

choose
to
change
your



HEALTH



*get involved
in your health care*

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Before Your Appointment

It is important to be prepared for your health care appointments. Take charge of your own health by learning to work as a team with your health care providers.

- Complete any paperwork sent or given to you.
- Write down your top three questions for your health care team.
 - 1) _____
 - 2) _____
 - 3) _____
- Describe your problem or symptoms:
 - Where is it? _____
 - When did it start? _____
 - Does anyone else at home have the same problem? _____
 - What do you think is causing it? _____
 - What have you tried so far? _____
 - Did it work? _____
 - Do you have any pain? If so, where? _____
 - What type of pain? _____
 - How long does the pain last? _____
 - Have you recently begun a diet or started exercising? _____
 - Have you lost weight? _____

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Before Your Appointment

- Be as accurate as possible. Don't exaggerate, understate or leave out facts.
- Keep your own personal health profile (sample on pages 18 and 19). Bring this with you to each of your appointments.
- Get to know how the clinic or office works. Find out who can answer your questions.

- When is the best time of day to reach staff?

- Who should you call after hours? _____

- How should you handle emergencies? _____

- Who should you call about billing issues or co-payments?



The Day of Your Appointment

- Follow any instructions you are given, especially if you are told not to eat or drink before your appointment.
- Remember to bring/wear your glasses and/or hearing aid(s).
- If you think you might have trouble understanding or hearing, consider bringing someone with you to help you ask questions.
- Bring your personal health file to your appointment along with your list of questions for your health care team.
- Bring a paper and pen to take notes.
- Wear clothing that is easy to take off and put on.
- Be on time and be sure to check in.
- While at the facility, sign up in person for MyHealth_Vet with your team or in the Office of Enrollment and Eligibility. (More information on page 16).



At Your Appointment

- Your health care team should introduce themselves. Look for their identification (ID) badges.
- Hand washing is the most important way to prevent infections. Do not be afraid to remind a doctor or nurse to do this.
- Remind health care staff to wear clean gloves when giving shots, drawing blood, touching wounds, etc.
- Communicate clearly. Use facts rather than your opinion.
- Health care staff may ask you personal questions. It is important for them to know your health habits so they can recommend the best treatment for you. Be honest with your health care team. Let them know if you smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, use recreational drugs, etc.
- Repeat what the provider says to you in your own words to be sure you understand.
- Tell a member of your health care team if you do not understand. Do not be embarrassed. It's okay to ask them what a word means or to explain something to you in a different way.
- Keep the conversation on track. Focus on the questions that matter most to you.
- Make sure you understand what your main problem is and what you need to do before you leave.



Did you receive a new diagnosis?

It is important to educate yourself about your diagnosis, illness, medical tests, and treatment. You can get information from your health care team, library, respected Web sites and support groups.

- Ask your health care team if he/she has any written information you can keep.
- Write down any important facts.
- You and your provider should agree on your care.
- Ask a member of your health care team how a new test or medication will help. Sometimes more tests or medications are not always better.
- Your provider may send you to see a specialist that has expertise in an area of your health or disease (cardiologist/heart, rheumatologist/arthritis, etc.)
- You can ask for a second opinion. If you are unsure about the best treatment, talk with additional health care providers. The more information you have about treatment options, the better you will feel about your decisions.
- Talk to others who have had the same diagnosis but be cautious in accepting their advice. Remember that each person is different. You need to base your health care decisions on your own needs. They may help you prepare, tell you what to expect and what worked best for them.

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Did you receive a new diagnosis? *(continued)*

Receiving a new diagnosis can be scary or overwhelming. Talk to your health care team about:

- The technical name of the disease or condition

- The common name for the disease or condition

- Prognosis (outlook for the future) _____

- What changes will I need to make? _____

- Is there a chance that someone else in my family might have or get the same thing? _____
- What causes it? _____
- How serious is it? _____
- Will I need additional tests? _____
- Will I need to see another health care provider? If so, why?

- What organizations and resources do you recommend for support and information? _____

- Will I need special help at home to manage my condition?

Do you need treatment for an illness or condition?

It is important to understand all of your treatment options.

Ask your health care provider:

- What are my treatment options? _____
- What do you recommend? _____
- Is the treatment painful? _____
 - How can the pain be controlled? _____
- What are the benefits and risks of this treatment?

- What are the expected results? _____
 - When will I see results from the treatment? _____
- What are the chances the treatment will work? _____
- Are there any side effects? _____
 - What can be done about them? _____
- What happens if I choose to have no treatment at all?

- How soon do I need to make a decision about treatment?



Did your provider prescribe new medication(s)?

If you are taking prescription medication, vitamins, herbs, or over-the-counter drugs, be sure to ask your health care provider or pharmacist if it is safe to take them with your new medication(s). Remind your health care team of any allergies or reactions you have had with medication.

- What is the name of the medication? _____
- Why should I take it? _____
- What is the medicine for? What does it do? _____
- What are the side effects? _____
 - When should I tell someone if I have side effects? _____
- Does this new prescription mean I should stop taking any other medication? _____
- How am I supposed to take it? _____
 - When should I take it? _____
 - How much should I take? _____
- How long do I need to take it? _____
- When will it start working? _____
- Can I stop taking it if I feel better? _____
- Do I need to avoid any food, drinks, or activities? _____
- What should I do if I forget to take it? _____
- What should I do if I accidentally take more than the recommended dose? _____
- Are there any tests I need to have while I am on this medicine?

- Will the medicine still work if I only take half of it? _____
- Ask for a complete, updated list of your medications.

Are you scheduled to have a medical test?

It is important to understand why you are having it. Ask your health care team:

- What is the test for? _____
- What will we learn about my health? _____
- How is the test done? _____
- Will the test hurt? _____
- How accurate is the test? _____
- Is this test the only way to find out that information? _____
- What are the benefits and risks of having this test? _____
- What do I need to do to prepare for the test? _____

- Can I take my medication before the test? _____
- Are there any food or drinks I should avoid before or after?

- What will happen to me during the test? _____
- What will happen to me after the test? _____
- Do I need someone to bring me home after the test? _____
- When will I get the results? _____
 - How will I get the results? _____
 - Will I be told if something is normal or only if it needs attention? _____
 - What will the results tell me? _____
- What is the next step after the test? _____

Are you having surgery?

Deciding to have surgery is an important decision. Make sure you fully understand what will happen during the procedure and recovery.

- Why do I need this surgery? _____
- What are the benefits and risks of having this surgery?

- How successful is this surgery? _____
- Who will do the surgery? _____
- What will the surgeon be doing? _____
- Where will I have the surgery? _____
- Are there any vitamins, herbs, or medications I should not take before the surgery? _____
- Can I eat or drink before the surgery? _____
- Will the surgery hurt? _____
- Will I need anesthesia? _____
- How long will the surgery take? _____
- What will happen after the surgery? _____
- How long will I be in the hospital? _____
- How long will it take me to recover? _____
- How soon can I drive a car? _____
- How long will I need to be out of work? _____
- How soon will I be able to return to my normal activities (laundry, grocery shopping, etc...)? _____
- Is there some other way to treat my condition? _____

- What will happen if I wait or don't have this surgery? _____

Do you want or need to change your diet/exercise?

Changing your lifestyle through diet and exercise can have dramatic, positive results in your health. If you are interested in adopting a new diet or exercise program, talk to your health care team before getting started:

- Is there a special diet I should follow? _____
- What types of food should I include in my diet? _____

- Are there any foods I should not eat? _____

- Should I exercise? How long? _____
- What types of exercise should I do? _____
- Is there any activity I should avoid doing? _____
- Would I benefit from participating in VA's weight loss program MOVE? _____



Closing/Ending the Appointment

- What is the next step in your care?
 - Do not leave without understanding what to do to be as healthy as possible.
 - Let your health care team know if you cannot or will not be able to do what they suggested.
 - Make sure you know what symptoms you should let your health care team know about.
 - Is there anything I should watch for? _____
 - What should I do? _____
 - When should I call 911 or go to the emergency room? _____
-



After Your Appointment

Follow the advice of your health care team.

- Let your health care team know if something is not working as well as they said it would.
- Call your health care team if you think of something you forgot to ask during your visit.
- Remember to follow through with appointments, tests, lab work and/or medications that you discussed during your appointment.



My HealthVet (MHV)

MHV is a secure website where patients can create a private Personal Health Record (PHR) to keep track of their own health information. More information visit: www.myhealth.va.gov

Online Services Available

- **VA Prescription Refills** – if ordered through MHV they are delivered to your address within 5 to 10 business days through the VA's Consolidated Mail-Out Pharmacy.
- **Secure Messaging** with your Primary Care Team and other Boise VA clinics. It is not e-mail, but an encrypted, secure communication tool to communicate with your team.
- **VA Wellness Reminders** –Alert you to important tests, exams, or other medical procedures that you should schedule to protect your health.
- **Track health measures and maintain health journals** – blood pressure, blood sugars, etc.

How to Sign Up at the Boise VAMC

- Go to the Office of Enrollment & Eligibility and to the My HealthVet clerk
- Ask your team for a sign-up packet



My Health, My Care: 24/7 ^{Online} Access to VA

Additional Resources

The following web sites provide reliable health information:

- www.npsf.org/askme3
- www.ahrq.gov
- www.jointcommission.org/
- www.myhealth.va.gov
- www.healthfinder.gov
- www.medlineplus.gov

Veterans Service Contact Center

1-888-823-9656

For information on eligibility, VA health care benefits, enrollment, or questions on your billing statement

TelCare

1-888-838-7890

24-hour, toll-free medical advice for enrolled veterans

Boise VA Medical Center

<http://www.boise.va.gov/>

For reliable health information on the Web

www.myhealth.va.gov

Veterans Crisis Line

1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Personal Health Profile

Diseases or conditions

Medications and dosage amounts (prescription, over-the-counter, herbals, vitamins, etc.)

Medication

Dosage

Medication	Dosage
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>
<hr/>	<hr/>

Reactions to medications/treatments

Allergies

Family history (diabetes, heart disease, etc.)

Immunizations and dates (flu shot, etc.)

List of prosthetic devices (eyeglasses, hearing aids, dentures, etc.)

Personal Health Profile

Recent tests or X-rays

List of other health care providers (with telephone number)

Any other information you think your health care provider should know about you:

Insurance information

Emergency Contacts

Make sure you bring/attach a copy of your advance directives (health care proxy, living will, etc.) if you have one.

Reaching Us Is Easy

VA Medical Center:
Boise VA Main Facility
500 West Fort Street
Boise, ID 83702
208-422-1000
Toll Free: 866-437-5093
Hours: Primary Care Clinics at the Boise VA main facility are open weekdays from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. The last scheduled appointment time is 4:00 p.m. Primary Care Clinics are closed weekends and holidays. Emergency room services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at the Boise VA Medical Center main facility.

Primary Care Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs) and Outreach Clinics:
Patients can also receive primary care at any of the following CBOCs or Outreach Clinics:

Twin Falls, Idaho
260 Second Avenue
Twin Falls, ID 83301
Phone: 208-732-0959
Fax: 208-732-7480
Hours: Monday - Thursday: 7:00am - 5:30pm; closed on Fridays

Caldwell, Idaho
4521 Thomas Jefferson Street
Caldwell, ID 83605
Phone: 208-454-4820
Fax: 208-454-4859
Hours: Monday - Friday: 8:00am - 4:30pm

Burns, Oregon
271 North Egan Avenue
Burns, OR 97720
Phone: 541-573-3339
Fax: 541-573-3366
Hours: Monday - Thursday 8:00am - 5:00pm and Friday 8:00am - 12:00pm

Mountain Home, Idaho
815 North 6th Street East
Mountain Home, ID 83647
Phone: 208-580-2001
Hours: Monday - Friday: 8:00am - 4:30pm

Salmon, Idaho
(Behavioral Health Clinic)
111 Lillian Street, #203
Salmon, ID 83467
208-756-8515
Hours: 8:30am - 12:00pm and 12:30pm - 5:00pm
New primary care clinic slated to open in late 2011



**Department of
Veterans Affairs**