

Home Telehealth (HT)

“Bringing Home and Health Together Through Technology”



Patient Guide

Salisbury VA Health Care System
1601 Brenner Avenue
Salisbury, NC 28144

Toll Free: 1-800-469-8262
Local: (704) 638-9000

HT office: Ext. 16644 or 16697

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Weight Management/Home Telehealth

Donna Hawthorne RN, BSN (980) 330-0879 Rebecca Veros RN, BSN (980) 585-8865

Program Support Assistant / Technology Support

ext. 16644 / ext 16697

HT Hours: Monday thru Friday 8:00AM – 4:30PM (except Federal Holidays)

Non-emergency messages may be left on HT voicemail at 1-800-469-8262 (toll free) or (704) 638-9000, ext.16644 or ext.16697. The HT Program Office is closed on weekends and federal holidays.

The **VISN 6 Nurse Triage Line** can answer non-emergency questions after hours, weekends, or federal holidays. Their number is 1-800-469-8262 (toll free) or (704) 638-9000, ext.15650.

MyHealthVet Group: If you have access to MyHealthVet email, you can send HT a non-emergency message. Our group is named 'Salisbury Home Telehealth'.



For Emergencies:

- Keep a telephone in easy reach in the event of an accident.
- Post emergency numbers on or near each phone.

Medical Emergencies / Ambulance

Fire Department
Police
VA Medical Center

Dial 911

Dial 911
Dial 911
(704) 638-9000 (Local)

Please remember HT does not take the place of your primary care provider, the emergency room, or calling **911** for emergency assistance.

Scope and Mission

The Home Telehealth (HT) program works to help educate you about your health care needs such as heart failure, high blood pressure, lung problems, and/or diabetes, etc. You are given a Care Coordinator to work with you and your current VA primary care team/provider. You will set goals with your assigned Care Coordinator focusing on your health. These goals will be reviewed at least every 3 to 6 months. It is important to keep in touch and talk with your assigned Care Coordinator at least monthly to make sure you are moving in the right direction.

You will be given equipment if you do not have it. This equipment will allow your Care Coordinator to monitor your health condition. You will complete health sessions daily. These sessions can help you learn more about your chronic condition and ways to move in the right direction and/or maintain your current health.

The Mission of HT is to provide and coordinate quality healthcare for you in your own home. Our goal is to improve your outcomes using care coordination by matching your needs to **“the right care, in the right place, at the right time”** across the VA and other areas when needed.

This program is voluntary. Please let us know at any time you feel you do not need this program or cannot meet this program’s guidelines.



HT Patient Rights

You have the right to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Privacy
- Know the names, titles, and jobs of people who give care to you
- Get information about your health, illnesses, and care in a way that you can understand
- Make decisions about your care
- Refuse any care you do not want
- Have information about your health and care kept confidential
- Be cared for in a safe setting, free from abuse or harm
- Get information about a Living Will or Advance Directives, and make your wishes known
- Be kept as comfortable as possible



Any time you feel these rights are being violated, you have the right to notify staff. You can make a complaint to any health care worker, such as a doctor, nurse, Patient Advocate, or Veteran's Experience Officer. You can make a complaint without fear of it affecting health care or benefits.

For any concerns about care and safety not addressed, you may contact The Joint Commission:

Telephone: 1-630-792-5000
Email: complaint@jointcommission.org
Address: The Joint Commission
One Renaissance Blvd,
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181

For any HT problems, follow the steps below to help us solve your problem:

- Talk with a Care Coordinator to see if problem can be solved.
- If the problem cannot be solved by talking with a Care Coordinator, contact our Lead Care Coordinator at (704) 638-9000, ext.16656.
- If you are not satisfied with the help received from the Lead Care Coordinator, contact our Telehealth Facility Coordinator, Jennifer Terndrup, at (704) 638-9000, ext. 37824.

HT Patient Responsibilities

You have the responsibility to:

- Treat the team with courtesy and respect
- Ask questions about any part of your care you do not understand
- Tell the team about any changes in your condition or how you are feeling
- Tell the team about all medicines and remedies taken, including over-the-counter or herbal products
- Tell the team about other health problems you have had in the past
- Follow the team's instructions
- Let the team know if you have any problems following instructions
- Complete patient satisfaction surveys

Be sure only you (the patient) are using HT equipment or attachments. Information received from these devices is used to make decisions concerning health care. Using other people's information will affect your treatment.



HT Frequently Asked Questions

What Will I Have to Do?

A Care Coordinator will discuss and explain use of HT equipment to you, family members, or care givers. You will listen to educational information, answer questions about your health, and send in vital signs **daily**. If you have questions or concerns about your health or vital signs, you may call your assigned Care Coordinator. You are encouraged to reach out to your assigned Care Coordinator at least **every month**. You and a Care Coordinator will create goals related to improving your health condition. These goals will be reviewed at least every 180 days while you remain in the program. You will also be asked to complete a patient satisfaction survey every 90 days.

Is There Any Charge for This Equipment?

No, there is no charge for this equipment or for being part of the HT Program. However, to remain in this program you do need to complete health sessions and send in vital signs daily. Not responding for 15 days or at least 70% in three months can cause you to be discharged from this program.

What Are Some Things I Will Learn in This Program?

Your Care Coordinator will educate you on topics related to your chronic conditions. This information may also be given to you via HT equipment or a message sent through your HT equipment. There is a list of other topics that may be covered on page 11.

What Do I Do If I Am Hospitalized or Leave Town on Vacation?

Notify our HT office as soon as possible and in advance if previously planned. If you are unable to call, a family member or caregiver may call to notify HT staff. If HT does not receive information from you for 3 consecutive days, you may receive a call from the HT staff.



What If I Am Hospitalized or Go to The Emergency Room Outside The VA?

If you are hospitalized or go to an Emergency Room outside of the VA, our program cannot promise payment. It is required that you, a family member, a caregiver, or the hospital call Salisbury VA's Community Care Service Line at (704) 638-9000, ext. 12022 within 72 hours of admission. If no one answers, leave a message with your (Veteran's) name, last four of social security number, phone number, location, and reason for admission to a hospital.

How Long Will I Be in The HT Program?

HT is a voluntary program and differs with each illness. Discharge can occur if you contact a Care Coordinator and ask for discharge from this program or when we do not receive daily responses.



Home Telehealth Guidelines

- To get the most out of the Home Telehealth Program, complete your health questions and vital signs daily
- Daily response is encouraged to keep you in the program
- If you do not respond for 15 days, you can be discharged from the program
- If you respond less than 70% in three months, you can be discharged from the program
- Talk with your Care Coordinator at least every month

Guidelines

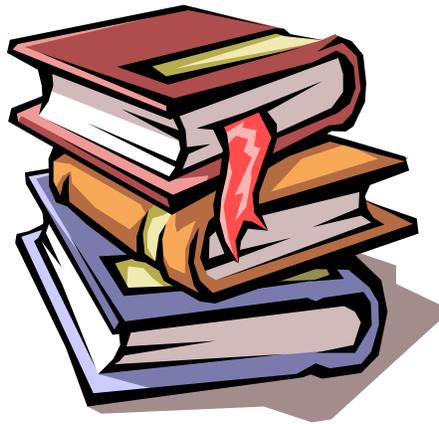


When to Call Your Care Coordinator

- If you have questions about your health
- If you will be going on vacation for more than three days
- If you are having equipment problems
- If you are hospitalized
- If you are moving
- If you are no longer interested in the Home Telehealth Program

Patient Health Education Topics

- Definitions and causes of your condition
- Symptoms specific to your condition
- Commonly prescribed medicines and treatments
- Tips for managing your medicines
- Diet instructions specific to your condition
- Healthy eating tips
- Exercise and daily activities
- Emotional health
- Family and friends
- Home safety
- VA and community resources
- If you are interested in other topics, contact your HT Care Coordinator



Basic Equipment Do's

DO:

- Read and understand all instructions provided with the technology
- Place the unit on a stable, flat surface capable of supporting the weight
- Keep the OPERATION INSTRUCTIONS close to the unit and follow the directions of your Care Coordinator
- Safeguard the equipment from damage. Keep units away from excessive heat, moisture, or extreme cold
- Clean the unit periodically as recommended in the instructions
- Plug only into electrical outlets that are grounded
- Bundle wires and stow them where they are not easily tripped over or run over by a wheelchair
- CALL HT program for any equipment problems at 1-800-469-8262 (toll free) or (704) 638-9000, ext.16644 or 16697



Basic Equipment Don'ts

DON'T:

- Place the unit in a kitchen area close to grease and fire
- Allow children or others to play with or use the equipment
- Place the unit around pets - they may chew or pull on cords
- Place near water
- Overload wall circuits and extension cords
- Spill liquid on a unit
- Push objects through any slots on a unit
- Try to disassemble a unit
- Place lighted candles, cigarettes, or cigars on a device
- Place telehealth units on a sofa, couch, bed or other soft surface that might clog ventilation slots
- Eat or drink while using the equipment or set beverages near equipment
- Use during electrical storms



Cleaning Do's and Don'ts for Telehealth Devices

Care and cleaning of HT equipment should be the same as most electronic/computer equipment.

DO:

- Use a soft, lint-free cloth to clean casings, cords, functions keys, or controls.
- Use a dry, soft, lint-free cloth to remove smudges from any screens and camera lens.
- Keep the lens cap on or closed when not in use for units with cameras.



DON'T:

- Insert anything into holes or vents
- Allow moisture to enter the equipment
- Use an abrasive or any alcohol-based solution to clean the equipment
- Spray any solution directly on the unit
- Use alcohol, benzene, thinner or other solvents, or harsh chemicals to clean the unit
- Use household cleaning agents

Advance Directives: Questions and Answers

What Patients Need to Know About Advance Directives and How to Complete Them

Who Should Make Your Health Care Decisions?

You should continue to make your own decisions for as long as you are capable. Your doctors will tell you what choices you have for treatment and explain the risks and benefits of each choice. Then, you can decide what care you want. Advance directives *only take effect* when you become incapable of understanding, making, or communicating choices.

What Is an Advance Directive?

An advance directive is a document stating how you want to be treated if you are dying and will not recover, and you are unable to say how you want to be treated because of coma or other conditions. This is called a “Living Will”. Another type of advance directive is a written statement in which you name someone who can make treatment choices for you if you become unable to do so yourself. This type of advance directive is called a “Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care.”

What Is a Living Will?

A Living Will is one kind of advance directive. It is a written statement to your doctors describing the kind of health care you want if you are terminally ill and unable to let people know your wishes. Living Wills are generally intended to stop the use of mechanical life support when you have no hope of recovery and are only being kept alive with tubes and machines.

How Do You Make a Living Will?

A VA Social Worker can help you with the Living Will form. You and two witnesses *who are not directly involved in your care* must sign it. One of the witnesses must not be a relative or have any right to your estate, nor may they be directly responsible to pay for your care.



Taking Medicines Safely

- Keep a record of problems you have with your medicines and tell your Primary Care Provider and/or HT Care Coordinator about them.
- Do not take other medicines (prescription, herbal, or over-the counter) unless you tell a Care Coordinator or your Provider first.
- Check each bottle of medicine when you receive it to be sure it has your name on it and it is the right medicine for you.
- Keep medicines in their **original bottles** and keep caps lightly closed.
- Keep medicines out of the reach of children.
- Do not change or stop taking medicines because you feel better unless you are told to by your Provider.
- Properly dispose of medicines older than one year. Most medicines lose their potency and do not work well past one year.
- Turn on a light before you take medicines at night to make sure you are taking the right medicine
- Re-check labels each time you take your medicine.
- Keep all medicines out of extreme heat, light, and humidity.
- Do not mix your medicine and alcohol without your doctor's approval. Some drugs react badly with alcohol.
- If you accidentally take too many or the wrong medicines, call poison control center to see what you should do.
- If you start to have reactions, notify your Primary Care Provider and/or Care Coordinator.
- For emergency drug reactions, like shortness of breath – call 911.

North Carolina Poison Center: 1 (800) 222-1222



Infection Control

The key to preventing infection is very simple. We have provided a few tips for you.

Wash Your Hands Often

Washing your hands often is the best way to stop the spread of germs. You should always wash your hands before, during, and after preparing food, using the bathroom, changing diapers, and after handling animal waste.

Routinely Clean and Disinfect Surfaces Often

Cleaning areas where germs are likely to be is very important. Kitchens and bathrooms are some areas that should be cleaned daily.

Handle and Prepare Food Safely

Wash your hands, kitchen surfaces, and utensils while preparing food. Buy and refrigerate perishable foods quickly. Cook meat until the juices run clear. Don't eat raw eggs. Keep cold foods and hot foods separate. Don't leave leftovers out longer than 2 hours.

Get Your Shots

Make sure all members of your family get the right vaccines at the right time. Keep immunization records for your whole family.

Use Antibiotics Properly

Taking unnecessary antibiotics can be harmful to your health. When antibiotics are misused they can cause bacteria to grow that may become resistant to your treatment. Use antibiotics exactly as your provider has prescribed them.

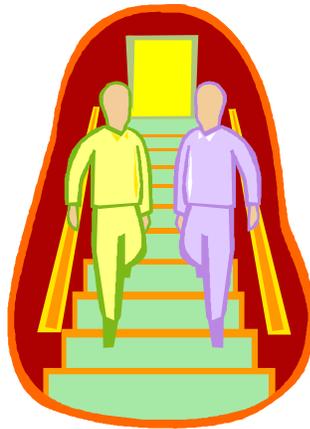
Practice Animal Safety

Keep your pets healthy by following your veterinarian's suggestions. Clean pet boxes daily.



Stair Safety

- Handrails should be sturdy and fastened securely along stairways. They should run the entire length of the stairs.
- Edges of steps should be easy to see. Contrast tape can be used to mark edges of indoor stairs. Outdoor stairs should have edges painted white to see them better at night.
- Do not store anything on stairs.
- Try to avoid wearing only socks, smooth-soled shoes, or slippers.



Electrical Safety

- Do not use extension cords for household electrical appliances. If you must use an extension cord, use one with sufficient power. Place it on the floor against a wall where people will not trip over it.
- Do not use electrical devices with frayed or cracked cords.
- Electrical equipment needs to be properly grounded and connected directly to wall outlets - especially medical equipment.
- Notify your power company if you have an electrically-dependent medical device, or are otherwise dependent on power for health reasons.
- Many electrical devices have back-up systems. Make sure you stay familiar with their use.

Fire Safety

Call 911 for an Emergency

- Store gasoline and kerosene only in containers approved for their storage. Do not store these containers inside the house.
- Keep things that could burn or explode away from the furnace and water heater.
- Have a smoke detector installed on every floor of your house.
- Check the functioning of your smoke detectors at least twice a year. Make it a habit to check your smoke detectors when you reset your clocks in the spring and fall.
- Make sure heaters are placed where they cannot be tipped over. They should be at least 3 feet from any materials that could burn, such as curtains, rugs, or people.
- Buy only heaters with an automatic turn-off-if-tipped-over feature.
- Follow the manufacturer's instructions for safe installation, operation, and maintenance of space heaters.
- Have at least one working fire extinguisher in your home and know how to use it.
- Have an emergency exit plan in case of fire or other emergency.
- NEVER SMOKE IN BED



Oxygen Safety

Remember these tips if using oxygen at home:

- Never smoke while oxygen is on - this includes you, your family, and visitors.
- Don't wear your oxygen around open fires.
- Don't have open flames or lighted candles in the home when using oxygen.

What Do I Do in the Event of a Natural Disaster?

- Listen for weather updates and stay informed.
- Keep a portable radio and flashlight on hand with fresh batteries.
- Listen to **local public radio station** for information, especially if phone lines are not working.
- Keep canned food on hand.
- Store drinking water in clean containers.
- Protect your windows with boards, tape, or shutters.
- Follow all evacuation orders.
- Take your Telehealth equipment with you, if possible.
- Contact your Care Coordinator as soon as you are out of immediate danger to report your location and health status.

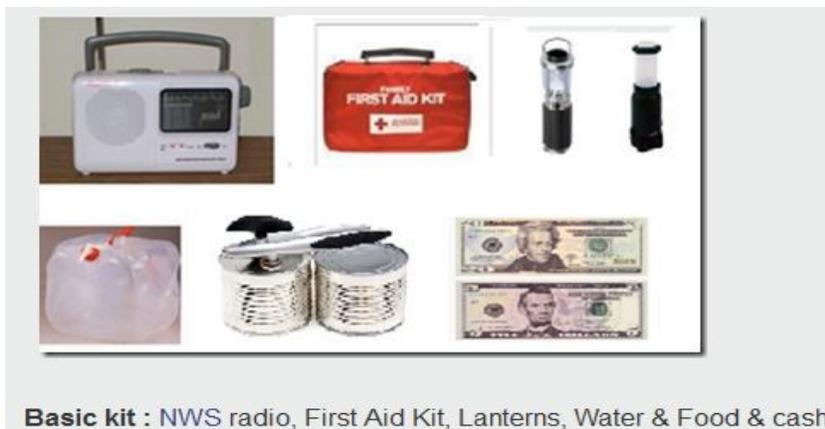


General Emergency Supply Kit

- Battery-powered radio, flashlights, batteries
- Whistle
- First aid kit
- Extra set of keys
- Extra pair of glasses
- Copies of documents: medical cards, passport, bank account numbers, insurance policies, birth and marriage certificates, and names, addresses, and phone numbers of doctors
- Water -1 gallon per person per day
- Food (canned, no-cook, packaged snacks) and vitamins
- Manual can opener
- Cash and credit cards
- Change of clothing, rain gear, and sturdy shoes
- Blankets or sleeping bags
- Fire extinguisher
- Large plastic bags for trash, waste, and water protection
- Toilet paper and paper towels
- Personal items
- Cell phone and charger



If you have a pet include: bowl, food, pet medicines, travel cage/kennel, leash, blanket, plastic bags, paper towels, immunization records, pet medical history, and a favorite toy.



Tornado Safety Tips

Terms to Know:

Tornado Watch: Tornado conditions are a real possibility for any area. Stay alert for these danger signs: Severe thunderstorms with strong, gusty winds or loud roaring noise

Tornado Warning: Tornado has been sighted and may hit your area shortly

Protect Yourself - Seek Shelter Immediately!

At Home: Go to rooms nearest center of house, without windows

In Your Car: **STOP!!** Get out and lie flat in a low area, cover your head

Do Not stay in mobile homes (Seek shelter elsewhere)

Do Not try to out run a tornado on foot or in your car

Do Not open windows



Hurricane Safety Tips

Terms to Know

Hurricane Watch: Hurricane conditions are a real possibility for an area.

Hurricane Warning: A hurricane is EXPECTED within 24 hours. Begin precautionary action at once.

At Hurricane Warning:

- **IF ORDERED TO EVACUATE, OBEY IMMEDIATELY**
- Listen for weather updates and stay informed
- Fill gas tank in your vehicle
- Keep portable radio and flashlight on hand – with fresh batteries
- Have cash available in case banks or ATMs are not available
- Clear your yard of all loose objects
- Keep a First Aid kit on hand
- Store drinking water in clean containers
- Have canned goods and a manual can opener available
- Shutter, board, or tape windows
- Plan a flood-free evacuation route and know where to go
- Take your hurricane evacuation kit
- Let friends and neighbors know where you are going
- If possible, leave a message on the HT Program answering machine as to where you are located
- Do not enter evacuated areas until local officials have issued an all clear



