



1925 • 2025

Creating More Independence for Over 100 Years

Welcome to *VHA*

A guide to your healthcare journey

LETTER FROM VHA'S PRESIDENT AND CEO



Welcome to home care with VHA Home HealthCare (VHA). It is our privilege to be your home care provider.

VHA is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2025. Our compassionate and caring team of home care specialists have been dedicated to working with our clients and their families and caregivers to create more independence for 100 years. During that time, we have grown to over 3000 team members, including home makers, personal support workers, nurses and rehab therapists, all providing care in homes and communities across Ontario, along with our administrative teams who provide critical back-office support.

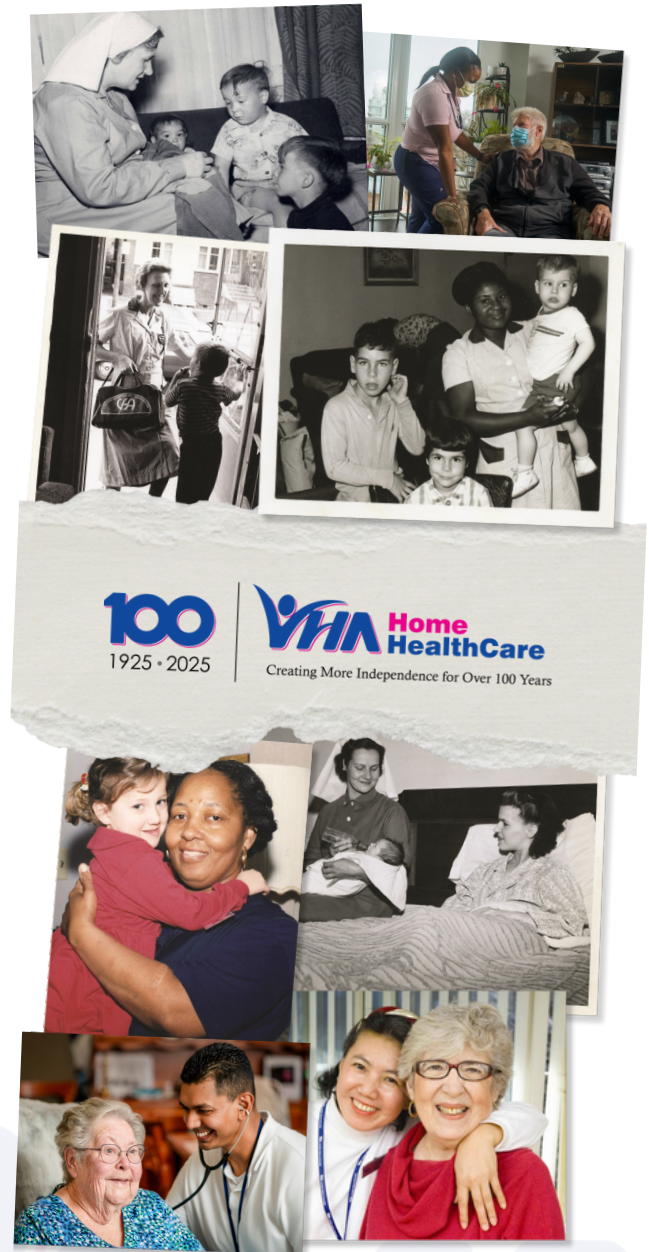
VHA is a values-driven, not-for-profit organization. Our focus is on providing client-centred care and building meaningful bonds with the clients and families we serve. VHA care providers are empowered to deliver high quality care and VHA provides extensive training and guidance to support this. We also invest in research and clinical expertise to continuously enhance our care and to drive improvements across the healthcare sector.

Our Purpose is: *Care at home. Delivered with heart. Led by science.* We hope this will reflect your experience with VHA. I wish you all the best on your care journey.

Take care,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kathryn Nichol".

Dr. Kathryn Nichol
President and CEO, VHA Home HealthCare



ABOUT VHA HOME HEALTHCARE

VHA Home HealthCare (VHA) is contracted by the Province of Ontario to provide home health care services to eligible clients. If you are receiving government-funded services, a care coordinator with your regional Ontario Health atHome (formerly Home and Community Care Support Services) determined you were eligible for our services and decided which and how many hours of service you will receive. VHA and your Ontario Health atHome care coordinator will work together and share information about your progress while you receive care.

As one of the largest not-for-profit home care providers in Ontario, VHA has strong connections in the communities we serve and is



known for its collaborative partnership and high quality, client-centred care. VHA is an active member in multiple Ontario Health Teams in the regions where we provide service and also actively participates in other integrated care initiatives with partner organizations. VHA invests in research and innovation and in integrated care solutions to help make care better, for the clients and families we serve, for our providers and for the sector.

In every role and at every level, we lead with purpose, build bonds that matter, and we're passionate about providing spectacular care.

OUR PURPOSE Care at home. Delivered with heart. Led by science.

OUR FIRST PRINCIPLES

VHA is committed to living our **First Principles**:

- Deep collaboration with clients, carers and our teams as key voices in creating better systems of care and support
- Driving change as a solution finder, system builder and partner of choice in the system
- Diversity, inclusion and meaningful action towards reconciliation
- Serving the most vulnerable in our communities
- Always advocating for equity in recognition of and compensation for our teams
- Responsible and ethical use of technology that simplifies our systems and processes and improves experiences
- Data driven quality improvement and safety
- Wise and responsible use of resources

OUR SERVICES

Our services include personal support, home support, nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech-language pathology, nutrition consultations, extreme cleaning, hoarding support and social work.

VHA HOME HEALTHCARE IS ACCREDITED BY ACCREDITATION CANADA WITH EXEMPLARY STANDING.



Accreditation Canada is an independent, not-for-profit organization that accredits health care and social services organizations in Canada and around the world. Its comprehensive accreditation programs foster ongoing quality improvement through evidence-based standards and a rigorous external peer review. Accredited by the International Society for Quality in Health Care (ISQua), Accreditation Canada has been helping organizations improve health care quality and patient safety for more than 60 years. VHA's Exemplary Standing is the highest ranking conferred by Accreditation Canada.

VHA HOME HEALTHCARE IS A REGISTERED NURSES' ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO BEST PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT ORGANIZATION (BPSO).



Best Practice Spotlight Organizations (BPSOs) are health care and academic organizations selected by the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario (RNAO) through a request for proposals process to implement and evaluate the RNAO's best practice guidelines. It is a dynamic partnership that focuses on making a positive impact on patient care through evidence-based practice. This designation recognizes VHA's success in implementing and evaluating Best Practice Guidelines (BPGs) developed by the RNAO over a three year period. VHA has been a BPSO organization since 2015.

VHA HOME HEALTHCARE IS A PARTNER AGENCY OF THE UNITED WAY GREATER TORONTO.



The United Way Greater Toronto is the largest non-governmental supporter of social services in the region, dedicated to creating the opportunities people need to improve their lives and build a better future.





LETTER FROM VHA'S CLIENT VOICE SPECIALIST

I wanted to write this note to you because I've walked in your shoes and hope my experiences might help you with yours. My family began receiving VHA services many years ago. And what I remember most about those early days was feeling completely overwhelmed. There were so many people marching through our front door: who were they and what were they here to do? I was grateful for their support but also wished they'd go away.

Just like anything new, it takes time to understand the process. If there's one thing I learned about successful home care, it's that communication is key. And if you can't follow everything that is being shared with you, perhaps someone who is a caregiver for you can ask those questions and voice what is important to you.

Some days will be difficult—but that's when you lean on your care team and those around you for the patience and understanding you need and deserve. Remember, even though the care providers have more experience in the system, you have more knowledge about what you need. VHA is truly committed to creating possibilities for more independence for the clients and families we serve.

Today, after being a client, I am VHA's Client and Family Voice Specialist. I connect with clients and caregivers and look for ways that VHA can partner with you to improve our services.

Whether it's providing feedback about an experience with a service, sharing your story to help VHA gain greater understanding into the issues clients face, or providing insights based on your professional knowledge, being a Client and Family Voice Partner can be a powerful experience for everyone involved. I know it was for me.

These are very early days in your journey and there is a lot to take in. When you're ready, I invite you to learn more about VHA's Client and Family Voice partnerships at www.vha.ca/client-voice. You can help create meaningful changes that will improve our services to you, and hopefully will have a positive impact on the lives of the clients and families VHA serves.

I wish you and your family all the best in your home care journey.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Stacey Ryan". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Stacey Ryan

Client and Family Voice Specialist, VHA Home HealthCare

AS A CLIENT, YOU ALWAYS HAVE A VOICE AT VHA

We always want to hear if you think we are doing a great job or if we could do more to meet your needs. Your feedback and service suggestions help us recognize exceptional service and improve the quality of care we provide. We are committed to responding to your concerns and making sure you're satisfied!

Do you have to reschedule your appointment?

Please give us at least 24 hours' notice to cancel or change the appointment time. When possible, we will reschedule the appointment to suit your needs.

Did your care provider not arrive for a scheduled visit?

Please let us know. When possible, we will reschedule the appointment to suit your needs.

Do you have a compliment about your care?

Do not hesitate to contact VHA about the quality of service you receive. Positive reviews of our service on Google help VHA to maintain and enhance our services. If you would like to leave a review on Google, please visit:

<https://g.page/r/CXEfsZL0rOcJEB0/review>

Do you have a complaint about your care provider or service?

If you contact us about an issue, here's what you can expect:

- **ON THE SAME DAY:** Our Client Care Office Team will acknowledge the complaint, document it, and we'll begin discussions with you to solve the issue.
- **WITHIN ONE WEEK:** Someone from VHA will write or speak to you about how the issue is being addressed, or to let you know if it is being moved to a more senior VHA staff member to resolve it.
- **AFTER THE FIRST WEEK:** If your issue is not resolved, it continues to move to more senior staff until it is.



CONTACT US AT

416-489-2500 (24/7)

or 1-888-314-6622 (toll-free, outside GTA)

myVHA

Our myVHA Client Portal provides easy online access to your schedule and other information at www.vha.ca/myvha.

AS A CLIENT, YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO...

QUALITY CARE

- Receive service that respects your dignity and privacy and promotes your autonomy.
- Receive quality care from skilled care providers who participate in on-going training to update and refine their skills.
- Receive fair, equitable and safe service.
- Participate in regular assessments of your needs and evaluation of your services.

RESPECT

- Receive service that respects and honours all aspects of your individuality including ethnic, spiritual, linguistic, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, family status, political affiliation, cultural beliefs and customs, lifestyle choices or any other personal characteristics.
- Receive a timely, courteous and neutral investigation into any service complaint(s) you may have.
- Receive services in a manner that is free from physical, sexual, mental, emotional, verbal and financial abuse.

INFORMATION

- Be informed of your rights, including the laws, rules and policies affecting the delivery of your services, in writing.
- Know who is providing your care, what their role is, and the types of services you will receive.
- Get information about VHA's complaint process and how to contact VHA to share your feedback.
- Know how your information is collected and used.
- Be informed of any possible costs (e.g., equipment purchase).

CHOICE

- Accept or refuse our services.
- Participate in decision-making, planning and provision of your care.
- Have a friend, member of your chosen family or other important person present during service or at any meeting with VHA or a VHA provider.

NO DISCRIMINATION

- Clients have a right to receive services free from any discrimination. We embrace the individuality of our clients and endeavour to respond to preferences based on ethnic, spiritual, linguistic, familial, gender identity and cultural factors.

VHA is proud to have zero tolerance for any discriminatory practices. VHA values the wealth of diversity and inclusion across all areas of our organization as well as within the communities where we provide care.

As an organization we "Call It Out" to ensure active steps are being taken to champion anti-discriminatory and culturally safe practices within home care and the health care sector. As such, we invest in education, align practices, advocate for changes and challenge situations to support our clients and caregivers, volunteers, staff and service providers with the humility that there is always more for us to learn.

AS A CLIENT, YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES ARE...

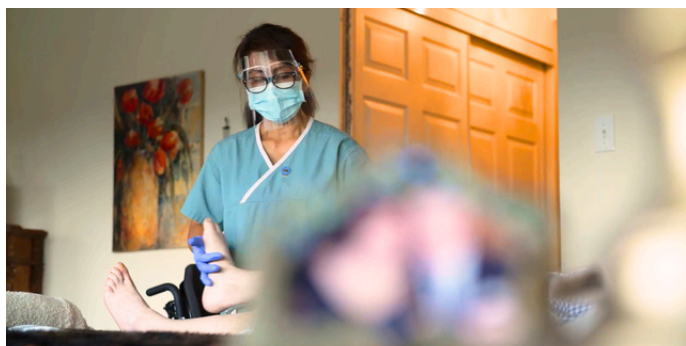
This is what we expect from our clients.

RESPECT

- Treat VHA's care providers with respect, courtesy and without prejudice or discrimination.
- Always work with your VHA care providers to ensure that service remains within your care plan and avoid pressure to perform tasks that are out of scope.
- Be respectful of the diverse cultures, identities and beliefs of your VHA care providers.
- Be available during the scheduled visit time.

COLLABORATION

- Participate co-operatively with your VHA care provider to create and implement a care plan.
- Give your VHA care provider information that may help with your care and let VHA know of any changes in your health condition(s).
- Participate in the assessment and reassessment of your care needs. If your care needs change, co-operate with your care provider to reassess your care plan.
- During service evaluations, assessments or reassessments please be honest and raise concerns or recommend changes.
- Recognize that VHA care providers are only able to provide service in accordance with your documented care plan.
- To provide necessary supplies as discussed during your assessment, and to pay for services or supplies as discussed and where applicable.



SAFETY

- Provide a safe working environment for your VHA care providers, including wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE), based on your condition, to minimize risk of transmission to staff and other clients.
- Do not smoke during the visit. Your care provider has the right to care for you without being exposed to smoke. Your care provider can ask you or anyone in your home to not smoke while he/she is there.
- Remember that pets can be nervous or protective of you and that your care providers may have allergies. Please put pets in another room during care.

COMMUNICATION

- Provide consent (or advise that consent is withdrawn) before receiving service.
- Advise VHA of any changes in your appointment availability.
- Provide at least 24 hours' notice to cancel or change a scheduled appointment.
- Follow VHA Home HealthCare's complaint process if you are making a complaint. This is outlined on page 5.

VHA'S SERVICES

Many of our services are free through publicly funded health care. VHA also offers some Responsive Community Care supports free of charge.

If you are receiving care through Ontario Health atHome, your Ontario Health atHome care coordinator should be your first point of contact. If Ontario Health atHome cannot meet all your care needs, you can purchase home care services directly from VHA through our Enterprise Health Solutions department.

Funding might be available through the United Way depending on your situation or service needs. If you have personal or employer insurance plans, they may also cover some home care expenses.

For more information on purchasing VHA's services, please contact our Enterprise Health Solutions department by calling 416-489-2500 ext. 4649 or emailing ehs@vha.ca.



Personal and Home Support

Our skilled Personal Support and Home Support Workers (PSWs and HSWs) provide personal care (PSWs only); help with activities of daily living, such as grooming and bathing; do meal planning and preparation; perform light household duties; escort clients to appointments; and provide support services for parents with newborns, multiple births or children with special needs.

Nursing

VHA has various nursing programs including in-home visiting and shift programs for adult care, paediatric care and palliative care. In-home services include post-hospital care, medication, pain and symptom management and more. We also have nursing clinics located across the GTA to support clients with wound care, infusion therapy and more.

Social Work

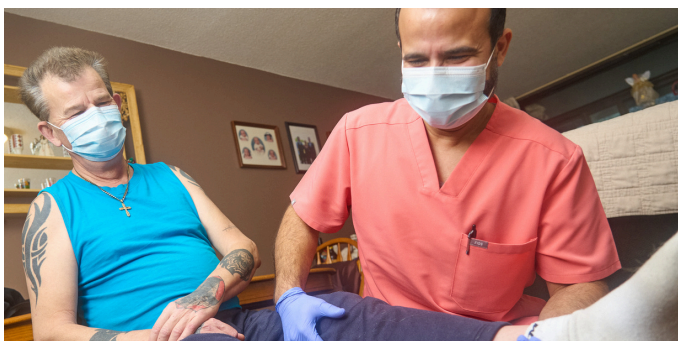
Our Social Workers help clients access government and community-based resources and programs. They also provide support and strategies to clients and their families to deal with difficult emotional issues, such as grief, loss, and family or marital conflict.

Physiotherapy

VHA Physiotherapists support clients to recover from surgery, illness or injury, and promote health to reduce pain and prevent injury. They also assess and recommend equipment to promote safe mobility; maximize independence and reduce risk of falls; teach caregivers how to safely mobilize and transfer their loved ones; and assess ergonomics and return-to-work suitability.

Occupational Therapy

Our Occupational Therapists help clients manage daily activities after an illness or disability; provide equipment recommendations for home safety and mobility; support palliative care clients and their families; assess return-to-work suitability; offer strategies to manage anxiety and depression and, in working with infants and children, assess and treat developmental delays, sensory processing disorders, feeding difficulties and fine motor problems.



Speech-Language Pathology

Our Speech-Language Pathologists treat language, communication and speech difficulties, and assess and treat swallowing and feeding problems for people of all ages.



Health Care During Pandemic Recovery

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and into recovery, VHA has continued to closely follow Public Health guidance and carefully manage our Infection Prevention and Control practices to keep clients and families, our care providers and our community as safe as possible.

Staffing shortages are a concern across the health care sector. VHA is a teaching and learning organization. We are committed to preparing students and new team members to meet your care needs and build our workforce to meet future needs. Learners will be closely supervised and your care will always be led by a VHA care provider. Thank you for your support ensuring we have the resources we need to provide necessary services.

Dietetics

VHA Dietitians conduct assessments and provide education for adults and children in many areas that impact overall nutrition. They are experts in the nutritional management related to tube feedings, swallowing disorders, optimal healing, diabetes, various cancers, and both weight gain and weight loss.

Our Dietitians also provide nutrition education and support to clients and their families during the end stages of life.

SPECIALIZED SERVICES

VHA provides specialized services and care to clients who need it as part of their care plan. These specialized services are free through publicly funded health care through your local Ontario Health atHome. If Ontario Health atHome cannot meet all your care needs, you can purchase services directly from VHA through our Enterprise Health Solutions department.

Funding may also be available through the United Way depending on your situation or service needs. If you have personal or employer insurance plans, they may also cover some home care expenses.

For more information on VHA's Enterprise Health Solutions, please call 416-489-2500 ext. 4649 or email ehs@vha.ca.

Children with Complex Medical Needs

The job of being a parent is no small task... even more so for parents who are caring for children with medically complex needs. You have to learn very quickly how to navigate the healthcare system, take your child for routine or unexpected medical visits, and become experts in your child's particular health needs.

We know how challenging that can be so VHA has created a **Children with Complex Medical Needs** hub at www.vha.ca/ccmn.

VHA's tailored approach helps our clients and families make informed choices to support

the long-term development of medically complex children, improving quality of life and helping children remain at home for as long as a family chooses, without unplanned hospital visits.

With our help, you can: gain comfort with your child's medical devices like tracheostomy tubes, mechanical ventilators, and g-tubes (among others); develop an increased understanding of what resources are available to support your medically complex child; use our clinical expertise to support you and co-develop a care plan with your child's unique needs at the heart of it.



Chronic Disease Self-Management

Are you a client or caregiver of someone who has a chronic disease? A chronic disease is one that is likely to be present for six months or longer, such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease or respiratory disease.

VHA has created a **Chronic Disease Self-Management** website that is simple, easy to navigate and read. You can find the website at www.vha.ca/cdsm. Learn more about common chronic diseases, finding a healthcare provider, health literacy, improving quality of life, managing multiple chronic diseases, tips and tricks for caregivers, community resources, advocacy, and advance care directives. Read about ways to ask questions when you do not understand something. Remember, you are not alone!

Dementia Care

When you or someone you love is living with dementia, you need support, compassion and the knowledge of how to help so as to make every day the best possible. Let our skilled and compassionate team at VHA be your guide in this **Dementia Care** journey.

VHA has specialized training for our supervisors and clinical leads who can bring their skillful support to situations when a person living with dementia expresses themselves through behaviours like hitting, verbal aggression, wandering and avoiding personal care.

At VHA, there are several programs our clients have access to when receiving dementia care:

- An online **Dementia Care** hub is available on our website at www.vha.ca/dementia-care for our clients and their families which provides helpful resources.
- **Heart in Mind Activation Therapy** is a free online toolkit created by VHA for families, personal support workers, therapists or other health care providers to engage loved ones and clients living with dementia. It is available on our website at www.vha.ca/heartinmind.
- VHA provides no cost access to personalized music via the Alzheimer Society of Toronto's Music Project partnership through our **VHA Music Care** program. Music especially selected by (or for) the person with dementia is loaded onto a small audio player, given out and enjoyed! Personalized music can help to improve cognition, as well as improve quality of life for both the person living with dementia and their caregivers. Research shows it can reduce depression, anxiety, agitation and aggression. To learn more, visit www.musicproject.ca.





Virtual Care

VHA is able to offer a variety of services via **virtual care** depending on the clinical situation. Virtual care services are conveniently provided by telephone and/or by video either with a smartphone, tablet or computer and enable clients to work with their service providers remotely to reach their goals. In many situations and depending on the needs and preferences of each client and family, virtual care can be used in combination with in-person visits. Please speak to your service provider to see if virtual care is right for you or visit our website www.vha.ca/virtual-care for more information.

Palliative Care

VHA is committed to being with you every step of the way, providing compassionate, professional care to people and their families living with a progressive, life-limiting illness such as cancer, cardiopulmonary, kidney and/or neurological conditions.

We have created an online resource for our **Palliative Care** clients and their families available at www.vha.ca/palliative-care to help in supporting your needs.

The support and expertise of the Palliative Care health team helps clients adjust and adapt to their circumstances as the illness progresses so they can receive medical and respite care as well as emotional and social support.

Our team helps clients and families make informed choices to remain at home for as long as they choose and avoid unplanned admissions to hospital.

myVHA Client Portal

myVHA is a new client portal that VHA has created to give our clients greater control over how and when they receive care. The client portal also enhances our ability to communicate effectively with our clients and families.

Developed with clients and family members, the **myVHA** client portal:

- is an easy-to-use, secure platform
- provides easy access to client schedules and information
- includes options for cancelling and rescheduling visits
- shares information about which care provider will be visiting

For those clients who are interested in using the client portal or virtual care, but have limited experience with technology, we offer volunteer support to help.

More information and registration to access the **myVHA** client portal, can be found online by visiting www.vha.ca/myvha.

RESPONSIVE COMMUNITY CARE AT VHA

VHA is focused on helping individuals and families live with more independence through short-term supports. Our Responsive Community Care supports help people who do not have the financial means to purchase needed services by offering many of these supports free of charge.

Homelessness Prevention and Housing Stability

VHA's **Safer Spaces: Hoarding Support** services help people living with extreme clutter which poses health or safety risks. Professionals compassionately support clients who are living with clutter to help them reclaim their home. Trained staff and volunteers work with clients towards developing strategies and plans to help clients stay focused on decluttering, and connect clients to clutter removal resources. Locations include Durham Region, London and Middlesex County, and Toronto.



Restored Home: Extreme Cleaning provides intensive cleaning for people at risk of eviction/institutionalization due to squalor and/or unsanitary home conditions. Our program offers intensive cleaning and follow-up supports to avoid relapse. Locations include Durham Region, London, Toronto and York Region.

Family Support Services

The **Helping Hands: Home Support for Families** program provides short-term in-home support to families with children (birth to age 4) who need “hands-on” care while a parent or parents are recovering from a medical emergency and/or crisis situation. The program gives parents time to recover from illness/urgent situations and promotes access to community resources for ongoing support.



Our **Connected Families: Parenting Support** program offers short-term in-home supports for parents at risk or experiencing postpartum depression, mental health issues and/or isolation by providing in-home childcare, emotional support, connections to other community supports and help with parenting skills.

Our **Volunteer Program** provides valuable experiences to individuals who face barriers to employment or wish to develop new skills and improve their community. In turn, the volunteers help to support isolated individuals and/or families to become more resilient and independent.

Health and Wellness Programs

Our **Respite and Renew: Caregiver Support** program provides relaxation time for caregivers while giving loved ones with dementia the stimulation and enjoyment to boost their physical and mental well-being. It is meant to be a short-term respite for those not receiving any other caregiver support service in the home. The recreational activities will be provided by a trained PSW to maximize your loved one independence and quality of life.

To learn more about our Responsive Community Care programs, please contact our Responsive Community Care Intake Social Worker at 416-489-2500, option 2.

Community Support Service Contracts and Partnerships

- Public Health Child Minding
- Home at Last (HAL) in partnership with four other Scarborough agencies
- City of Toronto Homemakers & Nurses' Services (HMNS)
- Dorset Park Community Hub
- VHA is Funded Agency and Partner of United Way Greater Toronto



RESEARCH AT VHA

VHA is committed to contributing research to help inform the best and safest ways to deliver home care. As one of the few entities across Canada that are focused on home care science, VHA's goal is to provide evidence to inform better care for clients and families and a safer work environment for providers.

Our research focuses on key areas of home and community care that create possibilities for more independence, support clients to live at home, promote safe and rewarding working conditions for home care providers, and evaluate ongoing efforts to increase the integration of care across the health system.

We strive to break new ground in research and develop solutions that reflect the voices of our clients, caregivers and providers.

Conducting research that is informed by those who receive care includes VHA clients, family members of those receiving care, and representatives of the communities we serve. Partnering with those with lived experiences brings new and much needed perspectives to the research process and is essential to building inclusive and authentic homecare services that meet the needs of communities we serve.



If you are interested in learning more about Research at VHA, please visit www.vha.ca/research-and-innovation/research.

If you are interested in partnering with us to develop research that will help us meet the needs of our communities, please email researchhelp@vha.ca or call 416-280-8393.

HAND HYGIENE

Clean hands are everyone's responsibility

Hand hygiene is the most important and basic way to prevent the spread of infections! How to perform hand hygiene:

1. Soap and Water

Washing with soap and water is the preferred way to clean your hands in everyday situations (such as before food preparation, after using the washroom, etc.). Everyone should—and care providers must—wash their hands with soap and running water when their hands are visibly soiled/dirty.

1. Wet hands and wrists with warm water.
2. Apply soap.
3. Lather soap and rub hands palm to palm, in between fingers, the back of each hand, and the fingertips and thumbs of each hand for at least 15 seconds.
4. Rinse your hands thoroughly under running water.
5. Pat your hands dry with paper towel.
6. Turn off water using paper towel.



2. Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizer

Using alcohol-based hand sanitizer is the best and most effective means of cleaning one's hands when a care provider is in clinical situations where sinks or soap and water are not available. For clients, alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be used as a back-up to regular handwashing with soap and water.

1. Apply 1 to 2 pumps of the hand sanitizer to the palms of dry hands.
2. Rub hands together palm to palm, in between and around fingers, the back of each hand, and rub fingertips of each hand for approximately 15 seconds or until the product is dry.
3. Let hands dry (do not use paper towel).

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)



For your protection, your VHA health care provider may use the following PPE while providing your care:



The purpose of the screening questions is to ensure that our care providers are able to take the appropriate precautions and wear protective equipment based on your answers to keep themselves and subsequent clients safe by reducing the spread of disease.

Where can I buy my own PPE such as cloth (non-medical) masks, surgical masks or alcohol-based hand sanitizer?

Alcohol-based hand sanitizer, when in stock, is widely available at many retail locations including pharmacies and grocery stores.

Cloth (non-medical) masks or surgical masks are available through big box retailers or online retailers* including:

www.walmart.ca
www.staples.ca
www.amazon.ca

For the safety of our care providers, it is strongly recommended that surgical masks are worn by clients during visits. If a client does not have a mask available for their visit, one mask may be provided to them by their care provider.

* VHA does not endorse any particular vendor of cloth masks, nor can we ensure that any vendor is able to maintain stock of these products. We are not liable if there are any issues related to the vendor or the purchased product.

Infectious Diseases Screening

As part of routine care, your VHA care provider will ask you questions about any new symptoms you may be experiencing (for example, these could be related to respiratory illnesses, gastro-intestinal illnesses (i.e. vomiting, diarrhea), or rashes). They may also ask whether you have been asked to isolate or quarantine from your physician, healthcare provider, or anybody else.

Please inform your VHA care provider if you have any symptoms as soon as possible and help answer those questions when asked.



HOUSEHOLD SAFETY TIPS

To keep you and our care providers safe

General Household

- Keep your home well lit. Turn on lights and use night lights to move around safely.
- Avoid slipping hazards. Don't use waxy finishes on floors or walk on wet surfaces. Keep walkways clear of clutter and cords. If you have rugs, tape the ends or remove the rugs.
- Ensure chairs have armrests to provide support when going from a sitting to standing position.
- Cover electrical sockets for children's safety.
- Attach large furniture/TVs to the wall.
- Keep blinds/curtain cords out of children's reach.
- Store weapons in a locked cabinet. If you have weapons in the home, let your care provider know about them.
- If someone is being violent or abusive to you, call the police or tell your care provider right away.
- Have a plan. Prepare for emergency situations before one happens.
- Keep list of emergency contacts by your phone.

Entrance

- Keep entrance areas well-lit.
- Secure doors to the outside with childproof locks or door handle covers.

- Keep walkways free of snow, ice and leaves. Repair damaged surfaces.
- Have your mailbox at an easy-to-reach height.

Kitchen

- Store items in cupboards where you can reach them easily.
- Keep most used items in easy to reach locations (preferably between shoulder and knee height).
- Keep heavier items in lower cupboards.
- Use appliances that have an automatic shut-off feature.
- Keep cleaning supplies, sharp utensils and hot liquids out of children's reach.
- Use child-proof locks on cabinets.
- Sit when preparing meals, if possible.

Bedroom

- Place mobiles out of baby's reach over crib.
- Remove crib bumper pads, and when baby can stand, lower the mattress.
- Adjust your bed so it's the right height for you to get on and off safely.
- Use a bedrail or floor-to-ceiling pole to help you get in and out of bed.
- Keep a commode or urinal by your bedside if you tend to rush to the bathroom in the middle of the night.

- If you tend to use the bathroom at night, keep a night light in your room, in your bathroom and/or in the hallways.
- Keep your phone or emergency call button in an easy place to reach.



Stairs

- Ensure good lighting in stairwells.
- Put children's safety gates on stairwells.
- Install railings on both sides of staircase.
- Highlight stair edges with coloured tape.
- Close in the back of steps.

Bathroom

- Use a toilet lid lock for children's safety.
- Always close bathroom doors and/or use door handle covers.
- Keep medications out of childrens' reach.
- Consider using a bath chair and a handheld shower head in the tub and/or shower.
- Drain the tub before getting out.
- Install grab bars and use a non-slip mat in the tub. Do not use towel racks for support!
- Avoid bath oils, which make tubs slippery.
- Install a raised toilet seat and/or grab bar if your seat is low.
- If you tend to use the bathroom at night, keep a night light in your room, in your bathroom and/or in the hallways.

Fire

- Do not overload plugs or power bars.
- Replace frayed, cracked or damaged electrical cords.
- Do not smoke when using oxygen.

Preventing Falls

- Stay healthy and keep fit. Eat regularly, keep hydrated and stay physically active.
- Get regular eye and ear exams. Wear glasses and hearing aids as recommended.
- Take medications as prescribed. Report side effects to your health care provider.
- Use handrails along pathways and stairs.
- Avoid carrying items on stairs.
- Stay grounded. Keep off step stools and ladders. Ask for help instead.
- Avoid rushing and pace yourself. Move slowly when getting up or turning. Break tasks into smaller parts and alternate activity with periods of rest.
- Use nightlights in household walkways.
- Remove obstacles, secure electrical cords and tape down the ends of rugs and mats or remove where possible.
- Take a seat. Sit down when putting on or taking off clothes and shoes. Use a shoehorn when putting on shoes.
- Get a grip. Wear closed-toe and closed-heel, slip resistant slippers and shoes.
- Use walking aids properly. Talk with your health care provider about using canes or walkers.
- Have a plan if you fall. Learn how to use emergency call button, get up on your own or to call for help and wait safely until help arrives.

Smoke Alarms and CO Detectors



Ontario law requires a homeowner or unit landlord to install and maintain smoke alarms on every storey of the home and outside sleeping areas. If the house contains a fuel burning appliance, fireplace or an attached garage, a carbon monoxide (CO) detector must also be installed outside sleeping areas.

Landlords must ensure that their rental properties comply with the law. If you are a tenant in a rental property, you should contact your landlord if:

- The unit does not have the required number of smoke alarms or CO detectors.
- The smoke alarm(s) or detector(s) are not working.

Tenants may not remove the batteries or tamper with smoke alarms or CO detectors.

Proper Maintenance of Smoke Alarms and CO Detectors

- Test your smoke alarm every month using the test button.
- Test CO detectors annually and after the battery is replaced.
- Landlords must test CO detectors at every tenant change and after any changes are made to an electrical circuit connected to the CO detector.
- Replace smoke alarm batteries at least once a year and whenever the low battery warning chirps or flashes.
- Replace smoke alarms with new ones if they are more than 10 years old.

- Move the smoke alarm to a different location if steam or regular cooking causes it to activate -- do not remove the batteries. You can purchase a smoke alarm with a hush feature that temporarily silences the alarm, if appropriate.

For more information about smoke alarms, contact your Fire Department.

Smoke-Free Workplaces



The Smoke-Free Ontario Act (2006) completely bans smoking of tobacco, cigarettes, cannabis and vapour products in every workplace in Ontario. That means:

- Your care provider has the right to care for you without being exposed to smoke.
- Your care provider can ask you or anyone in your home to not smoke while he/she is there.
- If you or someone in your home continues to smoke despite the care provider's request, the care provider may leave your home without providing further care, unless doing so presents an immediate, serious danger to your health. The care provider will report the problem to VHA.
- If you do not comply with this law you may be subject to a fine.
- If you or someone in your home cannot stop smoking during your care, please call the VHA office in advance so we can work out a solution.

For more about the Smoke Free Ontario Act, see www.gov.on.ca.

5 QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR MEDICATIONS

when you see your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.



1. CHANGES?

Have any medications been added, stopped or changed, and why?

2. CONTINUE?

Which medications do I need to keep taking, and why?

3. PROPER USE?

How do I take my medications, and for how long?

4. MONITOR?

How do I know if my medication is working, and what side effects do I watch for?

5. FOLLOW-UP?

Do I need any tests and when do I book my next visit?

Keep your medication record up to date.

Remember to include:

- ✓ drug allergies
- ✓ vitamins and minerals
- ✓ herbal/natural products
- ✓ all medications including non-prescription products

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist to review all your medications to see if any can be stopped or reduced.

All information on this page is adapted from ISMP Canada's 5 Questions to Ask handout.



VHA HOME HEALTHCARE'S INFORMATION PRACTICES

VHA needs to collect, use and disclose your personal health information to provide you with quality health care services.

Keeping your personal information accurate and current is very important to us. We also understand the utmost importance of maintaining your privacy. Unless sharing your personal information with others is necessary to provide you with service and/or is authorized by law, we won't share it without your consent.

VHA may collect, use and disclose your information to:

- Assess your health needs and provide safe and effective service.
- Monitor the quality of service provided to you, evaluate your achievement of goals and satisfaction with your service.
- Communicate with other service providers involved in your care (e.g., family doctor).
- Manage, plan, evaluate and allocate resources within VHA.
- Meet contractual, legal and regulatory requirements, including Accreditation Canada and audits by professional regulatory colleges.

At any time, you may withdraw your consent for VHA to collect, use and/or disclose your personal health information. You also always have the right to access and request a copy of your medical record. To do so, contact VHA Records Management at records-management@vha.ca or by calling 416-489-2500 or 1-888-314-6622 ext. 8774.



If you have any questions about how your personal health information is managed by VHA, want to make corrections to your health record, or file a complaint, contact VHA's Privacy Officer at privacy@vha.ca or 1-888-314-6622 ext. 8782.

If you are dissatisfied with how VHA has handled your health information, addressed your requests for access, or handled a complaint, you may contact the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Ontario at 1-800-387-0073 or 416-326-3333; info@ipc.on.ca.

For more information about VHA's information practices, please visit our website at www.vha.ca/privacy-at-vha to obtain further information, review our privacy policy, and see answers to frequently asked questions.

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VHA Home HealthCare has no corporate or other affiliation with VHA Health & Home Support, also known as VHA Ottawa. VHA Home & Health Support can be reached through its website at vhaottawa.ca

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LinkedIn: @vhahomehealthcare

X (Formerly Twitter): @vhacaregiving

Instagram: @vhacaregiving

Registered Charitable Number:
108185141RR0002

