

# Veteran Updates

## San Francisco VA Improves Dermatology Access for Vets

The San Francisco VA Health Care System is improving access to dermatology services for Veterans.

Through an innovative new program, nurse practitioners are able to see Veterans with dermatological issues on-demand during their regularly scheduled primary care appointments.

When a primary care provider at the San Francisco VA Medical Center notices that a Veteran patient has an acute dermatological issue, he or she can call an on-duty nurse practitioner from the dermatology service.

This “Roving NP” can see the patient immediately and provide treatment options, often erasing the need for a subsequent appointment in the dermatology clinic.

If a Veteran’s dermatological issue is serious or requires the opinion of a doctor, the nurse practitioner can send a photo of the affected area to a doctor via VA-encrypted smart phone software.

“This is really helping to improve our access,” says Theodora Mauro, MD, Chief of Dermatology for the San Francisco VA Health Care System.

“Many of our Veterans travel long distances to our Medical Center for care, and it’s difficult for them to come back for follow-up appointments,” says Dr. Mauro. “This allows us to treat acute dermatological issues while Veterans are with their primary care providers, and our clinic is able to treat many more patients.”

Though the “Roving NP” program has only existed since early 2016, the San Francisco VA Health Care System has already seen great results.

The program has added five or more dermatology appointments per day, which marks a dramatic increase in access for a busy outpatient clinic.

“We’re already seeing reductions in wait times and a big decrease in no-show rates for appointments,” says Dr. Mauro.

“We’re able to take advantage of the VA’s encryption technology to provide a service that is not available in private health care systems. This is a patient care breakthrough that no one had thought of before.”

## Get Notification When Your Refills Ship by Mail

For VA patients who have a My HealthVet account, you can get notified whenever your VA prescription refills ship by mail.

When your refill is mailed, you’ll receive a tracking number to monitor the shipment to your doorstep.

Just follow these easy steps:

1. Log in to **www.MyHealthVet.va.gov**, (or you can register there for a free MyHealthVet account).
2. Select the PERSONAL INFORMATION table under the My HealthVet logo (upper left corner), and then select MY PROFILE.
3. Scroll down to CONTACT INFORMATION and enter or update your email address.
4. Go to SUBSCRIBE TO EMAIL NOTIFICATIONS AND REMINDERS and select TURN ON for Rx Refill Shipment Notification.
5. Scroll down and select SAVE on the bottom right hand corner of your screen.

## Easy Way to Apply for VA Health Care

If you served on active duty and separated under conditions that were other than dishonorable, you may qualify for VA health care.

There's a new website for Veterans at [www.vets.gov](http://www.vets.gov) that provides current information on VA health care, education benefits, careers and employment, and disability benefits.

This website also streamlines applications for VA health care, and those who use it usually hear back within a week. Visit [www.vets.gov/healthcare/apply](http://www.vets.gov/healthcare/apply).

When applying for VA health care, Veterans will need their most recent tax return, social security numbers for themselves and any dependents, and account numbers for any current insurance program in which they are already enrolled.

Veterans can also visit the nearest VA medical center or clinic to apply in person by completing a 10-10EZ form. Call (877) 222-8387 Monday - Friday, 5 am. - 5p.m. (PST) to get help with your application. For more details visit [www.vets.gov/healthcare/apply](http://www.vets.gov/healthcare/apply).

## New Chat Function Added to Women Veterans Call Center

Do you know your Veteran status? Do you have a Veteran ID card? Are you due any benefits from the VA, like the GI Bill? Do you know what health care benefits you have earned?

If you don't know the answer to even one of these questions, the VA has established a Women Veterans Call Center (WVCC) just for you. **The toll-free number is (855) 829-6636.**

The WVCC staff (all of whom are women) are trained to provide women Veterans, their families, and caregivers about VA services and resources. The call is free, and you can call as often as you like until all of your questions are answered to your satisfaction.

The call center is open Monday through Friday, 5 a.m. - 7 p.m. PST, and on Saturdays from 5 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., PST.

Now, VA is expanding this service with an online, one-to-one **Chat Function**. This new service enables women Veterans to go online at [www.womenshealth.va.gov](http://www.womenshealth.va.gov) and anonymously chat via real-time text messaging with a trained WVCC representative.

You can use the new Chat Function to ask general questions about benefits, eligibility, and services specifically for women. Call Center staff will conduct a brief screening to assess your needs, and you'll be provided personalized information.

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## Press Blue Button for VA Files

My HealthVet made history this year as website users downloaded more than a half million health record files through the VA Blue Button feature.

Enrolled VA patients with premium My HealthVet accounts can use the Blue Button feature to access data from their VA health records, make more informed decisions, manage health care activities, and communicate with their VA health care teams.

Veterans who use VA Blue Button can update their health history, emergency contacts, medications, and more.

Files downloaded through the VA Blue Button feature helps make it easier for Veterans to share information when they visit a community provider outside of the VA system. Veterans with easy access to their personal health information may be able to avoid duplicate procedures or tests-- which will save both time and money.

To learn more about My HealthVet, visit: [www.myhealth.va.gov](http://www.myhealth.va.gov). To learn more about VA Blue Button, visit: [www.va.gov/bluebutton/](http://www.va.gov/bluebutton/). This free service was designed by Veterans, for Veterans.

