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News Release

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New tool enhances Veterans access to their VA health care

Veterans who receive primary care services at VA Black Hills Health Care System can now take advantage of a new way to communicate with their health care teams that's as fast as email, but completely safe and secure!

The new communication tool is called "Secure Messaging" and allows Veterans to communicate electronically with their primary care team in VA Black Hills Health Care System.

"Secure Messaging is a great communication tool for anything, but urgent communication," said Deann Arneson, My HealtheVet coordinator at Black Hills.

"It is meant for routine communication such as questions about appointments, prescriptions or other non-urgent health care matters," Arneson said. "We also plan to expand Secure Messaging to specialty care areas soon."

She added that Secure Messaging helps Veterans avoid long hold times on the telephone or missed phone calls from their health care team.

To take advantage of Secure Messaging Veterans should create an account on My HealtheVet (www.myhealth.va.gov), making sure to check both VA patient and Veteran when they register. Next, follow the In-Person Authentication link and complete the in-person authentication form.

"Veterans can complete the form at home and drop it off during their next visit or they can complete the form at the VA hospitals in Hot Springs, Fort Meade or any of our community-based outpatient clinics," Arneson said.

After the form is completed, it will take a few days for the Veteran's to be authenticated. Veterans can tell their account has been authenticated if they can view their VA appointments and VA lab results on My HealtheVet – these are some of the site's other enhanced features available to Veterans who complete the authentication process.

Once the authentication is completed Vets should login to their My Health^eVet account, click on Secure Messaging and 'Opt-in', which is agreeing to the terms and conditions of Secure Messaging.

“Opting-in only takes a moment, but it’s a very important step because it opens up a new form of safe and secure two-way communication between Veterans and their health care teams,” Arneson said.

She added that by Opting-in now, Veterans will have more control over their VA health care and will have Secure Messaging ready when they need it.

For more information about Secure Messaging and the many features of My Health^eVet, contact Deann Arneson at (605) 745.2000, extension 2060 or at deann.arneson@va.gov . Veterans are reminded not to send any personal information when communicating via email.

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