

# Veteran Updates

## How to Foil the Flu: Get a Flu Shot!

It's flu season! Getting your flu vaccine is your best defense for NOT getting the flu and not spreading it to others.

**All VA patients with a scheduled appointment may receive their free flu vaccine during their appointment.**

Inpatients will be offered the vaccine at hospital discharge. **You can also visit the Medical Practice drop-**

**in flu clinic in Medical Practice, or the flu clinic at any of our 6 community based outpatient clinics** (see flu shot clinic schedule on back of this newsletter.)

**The VA has partnered again with Walgreen's pharmacy to make getting a flu vaccine even more convenient,** as many of their pharmacies are open to give flu shots 24/7. **Walgreen's will offer flu shots at no cost to enrolled Veterans of the VA health care system now through March 31, 2016.** Enrolled Veterans must present a valid ID and a current VA ID. The immunization data will automatically be sent from Walgreens directly into the Veteran's VA electronic medical record.



If you have common flu symptoms (fever of 100°F or higher, chills, dry cough, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and a runny or stuffy nose), stay home and rest, drink fluids, take medicines for fever (such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen), and call your VA healthcare team within 48 hours for advice on what to do next.

Here are your main weapons against the flu, per the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

- Get your flu vaccine! The vaccine causes antibodies to develop in your body about two weeks after vaccination—that's effective protection against getting or giving the flu.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water (or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer).
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Clean frequently touched objects and surfaces, including doorknobs and phones.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people. If you think you have the flu, stay home.

## VA Apps For You

"Apps" are software applications you can download from the Internet to your smartphone or other electronic device. VA apps are free and can help you manage your health, connect with your health team, make appointments, access your medical records, deal with stress, learn about VA benefits, and more.

For example, try out **311 Vet** – for general VA benefits questions like health care benefits, pensions, life insurance, dependents and survivor's benefits. Receive answers 24/7 from any mobile device.

**PTSD Coach** – Gives information and tools to cope with the symptoms of PTSD.

**MOVE! Coach** – Provides tools, education and guidance to help you meet your weight and health goals.

**Stay Quit Coach** – Helps you "stay quit" after you stop smoking with tools to control cravings, reminder messages, and support links.

**A complete listing of VA Apps is available at <https://mobile.va.gov/appstore>.** Free tutorials to learn how to use them are at <https://mobile.va.gov/training>.

## Flu Shot Clinics

Here are our flu vaccine clinics, walk-in unless otherwise noted.

**San Francisco VA Medical Center**, 4150 Clement Street, at Medical Practice, Bldg. 200, 1st Floor, **Mon. - Fri., 8:30 a.m. - 12 p.m., and 1 - 4 p.m.** Main number: (415) 221-4810.

**San Bruno VA Clinic**, 1001 Sneath Lane, 3rd Floor, Suite 300, **Mon. 1 - 3 p.m. and Fri. 9 - 11:30 a.m.**, (650) 615-6000.

**San Francisco Downtown VA Clinic**, 401 3rd Street (at 3rd and Harrison), **Mon. - Fri. 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.**, (415) 281-5100.

**Clearlake VA Clinic**, 15145 Lakeshore Drive, **Wed. from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. and Thur. 9 a.m. - 12 p.m.**, (707) 995-7200.

**Eureka VA Clinic**, 930 Harris, **Oct. 7 from 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m., Oct. 9 from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Oct. 21 from 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.** Call for appointment and info on future clinics, (707) 269-7500.

**Santa Rosa VA Clinic**, 3841 Brickway Blvd., **Mon., Wed., and Fri., 8 a.m. and at 1 p.m.**, just register at the front desk, (707) 569-2300.

**Ukiah VA Clinic**, 630 Kings Court, **Wed. and Thur., 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.**, (707) 468-7700.

## Breast Cancer Awareness Month

Did you know that 1 in 8 women will be diagnosed with breast cancer in their lifetime if they live to be over 80 years old? (Men can also develop breast cancer, though it is rare. Breast cancer is about 100 times more common among women.)

The good news is, when breast cancer is detected early, in the localized stage, the 5-year survival rate is 98 percent.

According to the American Cancer Society, symptoms of breast cancer may include:

- A lump or swelling of all or part of a breast (most common)
- Skin dimpling or irritation
- Nipple retraction (turning inward)
- Redness, scaling, or thickening of the nipple or breast skin
- Nipple discharge other than breast milk

Per the National Breast Cancer Foundation, the best way to fight breast cancer is to have a plan that helps you detect the disease in its early stages.

Your plan should include digital mammograms every two years based on your age and your health history.

“Breast cancer mortality continues to decrease in the United States because of improvement in treatments and early detection,” says Karla Kerlikowske, MD, Co-Director of the SFVAHCS Women’s Health Care Center.

Women can decrease their risk of breast cancer by maintaining ideal body weight, exercising regularly, and limiting use of postmenopausal hormone therapy. If you notice any breast changes, see your VA health care provider as soon as possible for an evaluation.

## Resources for Veterans

**VA Benefits/Claims**  
(800) 827-1000

**Education (GI Bill)**  
(888) 442-4551

**Health Care Benefits**  
(877) 222-8387

**Veterans Crisis Line**  
(800) 273-8255 (Press #1)

**Women Veterans Call Center**  
(855) 829-6636

**Billing Office**  
(866) 347-2353

**Mental Health/Substance Abuse**  
(415) 750-6674

**Pharmacy (Auto Refill)**  
(415) 750-2233

**Patient Experience Specialist**  
(415) 750-6650

**Telephone Linked Care**  
(800) 733-0502

