U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Patient Handbook

VA PAHCS
Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System

3801 Miranda Avenue • Palo Alto, CA 94304
(650) 493-5000 • www.paloalto.va.gov

Important VA Phone Numbers & Contact Information

Hospital Operator
(650) 493-5000 (follow automated prompts)

Telephone Care Program
(Advice Nurse)
1-800-455-0057

Pharmacy
1-800-311-2511

Ambulatory Care Clinics
1-800-455-0057 select option 3, then option 2

Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
VeteransCrisisLine.net

Admissions & Benefits Services
Customer Service Line:
(650) 493-5000 ext. 66266

American Legion
(650) 493-5000 ext. 65388

Barbershop (Menlo Park)
(650) 493-5000
ext. 52-27381 or 63965

Caregiver Support
1-855-260-3274 or
www.paloalto.va.gov/caregiver.asp

Chaplain Service
(650) 493-5000 ext. 65532

Facebook
www.facebook.com/vapahcs

Home Based Primary Care
(650) 493-5000 ext. 62140

Information Desk
Palo Alto (650) 493-5000
ext. 60026

Livermore (925) 373-4700
ext: 35331

My HealtheVet
www.myhealth.va.gov

Patient Advocate:
Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Fremont:
(650) 493-5000 ext. 65544

San Jose (408) 363-3000
ext. 75449 or ext. 74269

Monterey (831) 883-3800
ext. 43852

Capitola (831) 464-5519

Livermore, Modesto, Stockton, Sonora
(925) 373-4700 ext. 35622
or ext. 35106

Purchased Care (Fee Basis Services)
Customer Service Line:
(650) 617-2788

Release of Information
(650) 493-5000 ext. 66406
or ext. 67298
www.paloalto.va.gov/release_of_information.asp

Social Work Service
(650) 493-5000 ext. 65455

Twitter
www.twitter.com/vapaloalto

VA Benefits Counselor
(650) 493-5000 ext. 65539

Veteran Co-Pay Line
Customer Service Line:
1-866-347-2353

VA Regional Office in Oakland
1-800-827-1000
www.ebenefits.va.gov

Voluntary Service
Palo Alto
(650) 493-5000 ext. 65800

Menlo Park
(650) 493-5000 ext. 22263

Livermore
(925) 373-4700 ext. 35360

Women's Health Program
(650) 493-5000 ext. 64194

Facilities

Palo Alto
3801 Miranda Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94304
(650) 493-5000

Livermore
4951 Arroyo Road
Livermore, CA 94550
Phone: 925-373-4700 or
(925) 373-4700

Stockton
7777 South Freedom Rd
French Camp, CA 95231
Phone: (209) 946-3400

Modesto
1524 McHenry Avenue
Modesto, CA 95350
Phone: (209) 557-6200

Sonora
13663 Mono Way
Sonora, CA 95370
Phone: (209) 588-2600

Capitola
1350 41ST Avenue, Ste 102
Capitola, CA 95010-3906
Phone: (831) 464-5519

Menlo Park
795 Willow Road
Menlo Park, CA 94025
Phone: (650) 614-9997

San Jose
80 Great Oaks Boulevard
San Jose, CA 95119
Phone: (408) 363-3000

Monterey
3401 Engineer Lane
Seaside, CA 93955
Phone: (831) 883-3800

Fremont
39199 Liberty Street
Fremont, CA 94538
Phone: (510) 791-4000

Welcome

Welcome to the VA Palo Alto Health Care System. I want to personally thank you for choosing our health care system.

We are proud to offer you world class medical care. We lead the nation in preventive health measures, clinical practice guidelines and patient satisfaction. Our Stanford affiliation further ensures our patients have access to the latest innovations in health care. Many of our staff physicians are also Stanford faculty.

We are able to provide comprehensive medical services at ten locations for your convenience. Some locations also offer a variety of special services.

Your care at VA Palo Alto Health Care System will start by assigning you a primary care provider. Your primary care team will partner with you in assuring your medical needs are met and that you are referred for any specialty care you may need. We hope, too, that you will take advantage of MyHealtheVet, VA's on-line program that brings a wealth of information to your finger tips.

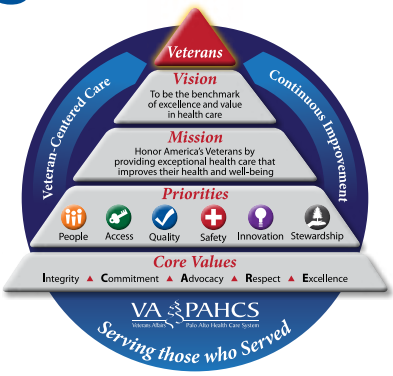
At VA Palo Alto Health Care System, we never forget whom we serve. We are proud to provide care to our nations heroes - each of you. To ensure we meet your needs, you will receive patient satisfaction surveys. This will be your opportunity to tell us what we do well and where we can improve. We want you to be able to rate the overall quality of your care as excellent. You deserve nothing less.

Again, thank you for putting your care in our hands. Thank you for choosing VA Palo Alto Health Care System.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Joyce Freeman
Director

Putting Veterans First



Mission Statement

Honor America's veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being.

Vision Statement

To be a patient-centered integrated health care organization for veterans providing excellent health care, research, and education; an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner; and a back-up for National emergencies.

Core Values

Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence

Our Goals

- We want to be your provider of choice
- We want you to rate our care as excellent
- We want to partner with you in your healthcare
- We want you to get all the information you need to understand your medical care and treatment plan
- We want you to know why tests are ordered and how you'll receive your test results
- We want you to understand your medications and know about their potential side effects

Emergency Department

The VA Palo Alto Emergency Department is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. It is located in Building 100 on the first floor to the right of the main lobby. The Emergency Department is available for any patient who feels they have an acute medical condition that needs attention. You do not need an appointment or referral to come to the Emergency Department.

The Emergency Department accepts patients in a wide variety of ways, mostly by walk in, but also by ambulance transport, referral from primary care doctors, or transfer from clinics or Community Based Outpatient Clinics. Patients are first checked-in by the clerk, and then seen by a specially trained nurse who will interview the patient and determine the seriousness of the illness to establish the order in which patients will be seen by the doctor. From there, urgent patients will be brought directly to the treatment area of the main Emergency Department. Less urgent patients may be sent to the Fast Track area of the Emergency Department or asked to wait in the waiting room for the next available doctor. Non-urgent patients can also be sent to different locations outside the Emergency Department if an appropriate appointment is available, for example to the Same Day Clinic in Building 5.

The Emergency Department strives to provide the best, most efficient care possible. Wait times, however, can vary widely depending on the number and types of patients who are in the Emergency Department. Patients are seen in a “worst first” order. This means that patients are not seen in the order of arrival time, but in order of the sickest, most urgent medical conditions. Illnesses requiring extended work-ups, radiologic and lab tests, and/or specialist consultations may make the Emergency Department visit longer. If you are at home and have questions regarding your symptoms, please contact the Telephone Care Program nurses at 1-800-455-0057. They will be able to recommend the appropriate location to be seen (the Emergency Department, Same Day Clinic, or your primary care provider).

In general, the busiest times in the Emergency Department are from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm, but it can be busy at any time. To avoid wait times in the Emergency Department, you may be able to take advantage of the following services:

- For non-emergent questions or concerns or to schedule an appointment, please call the Telephone Advice Nurse: **1-800-455-0057**.
- For medication refills or to check upcoming appointments, please callAppointment/Medication Services: **1-800-311-2511**.
- For ongoing issues, please call your primary care team. To contact any of the Ambulatory Care Clinics, please call the Telephone Care Program at **1-800-455-0057**.

The Palo Alto Division is the only site with an Emergency Department. The other VAPAHCS sites do not have emergency departments or walk-in clinics.

Suicide Prevention

1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Suicide is not the answer

Are you, or someone you love, at risk of suicide?

Following is a list of warning signs:

- Talking about wanting to hurt or kill self *
- Trying to get pills, guns, or other ways to harm self *
- Talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide *
- Hopelessness
- Rage, uncontrolled anger, seeking revenge
- Acting in a reckless or risky way
- Feeling trapped, like there's no way out
- Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from friends, family and society
- Anxiety, agitation, unable to sleep or sleeping all the time
- Dramatic changes in mood
- No reason for living, no sense of purpose in life

* If you have answered "yes" to the first three warning signs, don't wait – get help today by:

- Going to your local VA Mental Health Clinic
- Going to the nearest emergency room
- Going to the VA emergency room
- Calling 911 or
- Calling the Veterans Crisis Line and talking with a VA counselor

If you have answered "yes" to any of the others, make an appointment to see a mental health professional or call the veteran's crisis line.

The toll-free number is: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

Press "1" when you hear the recording to be connected immediately.

You can also communicate with a VA counselor through anonymous chat at: http://veteranscrisisline.net or TEXT to 838255

Telephone Care Program (TCP)

If you have a health care emergency - call 911

Urgent health concerns: 1-800-455-0057

To cancel an appointment: 1-800-455-0057

For urgent health concerns, an Advice Nurse is available 24 hours a day, including weekends and holidays. The toll-free number is 1-800-455-0057. The Telephone Care Program (TCP) gives you access to an Advice Nurse who can assist you with the following:

- Give health care advice
- Help you decide if you should come to the clinic or hospital
- Suggest things you might try for home care
- During normal business hours, Telephone Care can make you an appointment with the Sameday Clinic or your Primary Care Provider or team
- Answer questions about your appointments including canceling and rescheduling

Additionally, a Patient Services Assistant can:

- Cancel appointments
- Reschedule some appointments
- Get a message to your provider

Cancelling Appointments

If you are unable to keep an appointment, please cancel it by calling the Telephone Care Program. Thousands of appointments were lost last year due to "No Shows." By calling to cancel your appointment at least 48 hours in advance, you will open up a space for another Veteran to be seen.

Hours of Operation

The Telephone Care Program operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm, except holidays.

For health care emergencies – call 911. VA does not provide emergency transportation to the hospital. Whether or not VA pays for an ambulance is determined AFTER you have been evaluated in an Emergency Department. Always tell the hospital that you are a Veteran and ask them to bill the VA. The VA will review the bill to see if VA can pay the claim. Call the Non-VA Medical Care line for billing issues at 1-650-617-2788.

Primary Care

At the VA Palo Alto Health Care System we are committed to providing you with the best possible health care. To help us achieve this goal, we would like each Veteran to have an assigned primary care team. A primary care team consists of a physician or nurse practitioner, an RN care manager, an LVN and a clerk. Our goal is to have you be seen by a member of your primary care team, when you want and need to be seen. This team will address all your health care needs including arranging and coordinating any referrals to specialists.

When you are due for an appointment with your primary care team, you will receive a post card in the mail asking you to call the Patient Scheduling Unit (1-855-632-8262) to schedule an appointment at a time convenient for you. If you have any health care questions or want to pass along any information to your health care team, you can call the Telephone Care Program at 1-800-455-0057. You will then have an option to leave a message for your primary care team or to talk with an advice nurse.

First time visit reminders

- Bring completed forms (Adult History Worksheet).
- Bring any records from outside doctors visits and bring all of your medicines to your first visit.
- Bring a list of your questions and concerns.
- Please arrive early to allow time for check-in, the taking of your vital signs and health screening. This Health Screening Appointment is scheduled 20 minutes before your Primary Care appointment.
- Come at least 2 hours early if you need to have laboratory work or x-rays done. If possible, have your laboratory or x-rays completed a few days before your visit so the results will be available for review by your team.

Pharmacy Refills

Order your medication refills at least 2 weeks before you will run out.

You can order 3 ways:

1. Online at the My HealtheVet website: www.myhealth.va.gov (Instructions for registering are on the website)
2. Using your touch tone phone 1-800-311-2511 (Northern California) or (650) 496-2580 (outside Northern California)
3. By mail with a medication refill form (which comes with each prescription)

If you do not have any more refills on your prescription, call 1-800-311-2511, option 2, then option 8 and a message can be sent to your provider.

Find additional detailed information on our website:

http://www.paloalto.va.gov/patients/

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