

# Healthy Living Message

## Be Involved in Your Health Care

*This information is for clinical staff to share with the Veteran.*

**Key Message for Veterans:** Be involved in your health care. There are many ways to take an active role. Work with your healthcare team to improve your health.

### Expanded Message for Veterans:

- Give your treatment team accurate and complete information about:
  - Your current health problems
  - Your concerns about your health
  - Past illnesses
  - Past hospitalizations
  - Your medicines, including over-the-counter and herbals
  - Other matters related to your health
- Plan ahead for your visits by writing down the questions and concerns you want to raise. Share them with your provider at the beginning of each visit.
- Share your ideas and beliefs about your health problems and treatments with your provider.
- Let your healthcare team know about stressful aspects of your life that affect your health and ability to manage daily activities.
- Participate in decisions about your health care and treatments with your provider.
- Let your provider know the treatment options you prefer.
- Ask questions about anything that's not clear to you.
- Speak up if you have any concerns about the care you are receiving or if you think something is wrong.
- Ask for written information and instructions that you can keep and share with your family or caregiver.
- Gather information about your health problems from your treatment team, the VA library, and websites such as My Health<sup>e</sup>Vet.
  - Know your medicines and why you take each one.
  - Ask when and how you will get results of any tests or treatments.
  - Make sure you have the name and telephone number of a person to call if you have a problem.
  - Let your team know if you face any obstacles to your care or if your condition changes.



- Have a family member or friend come with you to your appointment to help you, if you wish.

## Message Delivery by Clinical Staff:

### During Face to Face Encounters:

- Share the message during the clinical encounter with the Veteran.
- Provide health education in a variety of settings: clinic visits, group visits, and classes.
- Discuss and review results of the VHA online Health Risk Assessment (under development) during a clinical visit.
- Use print, audiovisual, and electronic media.
- Use graphics or illustrations to enhance understanding.

### At the Facility Level:

- Participate in VA local and national campaigns and events.
- Include in New Patient Orientation.
- Add messages in appointment letters.
- Mention in telephone and secure messaging encounters.

## Important Considerations:

If a Veteran needs more intensive intervention in this area than the clinical staff member delivering the message is able to provide, the staff member should refer the Veteran to the appropriate clinical staff, clinic or program for further education or clinical care, following local referral/consult protocol.

**Clinical Staff Tools:** *(Staff may also benefit by reviewing the Veteran Tools listed in the next section).*

- Patient Self-Management Toolkit  
<http://vaww.telehealth.va.gov/telehealth/ccht/psm/index.asp>
- Patient Education: TEACH for Success program. This program offers clinicians evidence-based communication strategies and educational interventions that are practical, specific, and brief. These techniques can be used in a variety of clinical settings, and emphasize the importance of establishing therapeutic relationships and partnerships with Veterans.
- Enhancing Health Literacy (three LMS courses will be available 11/1/10). These three courses will cover how to enhance health literacy by:
  - Selecting or designing appropriate print materials
  - Communicating effectively
  - Conducting an assessment of environmental health literacy
- Ask Me Three—Clinician Information  
[http://www.npsf.org/askme3/PCHC/ \\*](http://www.npsf.org/askme3/PCHC/)



- Health Risk Appraisal report for healthcare team (under development)

## **Veteran Tools:**

- Ask Me Three – Patient Information  
[http://www.npsf.org/askme3/for\\_patients.php](http://www.npsf.org/askme3/for_patients.php)\*
- Speak Up: The Joint Commission Patient Safety Program  
<http://www.jointcommission.org/PatientSafety/SpeakUp>\*
- My Health eVet  
<http://www.myhealth.va.gov>
- New Health Partnerships  
<http://www.newhealthpartnerships.org/PatientsPuzzlePiecePrint.aspx?id=40>\*
- Veterans Health Library (under development)
- Healthfinder: Take Charge of Your Health  
<http://www.healthfinder.gov/prevention/ViewTopic.aspx?topicId=78>

\* Indicates that the link leads to a non-VA website. The VA is not responsible for the content that is on the site.

## **Supporting Information:**

### **Definitions:**

- Veterans Health Education: In VHA, Veterans health education encompasses patient education and is defined as “any combination of information, education, and other strategies designed to help Veterans to:
  - Enhance their quality of life through health promotion and disease prevention.
  - Actively partner with their providers and health care teams.
  - Engage needed family and social support systems.
  - Develop self-management and coping skills.
  - Access and appropriately utilize VHA healthcare resources across the continuum of care (access, health promotion and disease prevention, primary care, specialty care, diagnosis, treatment, self-management, inpatient care, rehabilitation and long-term care, and referral to VHA and community resources).”

### **Evidence and/or Guidelines:**

- The Joint Commission, together with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, urge patients to take a role in preventing health care errors by becoming active, involved and informed participants on the health care team.
- Patients who are actively involved in their health care are more likely to experience improved health outcomes and higher satisfaction with their healthcare (see references below).<sup>1-7</sup>



**VHA Guidance:**

- VHA Universal Services Task Force Report: Principle 5 of Veteran-centered Care, “Empower Veterans through information and education”  
VHA Handbook 1102.04, *Veterans Health Education and Information Core Program Requirements* VHA Handbook 1102.04,  
[http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub\\_ID=2052](http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=2052)

**VHA Program Office Stakeholders:**

- National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- Specialty Care Services
- Geriatrics and Extended Care Services
- Pharmacy Benefits Management
- Primary Care Services
- Patient Aligned Care Team Steering Committee and Subgroups
- Office of Nursing Service
- Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards
- My HealtheVet Program Office
- My HealtheVet Patient Education Subgroup
- VHA Consumer Health Library Panel

**VHA Content Experts:**

- National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
- Veterans Health Education Coordinators
- Specialty Care Services
- Geriatrics and Extended Care Services
- Pharmacy Benefits Management
- Primary Care Services
- Office of Patient-centered Care (being formed)
- Patient-Aligned Care Teams Steering Committee and Subgroups
- Office of Nursing Service
- Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards
- My HealtheVet Program Office and the My HealtheVet Patient Education Subgroup
- VHA Consumer Health Library Panel

**Source Documents:**

1. Johnson BA, M; Conway, J; Simmons, L; Edgman-Levitan, S; Sodomka, P; Schlucter, J, Ford. Partnering with Patients and Families to Design a Patient- and Family-Centered Health Care System. 2008;  
April:<http://www.ihl.org/NR/rdonlyres/C810CCBB-2DEB-4678-994A-57D9B703F98D/0/PartneringwithPatientsandFamiliesRecommendationsApr08.pdf>.



2. Brody DS. The patient's role in clinical decision-making. *Ann Intern Med.* Nov 1980;93(5):718-722.
3. Kizer K. Journey of Change II. In: Affairs DoV, ed. Washington, DC: Veterans Health Administration; 1998.
4. Street RL, Jr., Makoul G, Arora NK, Epstein RM. How does communication heal? Pathways linking clinician-patient communication to health outcomes. *Patient Educ Couns.* Mar 2009;74(3):295-301.
5. Epstein RM, Franks P, Shields CG, et al. Patient-centered communication and diagnostic testing. *Ann Fam Med.* Sep-Oct 2005;3(5):415-421.
6. Schwartzberg JG, Cowett A, VanGeest J, Wolf MS. Communication techniques for patients with low health literacy: a survey of physicians, nurses, and pharmacists. *Am J Health Behav.* Sep-Oct 2007;31 Suppl 1:S96-104.
7. Clark NM, Cabana MD, Nan B, et al. The clinician-patient partnership paradigm: outcomes associated with physician communication behavior. *Clin Pediatr (Phila).* Jan 2008;47(1):49-57.

