

Veteran Updates

Veterans Choice Act and You

Congress passed Public Law 113-146, the Veterans Access, Choice and Accountability Act of 2014, on Aug. 7, 2014 to expand Veteran access to timely, high-quality health care.

This new law provides \$10 billion to fund The Veterans Choice Program, which allows eligible Veterans who meet certain criteria to seek care outside the VA health care system.

As part of The Veterans Choice Program, on November 5, the VA mailed “Choice Cards” to Veterans (enrolled as of August 1, 2014) who live more than 40 miles from a VA medical center or clinic.

These cards will enable eligible Veterans to receive primary care at a non-VA health care facility of their choice (after preauthorization), closer to home.

The Veterans Choice Program covers primary care only and does not include non-VA pharmacy, prosthetics, dental, emergency, or nursing home care.

By the end of November 2014, VA plans to mail Choice Cards to Veterans who are waiting for an appointment more than 30 days from their preferred date, or the date determined medically necessary by their physician.

Prior to receiving care via The Veterans Choice Program, Veterans must receive authorization by contacting the Choice Program Call Center at 1-866-606-8198.

If you are eligible for a “Choice Card” you may choose to receive your health care at a non-VA medical facility close to your home, or at any VA facility, or both.

Beneficiary travel rules will remain unchanged.

Veterans who list P.O. Boxes only as addresses are not eligible for the “Choice Card,” as a physical address is needed to determine the 40-mile eligibility.

Combat Veterans who are not enrolled within the VA health care system and who would like to qualify for non-VA care under the Veterans Choice Program must first apply for enrollment in the VA health care system.

Veterans can apply for VA health care enrollment online at www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll, in person at a local VA medical facility, or by calling 1-877-222-VEETS (8387).

For more information about The Veterans Choice Program, please visit www.va.gov/opa/choiceact/.



Join us at SFVAMC on Thursday, November 20 from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. for a Tobacco Treatment Fair in celebration of the Great American Smokeout. Activities will include:

- Health coaching and clinical support in the Teak Room (Bldg. 200, Floor 1, Room 1A-122, across from Medical Practice) from 11 a.m. – 3 p.m.
- Qigong class at 12 p.m. in the Teak Room.
- Testimonials from former smokers at 12:15 p.m. in the Teak Room.
- Zumba® class at 1 p.m. in the Teak Room.
- Information table in the Stairwell Alcove (Intersection of Bldgs. 2 and 7, Ground Floor).
- Breath sample carbon monoxide testing – outdoors near the MUNI bus stop, across from Bldg. 1.

For tips and resources to help you quit smoking, visit www.publichealth.va.gov/smoking/ or talk with your VA health care provider.

My Smoking Cessation Workbook: A Resource for Women

Smoking kills nearly 175,000 women in the United States annually. For women, even light smoking can increase chances of having a heart attack and stroke.

Women who smoke during pregnancy have an increased risk of fertility difficulties and birth complications. It may also be more difficult for women to quit smoking due to increased stress and increased barriers such as depression or concerns about weight gain.

Recognizing the unique health risks faced by women who smoke and the challenges of quitting, VA has developed a patient workbook for tobacco cessation.

The patient workbook contains worksheets, and provides smoking cessation strategies for female patients to use in conjunction with visits with their VA provider. It provides before, during, and after guidance, plus sections on planning, reflection, and support.

You can download and print this workbook from www.sanfrancisco.va.gov/docs/SmokingCessationWorkbook.

Diabetes Awareness Month

November is Diabetes Awareness Month. Did you know that over 25 percent of Veterans have diabetes?

Diabetes is a group of diseases characterized by high levels of blood glucose (sugar) that result from deficiencies in the body's ability to produce and/or use insulin.

Some complications of diabetes are kidney disease, heart disease, vision problems, and stroke.

Diabetes is a serious condition, and early detection and treatment can decrease the chance of developing life-threatening complications.

If you already have diabetes, don't worry, there's still a lot you

can do to reduce symptoms and stay healthy.

What can you do? Weight loss through more physical activity and a healthy diet will improve certain symptoms.

Talk with your VA provider, ask for diabetes information, and about programs such as "MOVE!*" to help avoid or manage diabetes.

Are you at risk? You can take the American Diabetes Association's 60-second diabetes risk test at www.diabetes.org/are-you-at-risk/diabetes-risk-test/.

For more diabetes information, research and education, check out the Centers for Disease Control diabetes resource page at www.cdc.gov/diabetes/home/index.html.



Please join us
for our annual

VETERANS
Day Ceremony

Monday, November 10 at 11:00 am
Auditorium, Building 7, 1st Floor

Guest speakers will be:

Dr. Arthur Q. Tyler, Chancellor, City College of SF (Air Force Veteran)
Sean Stephens, Marin County VSO (Army Veteran)
Jake Martin, LCSW, Director, Comp. Homeless Center (Air Force Veteran)

