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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Pacific Islands Health Care System

ACROSS THE ISLANDS

VETERANS HEALTH NEWSLETTER



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On October 13th, we celebrate the birthday of the United States Navy and honor the generations of Sailors who have served our nation with courage, dedication and commitment.

Established in 1775, the U.S. Navy has protected America's interests around the world for more than two centuries. From defending our nation to providing humanitarian assistance during times of crisis, Sailors have continued a proud tradition of service and sacrifice.

Throughout its history, the Navy has answered the call to serve wherever duty required, both at home and around the world. Its proud legacy is built on teamwork, resilience and a commitment to protecting the freedoms we value.

Today, we recognize the contributions of all who have worn the Navy uniform and honor the lasting impact they have made in service to our country. We also extend our appreciation to the Navy Veterans whose service and sacrifice continue to strengthen our communities today.



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> *The nursing & office staff are also very pleasant and helpful.*
>
> *Veteran at the Maui VA CBOC*

From Concern To Confidence

At the VA Pacific Islands Health Care System Dental Department, we are honored to have the opportunity to care for Veterans who have served our country. This month, we would like to share the story of one Veteran whose case highlights the value of personalized dental care. We appreciate his trust in us to be part of his journey toward better oral health, comfort, and confidence.

Mr. Varela is a 46-year-old Veteran who came to Spark M. Matsunaga Ambulatory Care Clinic for a second opinion after a dentist in the private sector told him his teeth "looked like an 80-year-old's" and recommended crowns on every tooth. Concerned about the invasiveness and cost, he sought a second opinion at the VA.

After a thorough evaluation, we determined that full-coverage crowns were not necessary for every tooth. Instead, treatment was tailored to preserve as much healthy tooth structure as possible. For the front teeth, composite bonding was used to rebuild worn areas, restore shape and function, and protect the remaining tooth structure. For the back teeth, gold castings replaced defective restorations, worn and decayed dentition and defective restorations and provided durable protection while requiring significantly less tooth reduction than full crowns.

As treatment progressed, the Veteran noticed meaningful improvements. Eating became more comfortable, sensitivity decreased, and his bite felt stronger and more stable. Most importantly, he found himself smiling with greater confidence.

His experience is a reminder of what personalized VA dental care can offer: conservative treatment, advanced technology, prevention, and preservation of natural tooth structure.

"After years of viewing dental care through the lens of military readiness, I discovered the power of personalized treatment that turned overwhelming concerns into confidence. The Spark M. Matsunaga VA Dental Clinic made me feel like a partner in my care, never just another number. The results were life-changing—restoring health, uplifting confidence, and bringing back a smile I hadn't realized I'd been missing. "
~Veteran Aurelio Varela



Shaping the Next Era of VA Dentistry

The VA has invested in Digital Dentistry Technology, which allowed our team to integrate digital workflows from treatment planning through execution. This technology will enhance our ability to design, plan, and deliver precise, personalized restorations while continuing to prioritize conservative care.







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> *They showed respect and courtesy towards Veterans before, during and after their appointments..*
>
> *Veteran at the American Samoa VA CBOC*

WHO QUALIFIES FOR VA DENTAL CARE?

Understanding VA dental eligibility can be confusing; many Veterans may not realize what services they qualify for. Here at the VA Pacific Islands, we want to help ensure every Veteran has the information needed to maintain good oral health. Our dental teams proudly serve patients at two clinic locations on Oahu: the Spark M. Matsunaga VA Medical Center in Honolulu and the Daniel K. Akaka VA Clinic in Kapolei. Both sites offer high-quality, compassionate dental care tailored to each Veterans' unique needs.

Veterans may qualify for full dental care if they have a service-connected dental condition, are former prisoners of war, or have service-connected disabilities rated at 100 percent. Others may qualify for limited or one-time dental care based on when they were discharged and whether they received a dental exam upon separation.

For Veterans who do not qualify for free VA dental benefits—or who only qualify for limited dental care, the VA offers VA Dental Insurance Program (VADIP).

For questions about dental insurance options contact:
- Delta Dental: 855-370-3303
- MetLife: 888-310-1681

Whether you qualify for VA dental care or need supplemental insurance through VADIP, resources are available to help you maintain a healthy smile. We encourage Veterans to reach out, ask questions, and take full advantage of the dental options available through the VA Pacific Islands Health Care System.

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Spark Matsunaga VA Medical Center Dental Team

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> *I have always received the most excellent care whenever I am at the VA facility.*
>
> *Veteran at Spark M. Matsunaga VA CBOC*

EARLY DETECTION

OCTOBER IS BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

This month, we honor breast cancer survivors, remember those we've lost, and recommit to raising awareness about early detection. About one in eight women in the U.S. will develop breast cancer in their lifetime, making regular screenings one of the most important steps toward early diagnosis and better outcomes.

VA Pacific Islands Health Care System provides comprehensive breast health services, including mammography, breast imaging, genetic counseling, oncology referrals, and coordinated support throughout diagnosis and recovery.

VA follows the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) breast cancer screening guidelines and recommends that women begin getting yearly mammograms by age 40, and continue screening every other year through age 74. Women may choose to be screened annually, or continue the screening after age 74, after a discussion with their provider about risks and benefits.

If you have concerns about your breast health, start by having a conversation with your VA primary care provider. They can get you set up with a mammogram or any other necessary screening. If you do not have a primary care provider, call the Women Veterans Program Manager at 1-800-214-1306

Resources:

- Women Veterans Call Center: 1-855-829-6636
- VA Women's Health Services: www.womenshealth.va.gov
- National Oncology Program: www.cancer.va.gov



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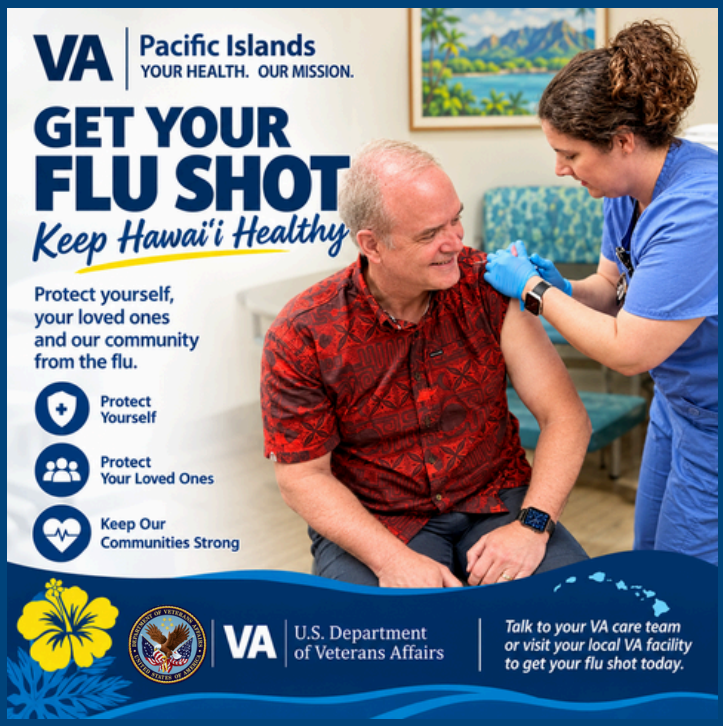
> *We have an amazing CBOC in Kauai! They are incredible!*
>
> *Veteran at the Lihue VA CBOC*

Healthy Habits for Flu Season & Infection Prevention

With flu season approaching, our clinical teams across primary care, urgent care, and specialty clinics encourage Veterans to take simple steps to stay healthy — including vaccinations, good hand hygiene, staying home when ill, and using telehealth for non-urgent concerns. Because flu viruses change each season, the flu vaccine is updated annually to provide protection against the strains expected to circulate during the upcoming season.

Getting vaccinated can reduce your chances of getting sick and may also help lower your risk of serious complications or hospitalization if you do become infected.

Flu vaccine protection generally lasts for around six months, making September and October ideal times to schedule your flu shot. Keep in mind that it can take up to two weeks for your immune system to build protective antibodies after vaccination.



Protecting Independence, Confidence & Safety

Falls are more than just slips—they can significantly impact a Veteran's independence, health, and overall well-being. Across VA Pacific Islands Health Care System, we prioritize fall prevention to help Veterans stay safe and maintain quality of life. A single fall can trigger a downward spiral—hospitalization, loss of mobility, and increased fear of falling again. VA home care and coordinated services aim to break that cycle by making environments safer, managing health effectively, and preserving Veterans' ability to live independently.

What You Can Do:

- Discuss fall risks with your VA provider—screenings are typically part of primary care visits.
- Ask about a home-safety assessment from your health team.
- Get connected with physical or occupational therapy, and consider enrolling in balance programs like Gerofit.
- Mental and medication reviews can help identify hidden risk factors.
- Keep your living space safe and continue movements that enhance strength and confidence.

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> *I had a wonderful experience staff were kind and caring. I felt welcomed and the facility was very clean and organized.*
>
> *Veteran at the Windward VA CBOC*



Thomas A. Steinbrunner, FACHE
VISN 5 - Health Service Area 5.5 Director

As the Executive Director for the VA Pacific Islands Health Care System, it's truly an honor to serve you. We're grateful that you choose the VA for your care, and we are committed to serving you with the same integrity and dedication that you showed in service to our nation. Across all our sites of care throughout the Pacific we're working every day to ensure your care is safe, timely and effective.

Just as importantly, we're listening closely to your voice. Your feedback helps us understand what's working, where we can do better, and how we can grow to meet your needs. We measure patient satisfaction by how easy it is to access care, whether the care you receive meets your expectations and how valued you feel as patient.

Our journey to continue to earn your trust means expanding services, strengthening our processes with mindfulness, transparency, and continuous learning at every level of our system.

You deserve world-class and patient-centered care and I look forward to sharing how we're building on that promise by improving the quality of our services, enhancing safety, and ensuring that your experience across the VA Pacific Islands Health Care System reflects the respect and commitment you earned through your service.

Thank you for trusting us with your care and for allowing us the privilege of serving you.