

# Getting Started with Whole Health



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

VA wants you to live your best possible life through exploring your Whole Health. This guide will help you find resources on your “Live Whole Health” journey.

Choose VA

## What is Whole Health?

Whole Health is VA's cutting-edge approach to care that supports and empowers you to take charge of your health and well-being. Whole Health centers around what matters to you, not what is the matter with you. This means your health team will get to know you as a person before working with you to develop a personalized health plan based on your values, needs and goals. You are a critical member of your health care team and we want to partner with you.

## What Whole Health services are available to me?

### Whole Health Courses

There are currently two Whole Health courses designed for and led by Veterans.

- 1. Introduction to Whole Health:** A 1 to 2-hour course for all Veterans and spouses. Any Veteran can attend regardless of their discharge status from the military or enrollment in VA Healthcare. All Veterans and spouses are invited to attend! You will be given the Personal Health Inventory to start you on your journey.

The Personal Health Inventory helps you explore what matters to you and self-care areas of your personal life where you are and want to be in the future. Veteran and VA Staff will help you create goals to develop your very own Personal Health Plan. VA uses your Personal Health Inventory responses to find the combination of clinical and well-being services you need to achieve your goals. You can learn more about Personal Inventory at: [https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/docs/10-773\\_PHI\\_May2020.pdf](https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/docs/10-773_PHI_May2020.pdf).

- 2. Taking Charge of My Life and Health:** More in-depth discovery of what matters to you and providing team support from Veteran peers and staff to help you live the best version of you; helping you explore well-being skills, complete your Personal Health Inventory, and create your Personal Health Plan. Online resources are available to help run, manage, and participate in these courses.

## Where can I find the Whole Health Courses?

To find Whole Health Courses, contact your nearest VA Medical Center (<https://www.va.gov/find-locations>) and ask to speak to Whole Health, Veteran or Patient Educators.

## HOW DO I GET STARTED WITH WHOLE HEALTH?

There are several ways to get started:

- You can visit the webpage at <https://www.va.gov/wholehealth>.
- Start a conversation with your health team or peer support specialists.
- Learn about Whole Health services from other Veterans through the Introduction to Whole Health by downloading the Whole Health App on your smartphone at <https://mobile.va.gov/app/live-whole-health>.



## DO I NEED TO BE ENROLLED IN VA HEALTH CARE TO ACCESS WHOLE HEALTH?

Veterans do not need to be enrolled in VA Health Care to attend the Introduction to Whole Health Classes; however, if you choose to pursue Whole Health, you will need to enroll. For more information about enrolling in VA, visit [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov).



## What services/treatments does Whole Health offer?

If you are interested in learning more about these VA-approved Whole Health and Complementary & Integrative Health Approaches as a part of your care, contact your primary care provider. They may also be available virtually via telehealth.

- **Whole Health Coaching** - Coaches work with Veterans one-on-one, in group settings, or virtually to empower the Veteran to develop and achieve self-determined goals related to health and wellness. Coaches support Veterans in mobilizing internal strengths and external resources, and in developing self-management strategies for making sustainable, healthy lifestyle, behavior changes. As partners and facilitators, while working closely with the Veteran's Patient Aligned Care Team (PACT) and/or other health care professionals, coaches support Veterans in achieving their health goals and behavioral goals.
- **Acupuncture** - is an approach to health care that may be used alone or in conjunction with other East Asian Modalities, where thin needles are inserted into the body at different acupuncture points.
- **Biofeedback** - is a process that uses your body's own signals like heart rate and body temperature to bring about healthy change. It can improve health issues that are caused or worsened by stress. Using a two-step process, biofeedback can help you relax and reduce your stress.
- **Clinical Hypnosis** - is the process of deliberately triggering a trance state and then utilizing that state to encourage helpful cognitive, emotional, or physical healing responses. A trance is a natural biological state of inner absorption, concentration and focused attention.
- **Chiropractic Care** - diagnosis and management of musculoskeletal problems using treatment options including manual spinal adjustments, other joint and soft-tissue therapies, exercise and lifestyle advice.
- **Massage Therapy** - is the manipulation of the soft tissues of the human body for therapeutic purposes. Currently in VA, massage therapy is recommended primarily for pain conditions for which there is an evidence base.
- **Meditation** - is a practice or technique, often arising from a contemplative tradition, that primarily focuses on training attention regulation processes, with the intent of cultivating general mental well-being and/or specific capacities such as concentration, compassion or insight.
- **Guided Imagery** - involves using a series of multi-sensory images designed to trigger specific changes in physiology, emotions, or mental state for the purpose of increasing healing response or unconscious changes. Guided Imagery often begins with a series of relaxation techniques, but that is not a requirement.
- **Tai Chi** - is a mind-body exercise combining slow-flowing intentional movements with breathing, awareness and visualization. Rooted in the Asian traditions of martial arts, Chinese medicine and philosophy, Tai Chi enhances relaxation, vitality, focus, posture, balance, strength, flexibility, and mood.
- **Qigong** - is an ancient Chinese healing art, older than, and like tai chi, with a focus of cultivating the body's vital energy or qi. It involves the coordination of the breath, posture, awareness, visualization and focused movements. Qigong may be a stationary or moving meditation.
- **Yoga** - is a mind and body practice with origins in ancient Indian philosophy. The various styles of yoga typically combine physical postures, breathing techniques, and meditation or relaxation.

### Helpful links

Whole Health

<https://www.va.gov/wholehealth>

#LiveWholeHealth Self-Care Series

<https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/category/health/livewholehealth>

VA Medical Center Locator

<https://www.va.gov/find-locations>