



Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)  
VA MIDWEST HEALTH CARE NETWORK  
*Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23*  
Network Update  
October 2011  
[www.visn23.va.gov](http://www.visn23.va.gov)



### Seasonal Flu

Be ready for the flu season by getting your flu shot. **Flu shots are now available** for Veterans enrolled in VA health care and VA health care personnel. Check with your [nearest VA health care facility](#). The flu shot is recommended for people 6 months of age and older.

[Flu](#) – short for influenza – is a respiratory illness that spreads easily from person to person. Flu vaccination is your best protection against the flu, which occurs mostly between October and May. Protection can take up to 2 weeks to develop after vaccination and it lasts about a year.

New this year, based on recent studies - [the flu vaccine](#) can be tolerated by people with egg allergies that are not severe. Check with your health care provider if you have a severe egg allergy. The flu vaccine contains egg protein.

## Million Veteran Program

### Minneapolis Joins National Genome Research Effort

The Minneapolis VA Health Care System (VAHCS) has joined a new VA research initiative called the Million Veteran Program (MVP): A Partnership with Veterans. **Currently, there are 462 Veterans enrolled in the program.** The goal for Minneapolis is to enroll 20,000 Veterans in the next five years. The Principal Investigator in Minneapolis is Scott Sponheim, PhD.

MVP is a national, voluntary research initiative of VA's Office of Research and Development (ORD) to better understand the effects that genes have on health and illness. The ultimate goal is improving Veterans' health care. MVP is a great opportunity for Veterans who receive care at VA Medical Centers across the country to participate in a research program that can transform healthcare not only for themselves, but also for future generations of Veterans and all Americans.

Understanding how different genes affect disease is an important part of advancing medical care. Information from MVP may help researchers answer questions such as "Why does a certain treatment work well for some Veterans but not for others?"; "Why are some Veterans at a greater risk for developing an illness?"; and "How can we prevent certain illnesses?" MVP offers a monumental opportunity for the VA to partner with those who have served our country, in an effort to transform VA health care and improve the lives of not only our Veterans, but all Americans.

For more information, visit [www.research.va.gov/mvp](http://www.research.va.gov/mvp) or call 857/364-5759

## Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) pilot kicks off in Twin Ports



The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced that it is expanding the Virtual Lifetime Electronic Record (VLER) pilot program to include Veterans in Northeast Minnesota and Northwest Wisconsin. With VLER Health, doctors will have more information instantly available and will improve the quality of health care they provide to our Veterans.

VLER is a multi-faceted business and technology initiative that includes a portfolio of health, benefits, personnel, and administrative information sharing capabilities.

An estimated 5,000 Veterans who receive primary care services at the VA's **Twin Ports Outpatient Clinic** (TPOC) in Superior, Wis. began receiving notification letters this week that they are eligible to participate in the VLER program, which allows the sharing of health information between the VA, Department of Defense and non-governmental health agencies who agree to partner with the VA.

The Minneapolis VA Health Care System (MVAHCS), which operates the Twin Ports clinic, is partnering with **Essentia Health** (formerly known as St. Mary's Duluth Clinic Health System), a private hospital, which provides space for the VA Twin Ports clinic in its building. Many VA patients also receive services at Essentia Health.

VA selected the Minnesota and Northwestern Wisconsin area because of the high concentration of Veterans, military retirees, and members of the National Guard and Reserve.

The MVAHCS also plans to implement the program at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, partnered with Minneapolis and St. Paul area health care providers, beginning late Fall 2011.

- For more information about VLER Health, Veterans may call 1-877-771-VLER(8537).
- Veterans can also learn more and find the VLER Health Authorization Forms at the website [www.minneapolis.va.gov/VLER.asp](http://www.minneapolis.va.gov/VLER.asp).

## Retroactive Traumatic Injury Benefit No Longer Just for OEF/OIF Injuries

VA recently announced extension of retroactive traumatic injury benefits to Servicemembers who suffered qualifying injuries during the period Oct. 7, 2001 to Nov. 30, 2005, regardless of the geographic location where the injuries occurred. Effective Oct. 1, the Servicemembers' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) Traumatic Injury Protection benefit, known as TSGLI, will be payable for all qualifying injuries incurred during this period. This retroactive benefit is payable whether or not the Servicemember had SGLI coverage at the time of the injury. TSGLI provides a payment ranging from \$25,000 to \$100,000 to Servicemembers sustaining certain severe traumatic injuries resulting in a range of losses, including amputations; limb salvage; paralysis; burns; loss of sight, hearing or speech; facial reconstruction; 15-day continuous hospitalization; coma; and loss of activities of daily living due to traumatic brain injury or other traumatic injuries. National Guard and Reserve members who were injured during the retroactive period and suffered a qualifying loss are also eligible for a TSGLI payment, even if the cause was not related to military service, such as a civilian automobile accident or severe injury which occurred while working around their home. For more information or to apply for a TSGLI payment, Servicemembers and Veterans should go to <http://www.insurance.va.gov/sgliSite/TSGLI/TSGLI.htm> or contact their branch of service TSGLI Office (contact information available at above link).



Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)  
VA MIDWEST HEALTH CARE NETWORK  
*Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23*  
Network Update  
October 2011  
[www.visn23.va.gov](http://www.visn23.va.gov)



## Upcoming Events

**Thru October 21: Flu Shot Clinics - [St. Cloud VA Health Care System](#)** To keep Veterans healthy during the flu season, the St. Cloud VA Health Care System has scheduled several flu shot clinics this fall. Flu shots for Veterans enrolled with the VA are free and an appointment is not necessary. The flu shots are available at the VA Medical Center in St. Cloud or any of the VA's three clinics across central Minnesota.

**Thru November 18: Walk-in Flu Clinics - [VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System](#)**, Veterans can get flu shots at various walk-in clinics held throughout the VA Nebraska-Western Iowa Health Care System:

\*All times Central Time Zone

**Omaha VAMC** Monday, Thursday and Friday from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.; Tuesday from 8 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
Wednesday from 6 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**Grand Island CBOC** Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. in the primary care clinics

**Lincoln CBOC** Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. in the basement

**North Platte CBOC** Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

**Norfolk CBOC** Tuesday and Thursday from 1 - 3:30 p.m.

Friday from 9 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

**Holdrege CBOC** Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

**October 12, 19, 26 and November 9: Flu Shot Clinics - [Fargo VA Health Care System](#)** Veterans, VA employees and volunteers get your free flu shot at the Fargo VA.

- October 12: 1 - 4:30 p.m. (CDT)
- October 19: 1 - 4:30 p.m. (CDT)
- October 26: 1 - 5 p.m. (CST)
- November 9: 8 a.m. - 12 p.m. (CST)

**October 14: Women Veterans Conference - [Sioux Falls VA Health Care System](#)** Booths open at 9 a.m. (CDT) while conference runs from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m. at the Holiday Inn City Centre, 100 W 8th St., Sioux Falls, S.D. For women Veterans of all generations. No fee to attend. VA staff is granted authorized absence. Questions, call Charlotte McGrath at 605.336.3230 Ext. 7747.

**October 17-21: Flu Shot Clinic - [Minneapolis VA Health Care System](#)** from 8 a.m. - 3 p.m. (CDT), Flag Atrium, Minneapolis VA Medical Center, One Veterans Dr., Minneapolis, Minn. Seasonal Influenza Vaccine Has Arrived! Letters will go to all enrolled Veterans with the dates and times of the flu shot clinic and at the Community-Based Outpatient Clinics.

**October 18: Veteran Enrollment Fair - [St. Cloud VA Health Care System](#)** from 4. - 7 p.m. (CDT), VFW Post 1112, located at 1210 3rd Ave. NE, in Little Falls, Minn. Veterans from all eras are invited to take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about the VA and the benefits provided to eligible Veterans. Veterans do not need to be a member of the VFW to attend.

**November 11: Service of Remembrance** - [Sioux Falls VA Health Care System](#) from 1:30 - 3:30 p. (CST), front foyer, Sioux Falls VA Health Care System, 2501 W. 22nd St., Sioux Falls, S.D

## **VA Websites Offer Calendar of Events, Weather Alerts, and Much More**

For information on special events, or weather related alerts, log on to your local VA facility's homepage.

VA Black Hills HCS	<a href="http://www.blackhills.va.gov">www.blackhills.va.gov</a>
VA Central Iowa HCS	<a href="http://www.centraliowa.va.gov">www.centraliowa.va.gov</a>
Fargo, ND VA HCS	<a href="http://www.fargo.va.gov">www.fargo.va.gov</a>
Iowa City VA HCS	<a href="http://www.iowacity.va.gov">www.iowacity.va.gov</a>
Minneapolis VA HCS	<a href="http://www.minneapolis.va.gov">www.minneapolis.va.gov</a>
VA Nebraska Western Iowa HCS	<a href="http://www.nebraska.va.gov">www.nebraska.va.gov</a>
Sioux Falls VA HCS	<a href="http://www.siouxfalls.va.gov">www.siouxfalls.va.gov</a>
St. Cloud VA HCS	<a href="http://www.stcloud.va.gov">www.stcloud.va.gov</a>
VISN 23	<a href="http://www.visn23.va.gov">www.visn23.va.gov</a>

For more information, call the Network Office at (612) 725-1968 or  
Log on at [www.visn23.va.gov](http://www.visn23.va.gov) or email [sharyl.schaepe@va.gov](mailto:sharyl.schaepe@va.gov)