about co-payments for care, please contact the VA Maryland Health Care System's Long-Term Care Information Line at 1-800-949-1003, ext. 1121.

Q: Am I eligible for prescriptions from VA?

A: Medications are provided to Veterans receiving care from VA health care facilities and to those Veterans authorized by VA to receive care from private physicians at VA expense. VA pharmacies cannot fill prescriptions written by a private doctor. Additionally, some Veterans may have to pay a co-payment for their prescriptions from VA.

Q: If enrolled, can I get dental care?

A: In general, dental benefits are limited to dental conditions determined by VA to be service-connected, as well as for Veterans who were Prisoners of War, and Veterans who are receiving 100 percent service-connected disability compensation. For more information about the eligibility for dental benefits, please contact the Eligibility & Enrollment Center for the VA Maryland Health Care System at 1-800-463-6295, ext. 7324.

Q: Will VA provide hearing aids and eyeglasses?

A: Service-connected Veterans receiving compensation, former Prisoners of War, Purple Heart recipients, or Veterans in receipt of VA's Aid and Attendance or

Housebound benefits and receiving VA care or services, are provided hearing aids and eye glasses based on clinical need. Otherwise, VA provides hearing aids and eyeglasses only in special circumstances. However, Veterans otherwise receiving VA care or services may be eligible because of medically compelling reasons, as determined by a VA audiologist or eye care practitioner. These circumstances may include hearing and vision impairment that results from:

- Diseases or medical conditions for which you are receiving VA care, or which result from treatment of such conditions;
- A significant functional or cognitive impairment that causes problems with activities of daily living, not including normally occurring hearing or vision loss; or
- Hearing and vision impairment severe enough to interfere with your ability to actively participate in your health care.

For information about the eligibility criteria for hearing aids and eyeglasses, please contact the Eligibility & Enrollment Center for the VA Maryland Health Care System at 1-800-463-6295, ext. 7324.

Q: Is there someone I can call if I have a health care question?

A: You should contact your VA primary care provider if you have any questions about your health care. You can also contact the Telephone Care Line for the VA Maryland Health Care System to receive medical advice or to schedule an urgent appointment by calling 1-800-865-2441.

Q: How do I schedule, change or cancel a primary care appointment?

A: After you are enrolled, you can schedule, change or cancel a primary care appointment by contacting the Appointment Call Center for the VA Maryland Health Care System at 1-800-463-6295, ext. 7333.

Q: Are there any transportation services available between VA facilities in Maryland?

A: There are a number of free shuttles available to assist Veteran patients get to and from their scheduled clinic appointments throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System. To be eligible to ride any of the free shuttles, Veterans must first have a scheduled clinic appointment at the medical center or outpatient clinic they will be travelling to, and they must call in advance to make a reservation to ride the shuttle. To get a listing of the shuttle schedules and information on how to make a reservation, please visit our Shuttle Information web page at <http://www.maryland.va.gov/patients/shuttle.asp>.

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