



Being an active
partner in your care

www.veteransmates.net.au



STAYING HEALTHY AT HOME

When we take care of ourselves we get more out of life. Keeping healthy habits can help you to stay active and independent. Stay in touch with friends and family, keep your brain and body active, eat a healthy diet and have your medicines reviewed.

This brochure guides you through the ways to help yourself and introduces you to the many services and supports that are available through DVA.

These tips are for everyone. This includes those living with memory and thinking problems, or those caring for a family member or a friend. The tips can help you or a loved one to live well at home for longer.

Plan to be active and move more

The more you move the better you feel. Being active has many benefits for your mind and body. It:

- improves muscle strength and balance
- improves thinking and memory
- makes you feel good about yourself and helps you to sleep better
- helps you to maintain a healthy body weight and keeps your heart healthy
- helps prevent and treat depression and anxiety.

How can I be more active?

- Talk to your GP about exercises that are suitable for you. Your GP can refer you to a physiotherapist or exercise physiologist who can work with you to improve your strength, balance, mobility and endurance, at a pace that suits you.
- Even a small amount of exercise each day can help. Start slowly and gradually increase the amount you do each day. If you can, build up to at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days.

- Find an activity that you enjoy like gardening or walking, or group activities such as aqua aerobics, yoga or tai chi. Some of these may be available through your local community centre.

Tip: break the exercise into 10 minute blocks throughout the day if you prefer.

✔ Keep your home comfortable, safe and well-functioning

Having your home set up so that it is safe and comfortable will make life easier. Just a few small changes can make a big difference. For those living with memory and thinking problems, aids such as orientation clocks and signs, medication timers, and home safety products, can help with daily activities and are funded by DVA.

How do I make my home safer and more comfortable?

- Talk to your GP about whether you might be eligible for DVA-funded services, appliances and modifications for making your home safer.
- If you or someone you are caring for has memory impairment, a GP can arrange for an occupational therapist to visit your home and suggest aids that can help support independence in daily activities.

DVA funds health services for all Gold Card holders (and for White Card holders for an accepted war or service caused injury or disease).

These include services provided by an:

- occupational therapist
- physiotherapist
- exercise physiologist and
- dietitian.

✓ Stay in touch with your friends and family

Keeping socially connected helps to keep your brain active. It has also been shown to benefit both mental and emotional well-being.

How do I stay socially connected?

- Do the things you enjoy doing and try something new. Keep connected by seeing your family and friends, or by joining a sporting group, book club, walking group or social group.
- Contact your local community centre to see whether they have something that interests you.



✓ Have your medicines reviewed

Some medicines can affect your thinking and memory. It is a good idea to ask your GP to review your medicines every six months to make sure you are gaining the most benefit from them.

How do I have my medicines reviewed?

- Ask your GP about having your medicines reviewed and let them know if you think any of your medicines are causing you to feel muddled, forgetful or sleepy during the day.
- Your GP might suggest a Home Medicines Review:
 - In this free service a pharmacist comes to your home to review your medicines with you. Together with your pharmacist and GP, you can work out if any of your medicines need to change.
 - The pharmacist can also see if you would benefit from aids, such as a Dose Administration Aid provided free to eligible DVA patients, that can help you to better manage your medicines. Your GP will need to write a prescription for you to access this service.

Tip: Before visiting your GP, write down your questions and take them with you.

Maintain your overall well-being

A few more things you can do to maintain your overall health and well-being are:

- eating a well-balanced diet that includes lots of vegetables, fruit, legumes, grains and cereals, nuts and olive oil
- keeping your brain active by learning new things that challenge you or are out of your comfort zone
- having good sleep habits
- seeking help early if you feel depressed or anxious.

How do I maintain my overall well-being?

 For advice and tips on eating a healthy balanced diet, go to: www.eatforhealth.gov.au. If you would like advice about your diet or have lost interest in eating, talk to your GP about seeing a DVA-funded dietitian, who can give practical help for eating well.

 If you are having trouble sleeping, talk to your GP about keeping good sleep habits. They can refer you to

a psychologist to help you manage your sleep.

 If you think you or a loved one might be depressed, talk to your GP or contact *Open Arms - Veterans and Families Counselling* (previously known as *Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (MVCS)*), available 24/7 for DVA patients and their families by phoning 1800 011 046 or at: www.openarms.gov.au/

Do you care for a family member or a friend?

Look after your own health by using the tips in this brochure. Gold and White Card holders (whether they are carers or the person you are caring for) may be eligible to receive respite care through the *Veterans' Home Care (VHC)* program. To arrange for an assessment to access respite care, contact *DVA Veterans' Home Care* by phoning 1300 550 450 or at: www.dva.gov.au/providers/provider-programmes/veterans-home-care

Several Australian and state government funded respite services are also available.

For further support contact:

- *Open Arms - Veterans and Families Counselling* (see details above).
- The National Dementia Helpline 1800 100 500 or at: www.dementia.org.au/helpline