



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

2020 3rd Quarter Edition

Healthy Living

Healthy Living Matters. Prevention Works.

E-Newsletter



Your Health & the Coronavirus COVID-19 Pandemic

By now, you've probably heard about the COVID-19 pandemic. The [CDC](#), VA's [Public Health](#) and [FAQ](#) pages are great resources to keep up to date on COVID-19, prevention steps, guidance for high-risk groups and more.

This newsletter will give you a wealth of resources to stay healthy during this time. Know that if you are struggling with fear and anxiety, you are not alone. The National Center for PTSD has [Guidance on Managing Stress](#), and the CDC offers support for [Stress and Coping with COVID-19](#).

Read on for more guidance on staying active, eating well and taking care of your mental health.

-  Get Recommended Screening Tests and Immunizations
-  Be Involved In Your Health Care
-  Manage Stress
-  Be Tobacco Free
-  Limit Alcohol
-  Be Safe
-  Strive for a Healthy Weight
-  Be Physically Active
-  Eat Wisely

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Additional Physical Activity Resources



Take a deeper dive into physical activity for health with these resources:

- [Be Physically Active](#)
- [Physical Activity](#)
- [Exercise and Healthy Aging](#)
- [Exercise for Older Adults](#)

You can also track your physical activity through [MOVE! Coach](#) phone app:



Source: VA Northwest Health Network Healthy Living Resource Guide (under Resources)
<https://www.visn20.med.va.gov/ISN20/patients/patiented.asp>

Staying Active While Staying Safe

Staying healthy and active during times of uncertainty might seem daunting, but it's more important than ever to keep our bodies and minds moving and well-nourished. Keeping or starting new healthy habits can help support your immune system and help you stay grounded when you have extra stress and worry.

With guidelines from the government encouraging people to stay home to prevent the spread of coronavirus, you may be spending a lot more time indoors than usual. That doesn't mean you have to turn into a couch potato! VA's [Get Fit for Life](#) YouTube playlist has lots of exercise videos you can follow from the comfort of your own home. Choose from videos on aerobics, strength training, balance and more.

Yoga, Tai Chi and Qi Gong are exercises you can also practice to help you stay both physically and mentally well. VA's [Whole Health](#) program has a variety of resources on yoga, Tai Chi and Qi Gong as well as tips for incorporating them into your life. And be sure to check out [Yoga for Veterans](#) to find videos on general yoga and yoga for chronic pain.

For the best fitness results, you should aim to be active on most days and practice different types of exercise throughout the week. And remember, even a little movement is better than nothing!



Source: VA Portland Health Care System
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL3AQ_JVoBEyyg8PKc_hge6CXBk_B-IsN



Food Insecurity

[Food insecurity](#) is a lack of access to enough food for a healthy lifestyle. In 2018, about 11 percent of US households were food insecure at least some time during the year. Food insecurity tends to be higher in households relying on social assistance, single-parent homes, ethnic minorities and people who are [homeless](#) or house insecure.

Visit VA Nutrition and Food Services' [Food Insecurity](#) page to find resources and websites such as:

- [Nutrition Guide During a Disaster or Flu Pandemic](#)
- [Nutrition Tips for Veterans Without a Home](#)
- [Thrifty Meal Plan](#)
- [Weekly grocery lists and recipes](#)
- [Food Delivery Services](#)
- [Meals on Wheels Locations](#)
- [Food Pantries in Your Area](#)
- [Find Your Local Food Bank](#)
- And more!

Source: VA Nutrition and Food Services
https://www.nutrition.va.gov/Food_Insecurity.asp

Eat Well to Stay Well



Nourish your body to stay well and help avoid illness.

- Eat a variety of vegetables, fruits and whole grains.
- Choose lean protein foods and low-fat or fat-free dairy.
- Limit added sugars, sodium, alcohol and saturated and trans fats.

Don't be afraid to experiment in the kitchen. Watch a VA [Healthy Teaching Kitchen](#) video and try a new recipe today!

For more information on healthy eating, visit [Eat Wisely](#) and the VA Nutrition website for [recipes and cookbooks](#).

Source: VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention
<https://www.prevention.va.gov/>

Your Mental Health

During the Coronavirus COVID-19 Outbreak

Taking care of your well-being, including your mental health, is essential during this time. Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations, and it's normal for many people to experience stress, fear, anxiety or feelings of depression. There are things that you can do to manage your stress and anxiety.

1. Exercise regularly, try to eat well-balanced meals, and [get plenty of sleep](#).
2. Limit alcohol.
3. Practice breathing exercises and/or meditation. VA has many [free mental health apps for Veterans](#).
4. Take breaks from the news.
5. Stay connected with others while practicing social distancing.
6. Participate in activities or hobbies that you enjoy or learn a new one.
7. Keep your current mental health appointments. VA offers both video and phone telemental health options that do not require you to go to your VA facility in-person.
8. Learn ways to connect with VA providers using telehealth options and [schedule or reschedule your appointment online](#). If you are requesting a new mental health appointment, please call your [local VA](#) and they will work to arrange an appointment for you. If you need same day access for mental health services, call your [local VA](#) to request this and you will be connected to care.

Also, see these great resources on managing stress:

- [Moving Forward](#)
- [Manage Stress Workbook](#)
- [Relaxation and Meditation Audio Recordings](#)
- [Live Whole Health Self-Care Blog](#)
- And check out [VA mobile apps](#) for support with mindfulness, meditation, and more

And if **emotional eating** from stress is a concern, check out this VA blog article on [Managing Stress to Avoid Weight Gain](#).



Sleep for Your Health

A good night's sleep can feel out of reach when we're stressed or worried, but sleep is just as important for health as healthy food and exercise. We know from studies that people who do not get enough good, sound sleep every night are at risk for a host of illnesses that include high blood pressure, diabetes, obesity and depression.



Learn more about healthy sleep:

- [In Brief: Your Guide to Healthy Sleep](#)
- [Brain Basics: Understanding Sleep](#)
- [Sleep and Sleep Disorders](#)
- [Test Your Sleep IQ](#)

Sleep is necessary for our brains to create memories and help us learn. If you have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, there are ways for you to get help and begin to feel better!

See these additional resources:

- [Sleep Health and Wellness Blog](#)
by American Academy of Sleep Medicine
- VA's [Path to Better Sleep](#)
and [Sleep 101](#) training.



Sleep 101
Learn the Basics

Source: VA MyHealthVet
<https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/healthy-sleep>

Yoga Sleep

Yoga nidra (yoga sleep) is a spoken word guided meditation that promotes a sense of deep calm while enhancing awareness. The meditation class follows the 10 stage iRest™ protocol.

During class, Veterans:

- Discover a heartfelt mission & purpose and establish a goal for the meditation
- Establish and connect with an inner "safe haven"
- Explore the connection between body sensations, emotions, thoughts and beliefs with an awareness of how thoughts and emotions affect the body and mind
- Learn to experience an inner joy and develop an awareness of, and access to, one's own sense of well-being
- Connect with an inner strength & resiliency in order to more appropriately "respond" rather than "react" to situations in life

Veterans may also benefit from the restful sleep-like state achieved during the meditation.

Weekly meditation classes are available from home. Find out more about [VA yoga nidra offerings](#).

Source: VA War Related Illness and Injury Study Center
<https://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov/WARRELATEDILLNESS/index.asp>

Breathing Exercises

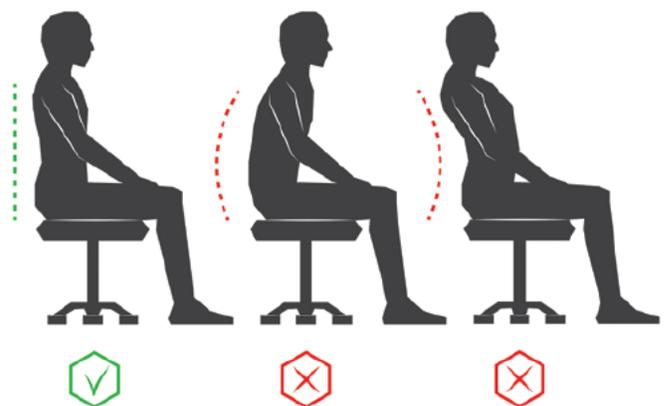
Breathing exercises can be a helpful tool for stress management. With no equipment needed and only a few minutes, breathing exercises can help reduce blood pressure, calm the mind and allow you to regain focus.

1. Sit in a comfortable chair with your back straight and your hands on your thighs. You can keep your eyes half open or closed, whichever feels best.
2. Place the tip of your tongue behind your upper front teeth and keep it there through the entire exercise.
3. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
4. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of **four**.
5. Hold your breath for a count of **seven**.
6. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of **eight**.
7. Repeat this breathing cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.
8. Always inhale quietly through your nose and exhale audibly through your mouth.

Good Posture

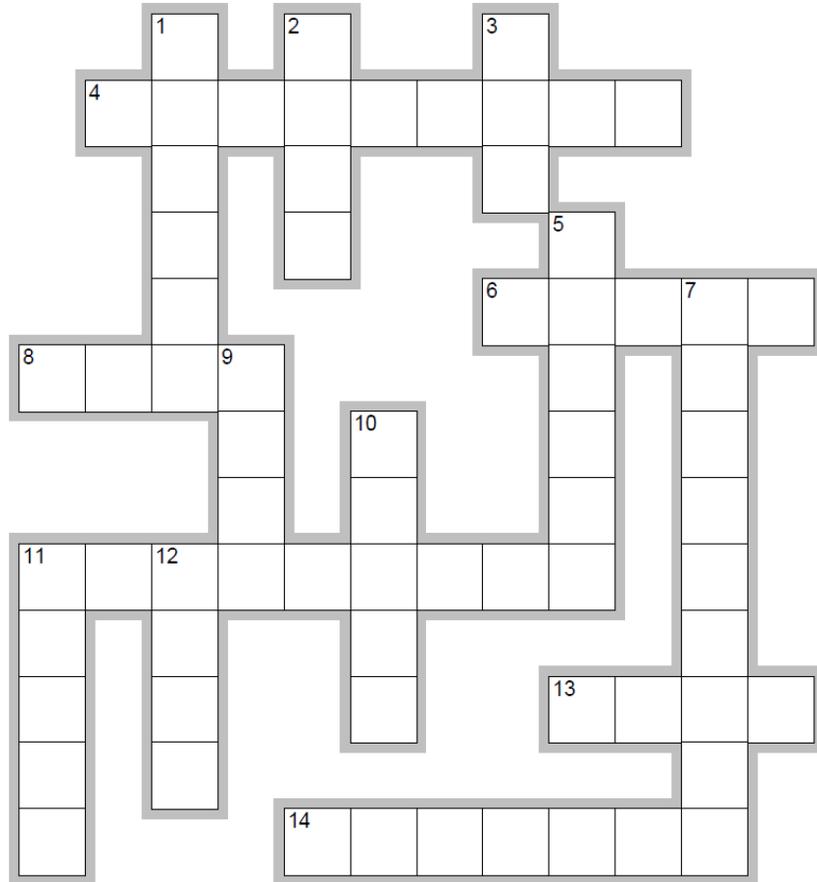
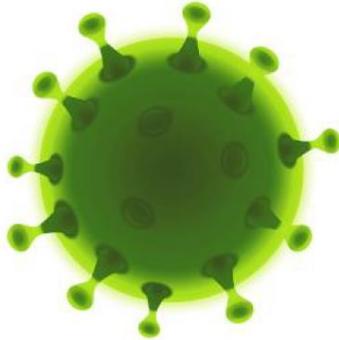
No matter where you work, live or play, good posture is important for mobility and to prevent pain and aches.

- Be aware of your posture. Set alerts that tell you to sit up straight.
- Think about your posture when you stand and walk.
- Make sure your computer set-up works for you. You shouldn't slouch to reach the keyboard or see the screen.
- Change positions often. Don't sit all day in the same position.
- Get up for breaks. Don't spend breaks at your desk. Take a walk or gently stretch.
- Work toward a healthy weight. Extra weight around the belly can weaken abdominal muscles. This can lead to back pain.



COVID-19 Crossword Puzzle

This COVID-19 crossword will remind you of ways you can protect you and your family from the spread of this disease. If you've been paying attention to recent news report, you are sure to do well on this crossword!



Across:

- 4. An important warning sign of COVID-19 is difficulty _____ or shortness of breath.
- 6. Do not shake _____.
- 8. _____ your hands frequently.
- 11. Handle food _____.
- 13. Limit ____ sharing.
- 14. If possible, open ____ to increase ventilation.

Down:

- 1. Avoid large _____ of people.
- 2. Try not to touch your _____.
- 3. Limit close contact with others, staying about ____ feet apart.
- 5. Stay home if someone in your _____ is sick.
- 7. Disinfect surfaces like tables, desks and _____ regularly.
- 9. Stay ____ if you are feeling sick.
- 10. Always cover your mouth when you ____ or sneeze.
- 11. People with the COVID-19 virus sometimes feel pain or pressure in the _____.
- 12. If someone in your family is ill, give them their own _____, if possible.

10 things you can do to manage your health at home

If you have possible or confirmed COVID-19:

1. **Stay home** from work, school, and away from other public places. If you must go out, avoid using any kind of public transportation, ridesharing, or taxis.



2. **Monitor your symptoms** carefully. If your symptoms get worse, call your healthcare provider immediately.



3. **Get rest and stay hydrated.**



4. If you have a medical appointment, **call the healthcare provider** ahead of time and tell them that you have or may have COVID-19.



5. For medical emergencies, call 911 and **notify the dispatch personnel** that you have or may have COVID-19.



6. **Cover your cough and sneezes.**



7. **Wash your hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.



8. As much as possible, **stay** in a specific room and **away from other people** in your home. Also, you should use a separate bathroom, if available. If you need to be around other people in or outside of the home, wear a facemask.



9. **Avoid sharing personal items** with other people in your household, like dishes, towels, and bedding.



10. **Clean all surfaces** that are touched often, like counters, tabletops, and doorknobs. Use household cleaning sprays or wipes according to the label instructions.



Please go to www.cdc.gov/covid19-symptoms for information on COVID-19 symptoms.



Caring for & Wearing Face Masks

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Milwaukee VA Medical Center

Wearing a face mask is not a replacement for social distancing or washing your hands!



Face masks are intended for use while you are in a proximity that is less than 6ft from others.

Before Putting the Face Mask on

- Make sure that there are no holes or rips in the mask.
- Clean hands using an alcohol-based hand rub or wash your hands with soap and water.

How to Properly Put on a Face Mask

- Do not touch the front of the mask.
- Place the mask on your face with the blue side facing out and the stiff edge at the top by your nose.
- Place one loop around each ear and be careful not to overstretch the elastic loops, as they easily break.
- Once the mask is in place use your index finger and thumb to pinch the bendable top edge of the mask around the bridge of your nose. Make sure it covers your nose and mouth so that the bottom edge is under your chin.

When Wearing a Face Mask

- Avoid touching the mask. Do not move it on and off your face to your chin, neck, or forehead.
- If you accidentally touch the front of the mask, clean your hands using an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

How to Properly Remove a Face Mask

- Wash your hands before removing the mask.
- Do not touch the inside of the mask (the part over your nose and mouth.)
- Remove the ear loops and then while holding it by the ear loops, place it into a closed trash container.
- Clean hands using an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water.

How to Fix a Face Mask if the Ear Loops Come Off

- The ear loops can easily come off. If they do, use:
 - Paper tape is recommended for sensitivity.
 - You can also use staples, glue, or regular tape to get the strap back on the mask; however, please be aware of any allergies you may have.

Things You Can do to Protect Your Ears

- Paper tape is recommended for sensitivity.
 - Place the tape directly on your ear where the straps will sit.
- Gauze or cotton can also be used.

Please Remember: Face masks are meant to protect *others from you*, not the other way around!



Need Help or Know Someone Who Does?

If you, or someone you care about, are feeling overwhelmed with emotions like sadness, depression, or anxiety, or feel like you want to harm yourself or others

- Call 911
- Call the Veterans Crisis Line 1-800-273-8255 press 1
- Visit the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#), call 1-800-985-5990, or text TalkWithUs to 66746
- Visit the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) or call 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224



ALASKA VA HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

MOVE! (907) 257 – 4890

WHOLE HEALTH (907) 257 – 5453

HEALTH PROMOTION (907) 257 – 4726

BOISE VA MEDICAL CENTER

MOVE! (208) 422 – 1000 EXT. 7917

VA PORTLAND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

MOVE! (503) 220 - 3482

VA PUGET SOUND HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

MOVE! (800) 329 – 8387 EXT. 76683

VA ROSEBURG HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

MOVE! (541) 440 – 1000 EXT. 45755

MANN-GRANDSTAFF (SPOKANE) VA MEDICAL CENTER

MOVE! (509) 434 - 7030

VA SORCC (WHITE CITY)

MOVE! (541) 826 – 2111 EXT. 7472

JONATHAN M. WAINWRIGHT (WALLA WALLA) VA MEDICAL CENTER

MOVE! (509) 946 - 1020



This newsletter brought to you by your local MOVE! Program Coordinators and the VISN20 Healthy Living Committee.