Influenza, or flu, is a contagious virus that spreads through coughing or sneezing, and is related to thousands of hospitalizations and deaths every year. Getting immunized is the single best way people can protect themselves and their loved ones from getting sick during flu season.

To assist in this effort, the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System and Walgreens are now providing no-cost vaccinations to Veterans enrolled in VA health care.

Locally at the VA within the Las Vegas valley, Veterans can get their flu shots during any scheduled appointment or by visiting either the patient aligned care team (PACT) at their local VA primary care clinic or the Occupational Health Clinic at the North Las Vegas VA Medical Center between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday through Friday. In Pahrump and Laughlin, flu shots are available to enrolled Veterans at the Pahrump Community Based Outpatient Clinic and MCPO Jesse Dean VA Clinic from noon to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday.

For those who are unable to make it to the VA during regular business hours, the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System will be offering special Saturday Clinics for flu shots in the community from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the following dates:

- **Oct. 13**, Northwest Primary Care Clinic, 3968 N Rancho Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89130
- **Oct. 20**, Southeast Primary Care Clinic, 1020 S Boulder Hwy., Henderson, NV 89015
- **Oct. 27**, Northeast Primary Care Clinic, 4461 E Charleston Blvd, Las Vegas, NV 89104
- **Nov. 3**, Southwest Primary Care Clinic, 7235 South Buffalo Dr., Las Vegas, NV 89113
- **Nov. 10**, North Las Vegas VA Medical Center, 6900 N. Pecos Road, N. Las Vegas NV 89086

In addition to receiving flu shots at the VA, enrolled Veterans can also get Quadrivalent flu vaccinations via a VA partnership with Walgreens through March 31. Veterans using this option should tell their Walgreens health care professional that they are a Veteran patient enrolled in the VA health care system, and show their VA ID card, along with a second form of photo ID. For store locations and hours, go to [www.Walgreens.com](http://www.Walgreens.com) and select Store Locator.

**(NOTE: Quadrivalent flu shots are the only immunization covered by the VA under this partnership. Veterans who need a high dosage flu vaccination should visit their nearest VA facility.)**

For more information on our flu clinics and hours we will be administering flu shots: [https://www.lasvegas.va.gov/news/flushots.asp](https://www.lasvegas.va.gov/news/flushots.asp)
Mind Over Matter
Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation
VASNHS Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

Thanks to the cooperative efforts of multiple VA medical centers, a Las Vegas Veteran is beating the odds to overcome both cancer and a spinal cord injury. Mark Christenson served in the U.S. Navy in Vietnam and U.S. Army during Operation Iraqi Freedom. However, the biggest conflict in his life occurred closer to home recently as he battled a debilitating cancerous growth on his spinal column.

After his surgery at the Palo Alto VA Medical Center to remove the growth, the severity of his condition left him paralyzed. Several weeks of rehabilitation at both the Palo Alto and Long Beach VA medical centers followed and Christenson eventually returned home to Las Vegas and the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System for follow-on therapy.

At first, even the most basic physical motion was extremely difficult for Christenson, but he was determined to improve. Under the care of Dr. Jeffrey Brookman, physician; Dr. Ellsworth Remson, SCI physiatrist; and Dr. Charles Musante, physical therapist he began an intensive recovery regimen at the North Las Vegas VA Medical Center. Using Bioness Vector motion assistance equipment—a 200-foot walk-assist crane track and the only one of its kind in the VA, Christenson increased his weight bearing ability from 15 to 80 percent of his body weight. Additionally, the VA aided Christenson in his mobility and recovery at home, utilizing the Galileo stair-climbing wheelchair.

“There is no magic pill to recovery. It takes hard work and dedication, and Mr. Christenson has demonstrated that his hard work is now paying dividends with ability to walk within the community and home environment.” said Musante. Working together, Musante and Remson developed a physical therapy plan that focused on strengthening the core as well as major muscles and joints to increase Christenson’s balance, flexibility and strength.

In addition to the equipment, Christenson also increased his core strength via a physical therapy at the VA. Working together, Shanna Nijem, physical therapy assistant, and Musante created a comprehensive program to build his strength. “Core strength is the foundation to all strengthening and rehabilitation; without the core, there can be no true function.” Musante said. Using a multi-disciplined approach to health rehabilitation, the VA Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Department used a variety of resources, including spinal cord injury, occupational therapy, kinesiotherapy, physical therapy and adaptive sports to assist Mr. Christenson in his recovery and return him to some of his daily life activities.

“I am now able to ride a recumbent bike for miles each day using my legs and am on the Project Hero Cycling Team,” Christianson said. “It was the team approach to wellness at the VA North Las Vegas Medical Center that helped me on the road to recovery... Not enough can be said about the professional and knowledgeable staff at the VA North Las Vegas Medical Center and how they work together to treat the whole person.”
Veteran Christianson working on core strength and balance training during a physical therapy session.

Veteran Christianson working with the Bioness Vector System in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Center.

Veteran Christianson traps into the Bioness Vector system at the VASNHS to work on leg strength therapy.

Veteran Christianson final culmination of VA therapy helps him participate in Project Hero Cycling Event in Las Vegas.
October: National Safety Month
"FALLS" Prevention Saves Lives

Falls happen at home for many reasons. There are several things that are known to add to your risk for falling. These include:

• Poor vision or hearing
• History of falls
• Use of aids, such as a cane
• Poor nutrition
• Certain medications
• Being over 65 years old
• Conditions of the home, such as slippery floors, loose rugs, cords on floor

Our goal is to help you prevent falls at home!

Here are some things that you can do that will help lower your risk for falls at home.

Lighting:

• Replace dim, burned out or glaring lights with bright, soft white light bulbs
• Use a night light
• Make sure lights are easy to turn on and off
• Keep a flashlight available
• Clear hallways and stairs
• Remove clutter, especially from hallways and stairwells
• Use handrails while taking the stairs
• Place non-skid treads or bright reflective tape to mark the edge of the stairs

Floors

• Remove scatter/throw rugs
• Place non-skid treads or double-sided tape under area rugs
• Keep floors free from clutter
• Wipe up spills immediately
• Make sure floors are not slippery

Bathroom

• Use a raised toilet seat and safety frame for ease in getting up and down from toilet
• Set water temperature at 120 degrees or less (prevent burns and falls trying to avoid burns)
• Consider a hand-held shower head, shower chair and handrails in the tub
• Place non-skid adhesive strips in the tub
• Use liquid soap or soap on a rope to prevent dropping soap.

National Safety Month 2018
Healthy Holiday Eating
Enjoying the holidays the "Healthy" way

Over-eating:
Eating seconds and thirds may come second nature during the holidays with so many options available. Did you know it may take your brain 10 to 20 minutes to realize your stomach is full? Eating slowly can give your brain that time to catch up with your stomach. Before going back for seconds, wait about 20 minutes to see if you are still hungry.

Activity:
It is often common to find ourselves on the couch after a huge holiday meal. This time, try taking the family out for a short walk or playing an outdoor game to get the body moving. Not only will this give you a boost of energy and help you sleep better, but doing short bursts of physical activity will help you use those holiday calories and maintain your weight.

Visit with a Registered Dietitian:
You no longer need a referral from your Primary Care Provider to see a Dietitian. Call 702-791-9024 or drop by your clinic anytime to make an appointment with a PACT dietitian to discuss your goals and ways to stay healthy throughout the holiday season.

If you are looking for a more intensive weight loss program consider our group-based MOVE! Weight Management Program, now offered at every primary care clinic! Also available without a referral from your provider, call 702-791-9024 to schedule a MOVE Enrollment group class to get started.

What is Metabolic Syndrome?

• Definition, any 3 of the 4 below:
  1. **Central** (apple shaped) obesity
     • Waist size 40” or greater in men
     • 35” or greater in women
  2. **Triglycerides** over 150 mg/dL,
     HDL (good cholesterol) less than 40 mg/dL in men, less than 50 mg/dL in women
  3. **Glucose** (blood sugars)
     100 mg/dL or higher
  4. **Systolic Blood Pressure** (top number) 130/85 mmHg or higher

• **How do you get metabolic syndrome?** Risk factors include:
  - Being overweight or obese
  - Diet high in sugar, refined carbs, and saturated fat
  - Having insulin resistance
  - Being physically inactive
  - Genetic factors

• **People with Metabolic Syndrome are at an increased risk for type2 diabetes and atherosclerosis (plaque build-up in the arteries).**

• **Metabolic Syndrome predicts an estimated 8-10 times greater risk for a premature cardiovascular event (eg heart attack, stroke).**

• **The risk increases when more components of metabolic syndrome are present.**

• Thirty-four percent of U.S adults have metabolic syndrome. But, there is good news – you can reduce your risks for cardiovascular events by maintaining a healthy weight, eating a healthy diet, getting adequate physical activity, and follow your health care provider’s instructions.

With the holiday season right around the corner why not get a head start on your New Years goals? Prevent that unwanted weight gain and keep your blood sugar numbers and cholesterol levels under control.

Research has shown the average person will gain anywhere between two to eight pounds during the holiday season, which is about fifty percent of the average weight gain for an entire year!

Many are faced with struggle of eating healthy during the holidays and we understand!! That’s why the VA dietitians are here to support you all year round. Here are a few ways you can maintain your health through the holiday season.

**Skipping Meals:**
Skipping meals and saving your appetite for that big holiday meal may result in overeating. Try to make sure you are eating a healthy breakfast, as research shows eating breakfast tends to reduce the amount of calories you eat throughout the day.

**Portion (Plate) Control:**
Overfilling your large plate increase the amount of calories you eat during your meal. Try using a smaller plate and begin with a salad or veggies first before the main entrée.
MVP: Million Veteran Program Research Initiative

VASNHS Participates in VA National Research Program

Jack Ford has dedicated his life to service. During World War II, he joined the U.S. Army Air Corps, serving for 10 months before they discovered he was only 15 years old. He was honorably discharged, but returned to service upon reaching the legal age. Ford joined the U.S. Navy where he spent more than 20 years as a parachute rigger and air traffic controller, serving all over the world and during three major conflicts (World War II, Korea, and Vietnam). Today, the spritely 88-year-old Veteran continues to serve in retirement as a Red Coat Ambassador at the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System’s North Las Vegas Medical Center. It’s this dedication to serving others that led Ford to support another endeavor — being one of the first Veterans in Southern Nevada to the Department of Veterans Affairs’ Million Veteran Program.

The Million Veteran Program (MVP), which began locally in July, is a research partnership project between the VA and Veterans to learn more about how genes affect health and to improve health care for Veterans. To accomplish this, MVP is establishing one of the largest databases of genetic, military exposure, lifestyle, and health information in the United States. Research findings based on MVP may lead to new ways of preventing and treating illnesses in Veterans. Such findings may help answer questions such as; Why does a treatment work well for some Veterans but not for others? Why are some Veterans at a greater risk for developing an illness? and How can we prevent certain illnesses in the first place? With the expected enrollment of one million Veterans over the next five to seven years, MVP aims to be one of the largest databases of its kind in the United States.

Dr. Joseph Fayad, serves as the local site investigator for the MVP Program at VASNHS. He is working with the Research and Development section to reach out to Veterans about the significance of this pioneering new program. “It’s very important, not only for the Veterans themselves, but for active duty. Servicemembers are sent to different countries and exposed to different chemicals than other people are,” Fayad said. “They are exposed to viruses and bacteria in other countries that civilians in America are not exposed to. It’s very important to find out what genes you have that predispose you to be resistant or susceptible to certain conditions.”

To learn about the role of genes, researchers compare genetic and health information from many samples. With such large amounts of information, researchers are better able to gain valuable knowledge to improve health care. “[The program] is progressing very well in our facility,” Dr. Fayad said. “We are up to 270 Veterans who have submitted samples for the Million Veteran Program. We appreciate your help in making this effort a success and to get more people involved.”

For Veterans like Ford, the potential findings and breakthroughs are reason enough to volunteer. “I agreed to become a participant because I strongly believe that future medical advances can only be accomplished through extensive medical research,” he said. “I would encourage all Veterans to enroll in the MVP program as it offers the potential for improving Veteran health programs for current veterans as well as those who will follow in future generations.”

“It’s a very simple program to join,” added Dr. Fayad. “We will send you a notification, and all that you have to do is agree to have us draw one tube of blood, and it will be sent in a very methodical way to a central bank. That bank will then analyze your pre-existing conditions, and send your sample to support studies that require those particular specimens.”

Active involvement in this program begins by filling out surveys about health and health-related behaviors, providing a blood sample that will be stored for future genomic analyses, allowing secure access to VA and VA-linked medical and health information – including past and future health records; and agreeing to future contact. For more information about MVP, Veterans should speak to their provider, or visit www.research.va.gov/mvp or call, toll-free, (866) 441-6075.
October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System is enhancing the breast cancer screening process with mammogram direct scheduling with women Veteran patients over the age of 40 who show no symptoms. To self-schedule a mammogram call the VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System Radiology Department at 702-791-9080.

VA would like to raise awareness of breast cancer and emphasize the importance of early detection. One in every eight women will develop breast cancer in her lifetime, according to the National Cancer Institute. That’s why we encourage women to begin annual mammograms by age 45 and have them every other year starting from age 55. The overall five-year survival rate of breast cancer is 89 percent, but if detected early enough—while the cancer is still localized in the breast—the rate of survival increases to nearly 99 percent. As the leader in nationwide breast cancer screenings among women Veterans, we remain deeply committed to improving and expanding available services to prevent and combat this disease. For More about Breast Cancer Awareness go to: https://www.blogs.va.gov/VAntage/42001/october-is-breast-cancer-awareness-month/

Upcoming Events Oct - Dec 2018 (Go to www.lasvegas.va.gov for current dates & times)

1 Oct - #VegasStrong Day  
7 - 10 Oct - National Healthcare Food Service Week  
8 Oct - Federal Holiday: Columbus Day  
12 -13 Oct - At Ease Event: Free Legal Assistance for Veterans - VAMC  
13 Oct - USN Birthday  
13-20 Oct - Project Hero California Cycling Challenge - California  
25 Oct - VASNHS Quarterly Town Hall - VAMC  
10 Nov - Marine Corps Birthday/ 2018 VASNHS BBQ & Car Show  
12 Nov - Federal Holiday: Veterans Day Observed  
22 Nov - Federal Holiday: Thanksgiving Day

If you are a Veteran enrolled in the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) health care system, the Veteran Appointment Request mobile application (app) allows you to self-schedule or request primary care appointments and request mental health appointments. You can also view appointment details, track the status of requests, send messages about the requested appointments and get notifications about appointments and cancel appointments.

For directions go to: https://mobile.va.gov/appstore/veterans
**Changing Behavior for Better Health**

The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System

"To The Point Newsletter" was designed to give Veterans, families and stakeholders information on the programs, services and the knowledge to better educate them of whole-health approaches to wellness.

Together with a Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT), each Veteran works together with health care professionals to plan for whole-person care and life-long health and wellness. The Veteran is the focal point at the center of the health team so he or she can make informed decisions about their health care plan with the provider, nursing, nutrition, mental health, and services in the VA and local community.

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**VA Quarterly Town Hall & Veterans Day BBQ Event**

**VA Quarterly Town Hall**

*When:*
Thursday, October 25, 2018
at 2 p.m. - 5 p.m.

*Where:*
VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System Medical Center
6900 N. Pecos Road
North Las Vegas, NV 89086

*Background:*
The Department of Veterans Affairs will hold its quarterly Veterans Town Hall Oct 25, 2018, which includes the moderated Town Hall from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. and the Fall Festival Information Fair from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m.

Local Agencies will be on hand to provide information and assistance to Veterans, families and caregivers. The Fall Festival Information Fair will have table booths to include VA Nutrition, Women's Health Clinic and other VA Outreach Programs.

Veterans can submit questions in advance to: vhalaspao@va.gov

Questions of a personal nature or those unable to be addressed during the town hall will be sent to the appropriate representative for a direct response back to the submitter.

(Note: Listing of participating non-government organizations is for informational purposes only and does not infer or imply endorsement by the Department of Veterans Affairs)

**Veterans Day BBQ Event**

*When:*
Saturday, November 10, 2018
at 10 a.m. - 3 p.m.

*Where:*
VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System Medical Center
6900 N. Pecos Road
North Las Vegas, NV 89086

*Background:*
The VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System will be hosting the 2018 Veterans Day Celebration at the VA Medical Center. There will be a free BBQ, courtesy of the Masonic Service Association, as well as a Car Show, sponsored by the Las Vegas Cruisin’ Association and much more. Our staff members will be available for a VA Heath and Service Fair throughout the day. It’s going to be a great and everyone is welcome.

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**FOR THE LATEST INFORMATION IN THE VA SOUTHERN NEVADA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM CHECK OUT THE FOLLOWING WEB LINKS:**

- **VASNHS Website**
- **Free Email Alerts**
- **My Healthevet**
- **VASNHS YouTube**

Scan Here to Sign-up!

Scan Here for videos!