

*October 2013*

# *Hangar Flying Newsletter*

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**It's that Time: Get your Flu Vaccine:** Each year, flu season affects millions of men, women and children. Flu season usually begins in October, so now is a great time to protect yourself and your family from the flu by getting vaccinated. The flu shot is easy to get and inexpensive – often free – for TRICARE beneficiaries and this year the flu vaccine offers even more protection.

Until now, seasonal flu vaccines have only protected against three strains of flu - two strains of influenza A, which usually causes more cases and more severe illness, and one of influenza B, which is less common but also circulates in multiple forms. The new vaccines include protection against a second strain of influenza B, which experts expect will prevent the vast majority of type B infections.

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat and lungs. People suffering from the flu often have a fever, cough, sore throat, stuffy nose, body aches, headaches and fatigue. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the flu virus spreads from person to person and can be more serious for young children, older adults, pregnant women and people with medical conditions. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death.

TRICARE covers both the flu shot and flu mist. Beneficiaries may be able get their flu vaccine, at no cost, from a military treatment facility, hospital or from a pharmacist at one of the 45,000 network pharmacies that administer vaccines to TRICARE beneficiaries. Find a participating pharmacy at [www.express-scripts.com/tricare/pharmacy](http://www.express-scripts.com/tricare/pharmacy), or by calling Express Scripts at 1-877-363-1303.

CDC offers additional steps people can take on their own to prevent the spread of germs which can lead to the flu:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Stay at home when sick
- Cover mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
- Wash hands often with soap and water
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth
- Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage stress, drink plenty of fluids and eat nutritious food

The single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated each year. To learn more about flu basics, treatment and prevention visit [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu). Get more information on TRICARE coverage and where to get shots go to [www.tricare.mil/flu](http://www.tricare.mil/flu). (Source; Tricare)

**VA: Let Us Serve You:** From the original GI Bill to the more than 8 million veterans currently cared for at more than 1,800 Department of Veterans Affairs facilities nationwide, VA is answering President Lincoln's call to "care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow, and his orphan." Millions of Veterans have already taken advantage of what VA has to offer, but many have not. Find out more about the VA services available to you at the Explore VA website at [www.va.gov/explore/](http://www.va.gov/explore/). (Source VA)

**VA Boosts Mental Health Services:** The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continues to expand access to mental health and has hired more than 1,600 new mental health clinical providers and staffed all 151 VAMCs with suicide prevention coordinators over the past year. Veterans can also access 24/7 emergency mental health care through the Veterans Crisis Line at [www.veteranscrisisline.net](http://www.veteranscrisisline.net), which has generated more than 30,000 rescues of Veterans in immediate suicidal crisis and 152,000 referrals to a VA Suicide Prevention Coordinator. For more information, visit VA's [Vantage Point Blog](#). If you are in immediate crisis, or know someone who is, call the Veterans Crisis Line toll-free at 1-800-273-8255, press 1; or text a message to 838255; or [chat online](#). (Source: *Military.com Veterans Report*)

**Prostate Cancer and Agent Orange:** Veterans who develop prostate cancer and were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service do not have to prove a connection between their prostate cancer and military service to be eligible to receive VA health care and disability compensation.

**About prostate cancer:** Prostate cancer is cancer of the prostate, a small gland in the male reproductive system. Some men may have urinary problems, but some men don't have symptoms early on. If you have any health concerns, talk with your health care provider.

The greatest risk factor for prostate cancer is increasing age. Other risk factors include having a father or brother with the disease and being African American. Prostate cancer is often first detected with a PSA (prostate-specific antigen) blood test or digital rectal exam. Talk with your health care provider about your risk and the pros and cons of screening.

Visit [Medline Plus](#) to learn about treatment for prostate cancer, the latest medical research, and more from the National Institutes of Health.

**Reduce your risk for cancers and other diseases,** Here's how, Follow a healthy diet. Don't have more than 2 alcoholic drinks a day. Get help to quit smoking. Go to [www.prevention.va.gov](http://www.prevention.va.gov) to learn more about healthy living.

**VA benefits for prostate cancer:** Veterans with prostate cancer who were [exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service](#) may be eligible for [disability compensation](#) and [health care](#).

Vietnam Veterans may apply for disability compensation for prostate cancer using VA's [Fast Track Claims Processing System](#).

Veterans who served in Vietnam, the Korean demilitarized zone or another area where Agent Orange was sprayed may be eligible for an [Agent Orange registry health exam](#), a free, comprehensive exam.

Surviving spouses, dependent children and dependent parents of Veterans who were exposed to herbicides during military service and died as the result of prostate cancer may be eligible for [survivors' benefits](#).

**Research on prostate cancer and herbicides used in Vietnam:** The Institute of Medicine (IOM) of the National Academy of Sciences concluded in its 1996 report [Veterans and Agent Orange: Update 1996](#) and in future updates that there is limited/suggestive evidence of a positive association between prostate cancer and exposure to herbicides used in Vietnam.

A 2013 study conducted at the Portland VA Medical Center and Oregon Health and Science University found that Veterans exposed to Agent Orange are not only at higher risk for prostate cancer, but they are more likely to have aggressive forms of the disease. Read the abstract for the publication, [Agent Orange as a risk factor for high-grade prostate cancer](#).

**VA Benefits Book Available:** The new, 2013 edition of the Department of Veterans Affairs benefits book 'Federal Benefits for Veterans Dependents and Survivors' is [now available online](#) on the VA website and on select mobile devices. (*Source : VA.gov*)

**Updated Fact Sheet: TRICARE For Life:** The TRICARE For Life fact sheet has been updated with information about how TFL coverage interacts with VA health care and the Affordable Care Act. Download the fact sheet at: [www.tricare.mil/~media/Files/TRICARE/Publications/FactSheets/TFL\\_FS.ashx](http://www.tricare.mil/~media/Files/TRICARE/Publications/FactSheets/TFL_FS.ashx). (*Source: Tricare Communications*)

**How to Find Support, Heal After Disasters:** Exposure to natural disasters — hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, fires — and manmade disasters — shootings, workplace violence and war — may place a tremendous burden on our resilience, self-esteem and ability to survive a disaster. Psychology provides us with an understanding of how we might cope with some of these feelings. For example, it's normal to experience a wide range of emotional, behavioral and psychological reactions to trauma. Feelings of helplessness, anger, fear and sadness are expected, and allowing yourself to experience these feelings is necessary for healing. Over time, these feelings will begin to fade, but keep in mind grieving is a process that may take months or a year, or more, to work through. It isn't something that can be rushed. However, there are things you and your loved ones can do to encourage healing:

**Connect with others.** It's important to seek comfort and support during this tough time. Check in with family members and friends to let them know you're OK — expressing your feelings to those close to you can facilitate your recovery and strengthen your resilience. Take advantage of a support or activity group — they help cultivate a sense of belonging. Connecting with others reaffirms that we're not alone in our struggles.

**Think and act positively.** No doubt disasters and negative experiences are stressful and can leave us feeling pretty low. But, research suggests that even negative and painful experiences can lead to positive change. It's referred to as post-traumatic growth or more commonly, the “silver lining” in a bad situation. The intent of focusing on post-traumatic growth isn't to minimize the impact of the disaster or emotional pain from it, but to refocus our attention to look for positive outcomes.

We all have strengths and coping skills to call on in difficult times — it helps to remind ourselves of this. One way to reclaim your sense of power or feel stronger is by helping others — try providing comfort to someone else or volunteering your time.

**Stay informed.** Lack of knowledge and information leads to more anxiety followed by a greater sense of helplessness and increased frustration. Although we cannot solve everything or improve things instantly, staying informed and gathering information about an event helps us cope and strengthens our resilience. However, protect yourself and your loved ones from unnecessary and excessive exposure to news about the trauma and reminders of the event.

**Establish some normalcy.** Getting back to our normal routine as much as possible or establishing a “new normal” helps to minimize traumatic stress, anxiety and hopelessness. It gives us a sense of control, even when faced with great odds. To the extent possible, keep occupied with regular activities — read, watch a movie, cook or play with your kids —so you're not dedicating all your energy and attention to the traumatic event. Everyone has different needs and ways of coping. It's important to recognize that, although we cannot control what happened, we can control our response. Keep these tips in mind to help minimize the impact of a traumatic event on your emotional and psychological health. (*Source: Defense Centers of Excellence*)

**A Look at Social Security:** Whether you are getting close to retirement or planning for the future, estimate your Social Security benefits at [www.ssa.gov/estimator/](http://www.ssa.gov/estimator/). The estimator gives you an idea of what your monthly Social Security benefits would be based on your current record of Social Security earnings. Your actual benefit amount cannot be determined until you apply for benefits. As you plan for your retirement, keep in mind that you will need 70-90 percent of your pre-retirement earnings to maintain your standard of living when you stop working. Social Security benefits will only make up a part of this percentage and should be supplemented by a pension, savings, and/or investments. Learn [10 Ways to Prepare for Retirement](#) on the U.S. Department of Labor website. (Source: Military.com Veterans Report)

**Are You a Caregiver for a Veteran? - Free Online Workshop:** A free online workshop that's designed for family Caregivers of Veterans. It helps them learn a variety of skills and how to care for Veterans with PTSD and other serious illnesses. This program has been recognized for its ability to reduce Caregiver stress. It's called Building Better Caregivers™ and it's a free six-week online workshop for family caregivers of Veterans.

If you are taking care of a Veteran, this workshop will help you learn a variety of skills like time and stress management, healthy eating, exercise and dealing with difficult emotions. Participants log on two to three times each week to review lessons, exchange ideas with other caregivers and access tools to make care giving easier. The program, developed at Stanford University, has been recognized for its ability to reduce caregiver stress, depression and increase their overall well-being. This comprehensive online workshop addresses specific needs of caregivers who care for Veterans with dementia, memory problems, traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress disorder, or any other serious injury or illness. "VA is committed to providing Caregivers with the support they need."

**How does it work?** It's a six-week, highly-interactive, online small-group workshop where 20-25 family caregivers complete the online workshop together. It's facilitated by two trained moderators; one or both of whom also are caregivers. Participation may be at two to three times during each week, for a total of two hours a week for six-weeks. 4

VA and the National Council on Aging are making this program available through an innovative partnership to provide self-management support for family caregivers.

"VA is committed to providing caregivers with the support they need to help those who live with scars borne in battle in defense of our nation's freedom," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Eric K. Shinseki. "We are especially pleased to be working with the National Council on Aging which has worked with multiple generations of Veterans and is uniquely qualified to provide this support to caregivers of Veterans from all eras."

**How Do I Sign Up?** Caregivers of Veterans interested in participating in Building Better Caregivers™ should contact a local Caregiver Support Coordinator. There is one designated Caregiver Support Coordinator at every VA Medical Center who can provide additional information and referral to the program. You can locate your Caregiver Support Coordinator by visiting [www.caregiver.va.gov](http://www.caregiver.va.gov) and entering your ZIP code in the ZIP code finder. (Source <http://www.va.gov/health/>)

**Budget-minded Travelers Take Flight With 'Space-A':** Military-owned or -contracted aircraft fly to more places than many people realize, even to areas without U.S. military installations. When all mission-related passengers and cargo are accommodated, empty seats are offered up to eligible passengers on a space-available basis. Last year, almost 215,000 service members, military family members and retirees took advantage of these "Space-A" flights all over the world. The travelers didn't require high-placed contacts or insider information -- just a basic understanding of how the system works.

In general, active-duty members and retirees and their families can fly Space-A between Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard facilities around the world. Flights also are available from the Seattle-Tacoma and Baltimore-Washington international airports.

Seats are offered to Space-A passengers only after all official-duty passengers and cargo have been accommodated. (Continued on next page)

Once those requirements are met, empty seats are offered to any qualified Space-A traveler. They may get a standard seat on a contracted commercial aircraft. But in other cases, it might be a backward-facing seat on a C-5 Galaxy aircraft or a jump seat on a C-130 Hercules cargo plane or KC-135 Stratotanker.

Passengers with a sense of adventure willing to try Space-A travel can sign up at the terminal they plan to fly from in person, online or by email or phone and stay on the roster for up to 60 days or, if applicable, until their military leave expires. It's possible to sign up for more than one destination and at more than one terminal to improve the chances of getting a seat. When passengers register, they get assigned to a passenger category that designates their place in "line" for a seat.

Space-A may be the one instance in which rank doesn't have its privilege. Seats are offered on a first-come, first-served basis, depending on a Space-A passenger's travel category and date and time they registered. First priority.

Category 1, goes to active-duty service members and their accompanying family members on unfunded emergency leave.

Category 2 is assigned to those on environmental morale leave.

Category 3 is for members and their families on ordinary leave or in a house-hunting status in conjunction with a permanent-change-of-station move.

Category 4 goes to unaccompanied active-duty family members on environmental and morale leave.

Category 5 is assigned to unaccompanied family members and service members on permissive temporary duty.

Category 6 goes to military retirees, reservists, National Guard members and ROTC cadets.

AMC, which enforces the policies for the Space-A program, spells out the details of Space-A travel on its website. The site, including a downloadable Space-A handbook, is updated regularly.

The command's Facebook page provides travelers the most current information possible to help them plan better than ever before and to answer any questions they might have. The site offers 72-hour flight schedules that are updated daily. One of its newest features is a Space A "roll call report." It provides information about seats provided to Space-A passengers within the previous 24 hours, including the latest date and time they signed up and which travel category they had been assigned. AMC introduced the feature as part of its efforts to give travelers more predictability. Passengers are cautioned to be prepared to buy a return flight on a commercial aircraft, as well as meals and lodging, if they find themselves unable to secure a Space-A flight home.

Related Sites: Air Mobility Command Space-A Page <http://www.amc.af.mil/amctravel/index.asp>

*(Source: American Forces Press Service)*

**Volunteers Needed!!!** Volunteering is a rewarding experience. There are many programs and activities that could not exist within our military community were it not for the volunteers doing the work to make things happen.

**Be a Volunteer at the RAO** If you have been looking for a fun, creative and rewarding way to stay involved in the McChord Military Retiree community, then volunteering is the answer. At the McChord Retiree Activities Office, you can join our volunteer staff. Hands on training will be provided and you will work with a great team of volunteers who are military retirees and spouses providing their time, skills, talents and wisdom towards helping the military community. You can contact us at 253-982-3214