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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

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The Hidden Burden of Caregiving

VA Reach – While caregivers play an important role in helping Veterans through difficult times, their own well-being deserves equal attention. Caring for yourself helps ensure you can continue showing up for those who depend on you.

Caregivers may experience stress, anxiety, and even secondary trauma while helping a loved one navigate difficult circumstances, leading to burnout, a common and understandable response to carrying a significant emotional load. Common warning signs include:

- Feeling exhausted, even after getting adequate rest
- Withdrawing from friends and family
- Becoming easily frustrated or irritable
- Losing interest in hobbies and activities once enjoyed
- Feeling emotionally drained or overwhelmed

Self-care is essential, and taking care of yourself is one of the most important ways you can continue caring for the Veteran you love. The VA Caregiver Support Program offers mentoring, training, respite care, and other resources. Additionally, Vet Centers provide free, confidential counseling services and the Veterans Crisis Line is available 24/7.

Taking care of yourself isn't separate from caring for a Veteran. It's part of it.

Start Your Wellness Journey Today



National Institute of Health – Healthy living isn't about following a one-size-fits-all plan. Each person's "healthiest self" is unique, shaped by factors such as physical health, emotional well-being, relationships and daily habits.

Your Healthiest Self: Wellness Toolkits provide practical, evidence-based guidance to help individuals improve different aspects of their health and well-being. Rather than focusing on a single area, the toolkits encourage a balanced approach to living healthier, happier lives:

- **Your Body –** Build healthy habits for energy, sleep, nutrition, and stress management.
- **Your Feelings –** Manage stress, build resilience, and support emotional wellness.
- **Your Relationships –** Strengthen connections that support mental and physical health.
- **Your Surroundings –** Create a safer, healthier environment at home and beyond.
- **Your Disease Defense –** Take preventive steps to protect your long-term health.

Whether your goal is reducing stress, becoming more active, improving relationships, or protecting your health, there are resources available to support your journey.

Healthy living isn't about perfection, it's about making consistent choices that help you become your healthiest self.

TRICARE Open Season Is Coming

TRICARE – TRICARE Open Season runs **November 9 - December 8, 2026**, giving eligible beneficiaries the opportunity to review, enroll in, or change their health plan coverage for 2027. **Mark your calendar!**

If you're enrolled in or eligible for TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Select, Open Season is the perfect opportunity to evaluate your current coverage, compare plan options, and make sure your family's health care benefits align with your needs and budget for the coming year.*

Eligible beneficiaries can:

- **Keep their current plan** (no action required)
- **Enroll in a TRICARE plan** if not currently enrolled
- **Switch between eligible plans**
- **Change between individual and family coverage**

*Open Season does **not** apply to active-duty service members.

Review your options early and be prepared before Open Season begins on November 9. **A few minutes today can help ensure the right coverage for you and your family in 2027.**

New How-To Videos Now Available for Patients

We're excited to announce a new series of **How-To videos** designed to help patients navigate services and resources with greater ease. These short, easy-to-follow videos provide step-by-step guidance on **using your Oxygen or Ventilator system**, making it simpler to access the information and support you need.

Visit the Mid-Cities Medical website to explore the video library and learn more.



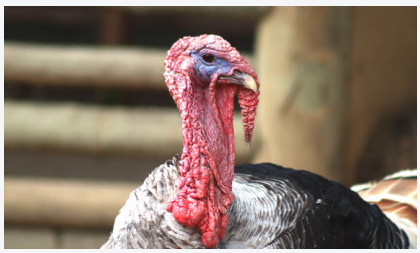
Oxygen Videos

- Getting Started with Liquid Oxygen
- Getting Started with O2 in Metal Tanks
- HomeFill® (Self-Fill) System by Invacare
- iFill® Personal Oxygen System by DeVilbiss
- Millennium M10 Home Oxygen System
- UltraFill Home Oxygen System

Ventilator Videos

- ResMed Astral™ Ventilator
- Trilogy Evo Ventilator

Holiday Calendar



NOVEMBER

- 1st Native American Heritage Month
- 1st Daylight Saving Time – "Fall Back" One Hour
- 3rd Election Day (TX)
- 10th U.S. Marine Corps Birthday
- 11th Veterans Day – **OFFICE CLOSED**
- 26th & 27th Thanksgiving – **OFFICE CLOSED**

1st Monday runs 11-02-26

**Mercedes only*
1st Monday runs 11-02-26
1st Tuesday runs 11-03-26

**Redlands only*
3rd Wednesday runs 11-18-26
3rd Thursday runs 11-19-26



DECEMBER

- 7th Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day
- 13th National Guard Birthday
- 21st Winter Solstice
- 24th Christmas Eve
- 25th Christmas Day – **OFFICE CLOSED**
- 26th Kwanzaa
- 31st New Year's Eve

1st Monday runs 12-07-26

**Mercedes only*
2nd Tuesday runs 12-01-26
1st Monday runs 12-07-26
1st Tuesday runs 12-08-26

**Redlands only*
3rd Wednesday runs 12-16-26
3rd Thursday runs 12-17-26

Important Health Contact Numbers

EMERGENCY — **DIAL 9-1-1**

EMERGENCY SITUATION — **DIAL 7-1-1**

Use if you have a TTY and cannot obtain emergency services.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS — **DIAL 2-1-1**

NON-EMERGENCY OR DOWN EQUIPMENT

Phone: TEXAS (888) 450-6676
Phone: AZ & CA (833) 986-4267

YOU CAN QUIT SMOKING

Phone: (800) QUIT-NOW
Website: www.SmokeFree.gov
www.BeTobaccoFree.gov

HOW TO STAY SAFE WHILE USING OXYGEN IN THE HOME

VETERANS CRISIS LINE — **DIAL 9-8-8**

Email: ConfidentialChat@VeteransCrisisLine.net

VA CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM

Phone: (855) 260-3274
Website: www.caregiver.va.gov

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Website: https://tinyurl.com/52uvkwu9

REPORT ABUSE. BREAK THE SILENCE.

Phone: (800) 252-5400

SPEAK-UP CAMPAIGN

Website: https://tinyurl.com/5n68nt29

Rights patients have if they feel they are being discriminated

Potato Casserole

Prep Time: 15 mins
Cook Time: 1 hr 45 mins
Total Time: 2 hrs
Servings: 8

Ingredients

- 1 (10.5 oz.) can condensed cream of chicken soup
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1/2 cup 4% small curd cottage cheese
- 4 ounces cream cheese, cubed and softened
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 1 1/2 tsps. kosher salt
- 1 tsp. onion powder
- 1 1/2 tbsps. fresh thyme leaves, plus more for garnish
- 1/2 tsp. freshly ground black pepper
- 2 pounds Yukon Gold potatoes (about 6), scrubbed and sliced into 1/8-inch thick slices
- 2 cups shredded Cheddar cheese, divided
- 30 round buttery crackers, crushed (such as Ritz®)
- 2 tbsps. unsalted butter, melted

Directions

Step 1 – Preheat oven to 350°F. Heat cream of chicken soup, heavy whipping cream, cottage cheese, cream cheese, sour cream, salt, garlic powder and onion powder in a saucepan over medium; stir until smooth. Stir in thyme and pepper, add potatoes and coat evenly.

Step 3 – Layer half the potatoes in a 9x13-inch baking dish; sprinkle with 1 cup cheese. Top with remaining potatoes.

Step 4 – Mix crackers, butter, and remaining 1 cup cheese until evenly coated; sprinkle over potatoes. Cover with foil and place on a rimmed baking sheet.

Step 5 – Bake 1 hour 40 minutes, removing foil after 1 hour 10 minutes. Let rest 15 minutes before serving; garnish with thyme.

Word Search

Blitzen
carrots
Comet
cookies
Cupid
Dancer
Dasher
decorations
Donner
elf
igloo
lights
Mrs. Claus
North Pole
Prancer
reindeer
Rudolph
Santa
snow
snowball
snowflake
snowman
Vixen

W	X	D	U	D	I	R	D	M	N	H	R	S	C	Z	R	S	N	O	W	J	F	P	F
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M	U	E	J	N	K	S	F	I	H	S	X	T	D	T	C	C	E	A	Y	E	I	A	U
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V	F	O	F	E	R	O	G	I	S	C	I	E	N	U	L	O	H	K	E	J	B	R	C
T	G	C	N	O	B	A	I	N	M	R	F	S	R	G	S	A	W	D	V	Q	P	X	O
U	T	Q	C	V	Q	W	O	T	Q	B	S	T	O	R	R	A	C	T	F	E	N	B	Q
B	A	R	O	H	D	W	Q	E	A	C	E	O	T	O	N	N	V	J	D	I	M	D	O
H	Q	Q	U	Z	B	O	L	A	V	R	C	T	S	T	E	T	D	O	R	V	Y	M	X
K	U	M	B	A	G	O	N	Y	K	N	O	N	L	Z	T	Z	S	N	O	H	P	U	A
V	X	Q	L	C	P	Z	R	N	S	I	N	C	T	B	T	O	F	T	O	M	E	G	S
D	Y	L	Y	H	C	V	K	X	E	W	N	I	E	E	V	O	O	P	H	R	Q	D	A
S	L	C	T	N	F	L	K	C	A	R	L	U	O	D	I	L	H	A	Y	G	Q	E	N
K	N	R	V	K	B	W	W	P	Y	B	N	R	E	C	X	J	U	D	F	U	I	V	T
G	O	O	O	D	S	P	Q	E	U	H	A	A	A	P	E	S	J	U	I	Z	Y	L	A
N	J	I	W	O	I	Y	T	X	Z	F	M	W	Q	L	N	F	H	T	A	S	Z	V	C
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