

St. Cloud VA

UPDATE

September 17, 2021



A monthly newsletter for Veterans served by the St. Cloud VA Health Care System, and for those who serve them.
Send news items and comments to St. Cloud VA Health Care System, Attn: Public Affairs Officer, 4801 Veterans Drive, St. Cloud, MN 56303, or via email to barry.venable@va.gov

Enrolled Veterans have three options for getting a free VA flu shot

During this flu season, flu shots for St. Cloud VA Veterans are available at most scheduled VA appointments, at convenient walk-in and drive-thru flu shot clinics, and through the VA Community Care Network.

The 2021-2022 flu season will again coincide with the COVID-19 pandemic. Flu shots provide the best protection against influenza and help reduce illness and hospitalization. An annual flu shot is an important part of staying healthy and is more important than ever during this combined flu season and COVID-19 pandemic.

VA flu shot clinics are for enrolled Veterans only and shots are free. Walk-in or drive-thru flu clinics do not require an appointment. Flu-shot only appointments cannot be scheduled.

Veterans who get a flu shot outside of VA or the VA's Community Care Network are asked to inform their care team.



Here's how:

- With another VA appointment
- At [Walk-In](#) flu clinics
- At [DriveThru](#) flu clinics
- Thru the VA Community Care Network

COVID-19 Vaccines and Flu vaccines

- For safety reasons, walk-in or drive-thru flu shot clinics do not offer COVID-19 vaccinations.
- Enrolled Veterans can request a COVID-19 vaccine for themselves and their spouse or caregiver as part of other scheduled appointments. Enrolled Veterans can get a flu shot at the same visit.
- Enrolled Veterans can schedule a COVID-19 vaccination by calling 320-252-1670, ext. 6339 or visiting <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/>

Veterans not enrolled for VA care, their caregivers and spouses, and CHAMPVA

beneficiaries can schedule a COVID-19 vaccine by using the Keep Me Informed too at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/> or calling 320-252-1670 Ext. 6339.

Flu shots for Veterans at a scheduled VA appointment

- Social distancing and the continuing need to minimize traffic in health care facilities play an important role in the flu shot effort.
- Veterans can get a flu shot as part of most appointments. Some services, like imaging, lab, and others, do not administer flu shots.
- Flu-shot only appointments are not offered.
- Flu shots are for enrolled Veterans only.

Flu shots for Veterans without a VA appointment

- Veterans without an upcoming appointment can use walk-in and **drive-thru flu clinics**.
- Veterans at walk-in and drive-thru clinics will undergo screening for vaccine allergies and COVID-19 symptoms. Veterans should prescreen themselves for COVID-19 by using VA's [COVID-19 screening tool](https://www.va.gov/covid19screeningtool/), available <https://www.va.gov/covid19screen/> Those with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 will be directed to other treatment locations.

- Safety and weather related postponements or suspensions of drive-thru clinic locations will be announced at <https://va.gov/st-cloud-health-care/> and at <https://www.facebook.com/stcloudvahcs>.

- Veterans using walk-in and drive-thru flu clinics should wear a mask, have their Veterans Health Identification Card (VHIC) ready, wear a short sleeve shirt, follow signage, and if using a drive-thru clinic to stay in their vehicle.

Walk-in flu shot clinics are available at these locations and times:

St. Cloud VA Medical Center, Bldg. 96:

- Tues., Oct 5, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Thurs., Oct. 7, Noon to 4 p.m.
- Sat., Oct. 9, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Tues., Oct. 12, Noon to 4 p.m.
- Thurs., Oct. 14, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

VFW Post 936, 1102 3rd Avenue East, Alexandria:

- Fri., Sept. 24, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Fri., Oct. 15, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Montevideo VA Clinic, 1025 N. 13th St., Montevideo:

- Mon., Sept. 27, from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
- Mon., Oct. 4, from 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Drive-thru flu shot clinics are available at these locations and times:

St. Cloud Municipal Athletic Complex (MAC) Parking Lot, 5001 Veterans Drive, St. Cloud (next door/west of the VAMC):

- Tues., Sept. 28
- Wed., Sept. 29
- Thurs., Sept. 30
- Veterans with a last name starting with A – K are asked to use the drive-thru clinic from 8 a.m. – Noon; and those with a last name starting with L – Z are asked to use the drive-thru clinic between 12:30 to 4:30 p.m.

Brainerd VA Clinic Parking Lot, 722 NW 7th St., Brainerd (enter via Essentia Health Sports Center parking lot at corner of NW 5th St and Jackson St.):

- Wed., Sept. 22
- Thurs., Sept. 23
- Veterans with a last name starting with A – K are asked to use the drive-thru clinic from 10 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.; and those with a last name starting with L – Z are asked to use the drive-thru clinic between 12:30 to 3 p.m.

Flu Shots Also Available through VA's Community Care Network

Eligible Veterans can receive free flu shots at more than 69,000 Community Care Network (CCN) retail pharmacies and urgent care locations.

Veterans can use the VA Locator to find a VA facility, in-network retail pharmacy or urgent care location near them by visiting: <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>.

Veterans should call ahead to make sure the flu shot is available at the location of their choosing. Veterans can find in-network locations in their area by entering:

- City, state, or postal code: Enter the appropriate ZIP code for your area
- Facility Type: Select "*Urgent Care*" OR "*Community pharmacies (in VA's network)*"
- Service Type: If "*Urgent Care*" is selected for Facility Type, choose "*Community urgent care providers (in VA's network)*"

Veterans using the CCN should tell the in-network community care staff they are an eligible Veteran enrolled with VA, and show a government-issued identification (e.g., Veterans Health Identification Card or driver's license).

Stand-alone flu shot visits to in-network community urgent care providers are copay free and are not counted as an urgent care visit. Other vaccinations are not available through the CCN.

VA is committed to keeping Veteran patients healthy, and vaccination is the best way to prevent the spread of flu.

Benson Appointed as Primary and Specialty Medicine Director

Lisa S. Benson, MD was recently appointed as Director, Primary and Specialty Medicine Integrated Clinical Community at the St. Cloud VA Health Care System.

Dr. Benson joins the St. Cloud VA HCS after serving as Chief Quality Officer and Chief Medical Officer for Ascension Wisconsin since 2016.



A native of Wilmar, Minnesota, Dr. Benson received a Bachelor of Arts in Chemistry from Viterbo University in La Crosse, Wisconsin in 1988, and a Doctor of Medicine from the University of Minnesota in 1992. She completed her residency in Internal Medicine at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics in 1995.

A lifetime learner, Dr. Benson also holds a Master of Business Administration from the University of St. Thomas and a Master of Organizational Change Leadership from the University of Wisconsin-Platteville.

Outpatient Care Team 5 Clinic Ribbon Cutting



Crystal Thesing, Primary and Specialty Medicine Associate Nurse Administrator; Cheryl Thieschafer, Associate Director; Breta Monroe, Nurse Executive; Dr. Lisa Benson, Primary and Specialty Medicine Director; Dr. Brent Thelen, Medical Center Director; Sherry Kenny, Administrative Officer for Primary and Specialty Medicine; and Amber Willert, Women Veterans Program Manager, cut the ribbon to mark the acceptance of the new PACT 5 Clinic in Bldg. 4, Room 160 on Sept. 13, 2021.

Primary Care will soon start moving in and the new clinic will welcome the first patients by the end of September.

Featuring four exam rooms with bathrooms, a procedure room and support and storage space, the newly renovated clinic area was designed to meet the needs of Women Veterans and PACT 5 will provide women's health services 5 days a week. On Wednesdays PACT 5 schedules female appointments only; the rest of the week both female and male patients are scheduled. This separate but shared space arrangement allows us to use the clinic space to its fullest capacity and best serve our Veteran population.

How to get your COVID-19 vaccine record online

Find out how to get a copy of your VA COVID-19 vaccine records through the MyHeathVet website or on your mobile device. You can also use your Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) vaccination card or a photo of the card as proof of vaccination.

Step by step instructions are available at <https://www.va.gov/health-care/covid-19-vaccine/vaccine-record/>

Breast Cancer Awareness Month

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month. As a woman, getting checked for breast cancer is an important part of maintaining your overall health. Talk to your VA provider team if you have questions related to your breast health or to be checked for breast cancer. The St. Cloud VA provides state-of-the-art, coordinated breast cancer care, including mammograms, breast Ultrasound and MRI, cancer diagnosis and treatment.



For women ages 45 and older, VA recommends regular breast cancer screening. Women may also choose to start screening with yearly mammograms as early as age 40. Talk with your VA primary

care provider team about scheduling your mammogram.

Intimate Partner Violence Awareness Month

The VA cares about Veterans affected by Domestic Violence (DV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). The VA Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program (IPVAP) recognizes Domestic Violence and Intimate Partner Violence is a serious yet, preventable public health problem that may disproportionately affect Veterans.

To help address the impact IPV has on Veterans, family members and VA employees the IPVAP promotes relationship health and wellness and supports healing and growth for those impacted by IPV.



This October, the IPVAP DVAM 2021 theme is: Honor Relationship Wellness.

Supportive and connected relationships is a universal protective factor for physical and mental health for all people. Living in conflict reduces health and quality of life. For those impacted by IPV, healing and growth is critical to recovery. Healthy relationships can increase connection, trust, and safety. We encourage Veterans, their partners and VA staff to talk with their local IPVAP

Coordinator and learn about available resources and services. Together we can make a difference. You can reach the St. Cloud VA IPVAP Coordinator Joy Finkelson at Joy.Finkelson@va.gov or 320-252-1670 Ext. 6398.

The Caregiver Support Program and the VA Caregiver Center Present:



Are you a caregiver of a Veteran? Would you like to learn an ancient practice that promotes physical and mental wellbeing?

Join us for three, 1-hour virtual courses on the ancient art of qigong taught by a VA Caregiver Center Instructor.

Caregivers of Veterans who receive care from VA are invited to attend this FREE program. Caregiver must be enrolled in the Caregiver Support Program prior to attending. Talk with your local Caregiver Support Coordinator at 320-252-1670 Ext. 7283 to learn more and register to attend. Pre-Registration is required by Oct. 18.

Schedule of Classes:

Session One – Monday, Oct. 25 from 9 - 10 a.m.

Session Two – Monday, Nov. 8 from 9 - 10 a.m.

Session Three – Monday, Nov. 22 from 9 - 10 a.m.

Women Veterans Town Hall



December 14, 2021 at 5:00 p.m.

Join this virtual meeting via MS Teams at:

<https://bit.ly/3iWwTx7>

Or dial in via phone at 1-872-701-0185,

Conference ID 558 427 71#



For more information contact:
Amber Willert
Women Veterans Program Manager
320-654-7656



The Women Veterans Program Manager invites all women Veterans to join us for the Women Veterans Town Hall meeting on Dec. 14, 2021 at 5 p.m. to learn and discuss various programs for women Veterans.

This meeting will use the communication platform of Microsoft Teams programs: <https://bit.ly/3iWwTx7> Click this link to join the meeting.

For more information contact Amber Willert at Amber.Willert@va.gov or 320-654-7656.

Coffee Talk

Coffee Talks



- Topics to be covered:**
- Enroll for health care
 - VA health care benefits
 - Using VA health services
 - VA wellness programs
 - Get started on your Whole Health journey

- Not enrolled?**
- Learn how to apply for VA health care.
 - Bring your DD214!

**Oct. 8, Nov. 12 & Dec. 10
2021**
2—4 p.m.
St. Cloud VAMC
Bldg. 29 Rm. 20E

To attend in-person call the Health Hub at 320-252-1670 ext. 7271 to reserve a spot! Limit 6 for in-person attendance, reservations are required.

Not able to attend in person? A Call-in phone line is available:
Call 1-833-558-0712

OR

Visit website: tinyurl.com/svh2ymwr
Meeting ID: 1998080535
Password: 656Coffee%



St. Cloud VA, Bldg. 29, Rm. 20E, or virtually Coffee Talks are informal conversations intended to provide Veterans an opportunity to have their questions about VA health care answered.

To attend, call the Health Hub at 320-252-1670 ext. 7271 to reserve a spot! Limit 6 for in-person attendance, reservations are required. Not able to attend in person? A Call-in phone line is available, call 1-833-558-0712 or Visit:
www.tinyurl.com/svh2ymwr
Meeting ID: 1998080535
Password: 656Coffee%

UPCOMING EVENTS

2021 St. Cloud VA Games (Virtual)

Sept. 1 to 30
Registration and information packets available at www.va.gov/st-cloud-health-care/

Veterans Affairs Radio Show

Monday, Oct. 4 8:10-8:30 a.m.
KNSI AM 1450/FM 103.3

Coffee Talk

Friday, Oct. 8 2-4 p.m.

Voices for Veterans Radio Show

Wednesday, Oct. 20 8 – 8:30 a.m.

Coffee Talk

Friday, Nov. 12 2-4 p.m.

Coffee Talk

Friday, Dec. 10 2-4 p.m.

Women Veteran Town Hall meeting

Dec. 14 5 p.m.

For more information contact:
Amber Willert, Women Veterans Program Manager, 320-654-7656

For a complete Calendar of Events, go to www.va.gov/st-cloud-healthcare/events

Quick Reference Phone List

Main St. Cloud VA HCS Phone Number	320-252-1670 or 800-247-1739
TDD User	320-255-6450
Max J. Beilke VA Clinic, Alexandria	320-759-2640
Brainerd VA Clinic	218-855-1115
Montevideo VA Clinic	320-269-2222
Veterans Crisis Line	800-273-8255 Press 1
Homeless Veteran Hotline	877- 424-3838

Billing:

• VA Care	866-347-2352
• Care in the Community (non-VA care)	877-881-7618
Caregiver Support Team	Ext. 7283
Chaplain Service	Ext. 6386
Community Care Referrals	Ext. 6401
Discrimination Complaints	Ext. 6304
Eligibility	Ext. 6340
Nutrition Clinic	Ext. 6376
Transition & Care Management Program	Ext. 6453
Patient Advocate	Ext. 6353
Pharmacy Refill Line	855-560-1724
Privacy Officer	Ext. 6408
Public Affairs Office	Ext. 6353
Release of Information (Medical Records)	Ext. 6336
Transportation	Ext. 7622
TRICARE	844-866-9378
Voluntary Service	Ext. 6365
VA Police	Ext. 6355

Stay in Touch

Visit our Website: <https://www.va.gov/st-cloud-health-care/>

Like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/StCloudVAHCS

Visit us on Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/stcloudvahcs/>

Sign up for our automated email service. Visit the St. Cloud VA Website at: <https://www.va.gov/st-cloud-health-care/> and scroll down to the Get updates from VA St Cloud health care in the grey box. Click on the options you wish and enter your email address and you will be signed up to receive email updates from these four options.