BILL'S HOME TECH
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BILL'S COMPLETE MANUALS

VA.gov & My HealtheVet

Signing in, prescriptions, appointments, benefit letters and payments — explained in plain English, one step at a time

A plain-English guide for Veterans and the families who help them

Take your time — looking around VA.gov can't change your benefits

Written for you by Bill — Bill's Home Tech

(330) 200-8042 · BillsHomeTech.com

For VA.gov, My HealtheVet on VA.gov & the VA: Health and Benefits app · facts current November 2026

What's Inside

This is your guide to doing your VA business online: signing in the new way, refilling prescriptions, messaging your care team, checking appointments, and downloading the letters and payment records you need. Start with Part 1, then jump to whatever you need today. Read at your own pace. VA updates its website often, so if a button looks a little different, the idea is still the same.

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PART 1

Getting Started

What VA.gov and My HealtheVet can do for you, what changed about signing in, and a calm plan for your first hour.

CHAPTER 1

A Note from Bill

Hello, and welcome. If you're a Veteran, or you help one, you've probably noticed that more and more VA business happens online. Refilling a prescription, sending a question to your care team, checking when your next appointment is, or printing a letter that proves your benefits can all be done from a computer, tablet or phone, without waiting on hold.

I'm Bill. For more than 30 years I've helped people make sense of their technology, and I serve folks right here in Portage County, Ohio. I wrote this guide the way I'd explain it at your kitchen table: slowly, in plain English, one step at a time.

Who this guide is for

- Veterans who use VA health care and want to refill prescriptions, message their care team or see their records online.
- Veterans who get disability compensation or pension and need a benefit letter, their payment history, or a change to direct deposit.
- Anyone whose old My HealtheVet or DS Logon username stopped working and isn't sure what to do next.
- Spouses, grown children and caregivers who help a Veteran with all of this, with that Veteran's blessing.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

What this guide does for you

By the end you'll have a modern sign-in account that works on VA.gov and the VA app, you'll know where My HealtheVet lives now, and you'll be able to refill a prescription, send a secure message, check an appointment, download a benefit letter and file for travel pay on your own. You'll also know the scams that target Veterans, and how to spot them.

The big promise: looking around can't hurt

Clicking around VA.gov to see what's there won't change your benefits or cancel anything. A few actions really do matter, and I'll flag each one clearly: changing your direct deposit, canceling an appointment, and anything that asks you to sign or submit. Everywhere else, explore freely.

You're never stuck alone

If anything in this guide feels like too much, call or text me at **(330) 200-8042**. We'll sort it out together, with no judgment. And for VA questions only VA can answer, I'll show you exactly who to call in Chapter 31, *Where to Get Help: VA, the County and the Crisis Line*.

— Bill

CHAPTER 2

What VA.gov and My HealtheVet Do for You

VA.gov is the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' official website. It's the front door for both sides of VA: health care and benefits. My HealtheVet is the name for VA's online health tools, and today those tools live right on VA.gov.

Health care tools (My HealtheVet on VA.gov)

Tool	What it does for you
Medications	Refill VA prescriptions, review current and past prescriptions, see your medication list, and track prescriptions that were mailed to you. See Chapter 13, *Refilling Your VA Prescriptions* and Chapter 14, *Tracking Mailed Prescriptions and Your Medication List*.
Messages	Send a secure message to your VA care team about a non-urgent question. See Chapter 15, *Secure Messages to Your Care Team*.
Appointments	Review upcoming and past appointments, and schedule some kinds of appointments online. See Chapter 16, *Checking and Scheduling Appointments*.
Medical records	Review lab and test results, allergies, vaccines and care notes, and download a copy to share with another doctor. See Chapter 17, *Your Medical Records and Lab Results* and Chapter 18, *Downloading a Copy of Your Records*.
Medical supplies	Order some medical supplies. See Chapter 19, *Medical Supplies and CHAMPVA Meds by Mail*.

Benefits tools on VA.gov

Tool	What it does for you
Benefit letters	Download your Benefit Summary Letter and other letters. See Chapter 21, *Downloading Your Benefit Letters*.
Claims	Check a claim or appeal and get your decision letters. See Chapter 22, *Checking a Claim and Getting Decision Letters*.
Payments	Review your VA payment history. See Chapter 23, *Reviewing Your Payment History*.
Direct deposit	Change the bank account your VA payments go to. See Chapter 24, *Changing Your Direct Deposit*.
Travel pay	File for mileage after a VA health appointment. See Chapter 20, *Filing for Travel Pay*.

GOOD TO KNOW

Your screens may look a little different

VA updates VA.gov and its app often. If a button name doesn't match this guide exactly, look for the closest match. Facts in this guide were checked in November 2026.

CHAPTER 3

What Changed About Signing In

If you used My HealtheVet for years with your own username and password, and one day it simply stopped working, you didn't do anything wrong. VA retired its older sign-in options in 2025 and moved everyone to newer, more secure accounts.

What went away

Old sign-in	What happened
My HealtheVet username and password	Retired in early March 2025
DS Logon username and password	Retired in fall 2025 (VA's deadline was September 30, 2025)

What you use now

To sign in to VA.gov and the VA mobile apps today, you use an account from one of these three sign-in services: **Login.gov**, **ID.me** or **CLEAR**. Each is a separate account you create once, then use for VA and, in many cases, other services too. We'll compare them in Chapter 6, *Choosing Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR*.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why the change is good for you

The new accounts use two-step security, a code or a key in addition to your password, and they confirm your identity once. That makes it much harder for a stranger to get into your health records or redirect your payments.

TIP

Your records didn't go anywhere

Changing how you sign in doesn't change your health records, prescriptions or benefits. Once you sign in with your new account, everything is still there. VA says your choice of sign-in service won't affect your eligibility for benefits or health care.

GOOD TO KNOW

Don't want to go online at all?

That's okay. VA said that if you don't want a new account, it can help you manage your health care and benefits by phone, by mail or in person. Online is a convenience, not a requirement.

CHAPTER 4

Your First-Hour Plan

You don't need to read this whole guide before you start. If you have about an hour, do these things in this order. Each one points to the chapter with the slow, step-by-step directions.

1. **Gather what you need**: your email, your cell phone, and your driver's license or other photo ID. See Chapter 5, *Getting Ready: What to Have Handy*.
2. **Pick a sign-in service**, Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR. See Chapter 6, *Choosing Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR*.
3. **Create the account and verify your identity.** See Chapter 7, *Creating a Login.gov Account* or Chapter 8, *Creating an ID.me Account*, then Chapter 9, *Verifying Your Identity*.
4. **Sign in to VA.gov** and look around your dashboard. See Chapter 10, *Signing In to VA.gov, Step by Step*.
5. **Try one real task**: look at your medication list or your next appointment. See Chapter 13, *Refilling Your VA Prescriptions* or Chapter 16, *Checking and Scheduling Appointments*.
6. **Write down your sign-in details** somewhere safe at home. See Chapter 33, *Your VA.gov Cheat-Sheet*.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why do it now, on a calm day

The worst time to set up a new account is the day you're almost out of a medication. An hour now means that next time, a refill takes two minutes.

TIP

Do it at a computer if you can

Creating an account and verifying your identity is easier on a computer or tablet with a bigger screen. Keep your cell phone next to you, because you'll get codes by text or need to take a picture of your ID.

HEADS UP

Use your own email and phone

The account should belong to the Veteran, with the Veteran's own email and phone number. If a family member is helping, sit side by side rather than setting it up in their name. See Chapter 30, *Helping a Veteran in Your Family*.

CHAPTER 5

Getting Ready: What to Have Handy

A little preparation saves a lot of frustration. Here's what to gather before you create your account.

Have these within reach

- **An email address you check**, and its password. The sign-in service sends a confirmation email.
- **Your cell phone**, charged. You'll get a one-time code by text or phone call, and you may use the phone's camera to photograph your ID.
- **A photo ID**, such as a state driver's license or state ID card.
- **Your Social Security number.** The identity check may ask for it.
- **A quiet half hour** and a pen and paper to write down what you choose.

GOOD TO KNOW

Verifying is a one-time step

Confirming your identity happens once per account, and VA says it often takes about 10 minutes. After that, signing in is just your email, password and a quick code.

Pick a strong password

Choose a password you haven't used anywhere else. A short sentence works well, such as four ordinary words strung together with a number. Write it down and keep it with your important papers at home, not in your wallet.

STAY SAFE

Your Social Security number is safe to enter here, and only here

Type your Social Security number only on the real Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR site that you reached by starting at VA.gov. Never give it to someone who calls, texts or emails you. See Chapter 28, *VA Scams to Know*.

PART 2

Signing In the New Way

Choosing Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR, creating your account, proving who you are once, and what to do if you get locked out.

CHAPTER 6

Choosing Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR

VA lets you sign in with any one of three services. All three meet VA's security standards, and VA says your choice won't affect your benefits or care. So there's no wrong answer. Here's how they differ.

Service	Who runs it	Worth knowing
Login.gov	The federal government	Also used by other federal agencies
ID.me	A private company that works with government agencies and businesses	Also used by some state agencies and businesses
CLEAR	A private company	VA's newest option

Bill's plain advice

- **If you already have one of these accounts**, for example from Social Security, the IRS or another agency, use it. One fewer password to keep track of.
- **If you're starting fresh**, pick whichever one you like. This guide walks through Login.gov and ID.me in detail because they've been VA's options the longest.
- **Pick one and stick with it.** Having two accounts isn't harmful, but it's confusing.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

One account, two places

The same account works on VA.gov in your web browser and in the VA: Health and Benefits app on your phone. Set it up once and you're ready for both. See Chapter 26, *Getting the VA App on Your Phone*.

HEADS UP

These services never call you to "fix" your account

Create your account by starting at VA.gov and clicking **Sign in**. If someone calls offering to set up or "verify" your VA login for you, hang up. See Chapter 28, *VA Scams to Know*.

CHAPTER 7

Creating a Login.gov Account

Login.gov is the federal government's own sign-in service. Here's the general path. The screens walk you through each step, so read each one slowly and don't rush.

To create your account

1. On your computer, type **va.gov** into the address bar at the top of your web browser and press **Enter**.
2. Click **Sign in** near the top of the page.
3. Choose **Login.gov**, then choose to create an account.
4. Enter your email address. Login.gov sends you an email; open it and click the button to confirm.
5. Create a password.
6. Set up a second way to prove it's you, such as a code texted to your cell phone. Login.gov offers several choices; a text or phone call is the simplest for most people.
7. Follow the screens to verify your identity. See Chapter 9, *Verifying Your Identity*.
8. When you're finished, you're sent back to VA.gov, signed in.

TIP

Set up a backup way in

If Login.gov offers to set up a second sign-in method, such as backup codes, take it. If you ever lose your phone, a backup method saves you from being locked out. Write backup codes on paper and keep them with your important papers.

GOOD TO KNOW

Which email to use

Use the email you check most often and expect to keep for years. Avoid an old work or school email that might be shut off someday.

HEADS UP

Check the address bar

Before typing your password, look at the address bar. It should show **login.gov** or **va.gov**. If it shows a strange address, close the window and start again by typing va.gov yourself.

CHAPTER 8

Creating an ID.me Account

ID.me is a private company that many government agencies use to confirm who you are. If you've used it for the IRS, Social Security or your state, you can use the same account for VA.

To create your account

1. Go to **va.gov** and click **Sign in**.
2. Choose **ID.me**, then choose to create an account.
3. Enter your email address and create a password. ID.me sends you a confirmation email; open it and confirm.
4. Set up a second way to prove it's you, such as a code sent by text message to your cell phone.
5. Follow the screens to verify your identity. See Chapter 9, *Verifying Your Identity*.
6. When you're done, ID.me asks your permission to share your information with VA. Allow it, and you'll land on VA.gov, signed in.

TIP

Already have ID.me?

Just choose **ID.me** on the VA.gov sign-in screen and sign in with the email and password you already use. If your identity is already verified, you may not need to do it again.

GOOD TO KNOW

Why it asks permission

ID.me is a separate company, so it asks you before sharing your verified identity with VA. That's normal and expected when you started at VA.gov.

HEADS UP

ID.me won't text you a link out of the blue

Only expect codes from ID.me when you're actively signing in. A surprise text with a link that says your VA or ID.me account is "locked" is a scam. Don't tap it. See Chapter 28, *VA Scams to Know*.

CHAPTER 9

Verifying Your Identity

The part that makes people nervous is proving who you are. It's a one-time step, and it's what keeps a stranger from opening an account in your name and getting into your records or payments.

What usually happens

1. You photograph the front and back of your driver's license or state ID with your phone's camera, or upload pictures of it.
2. You may be asked to take a picture of your face so the service can match it to your ID.
3. You enter personal details such as your Social Security number, date of birth and address.
4. The service checks the information and tells you whether you're verified.

GOOD TO KNOW

Each service has its own process

The exact steps differ between Login.gov, ID.me and CLEAR, and each may offer other ways to verify if the phone camera doesn't work for you. Follow the screens of the service you chose.

Tips for a smooth photo

- Lay your ID flat on a dark table in good light, with no glare from a lamp or window.
- Hold the phone steady, straight above the card, and fill the box on the screen.
- Take off your glasses and hat for a face photo, and face a window or light.
- Make sure the address on your ID matches the one you type, or be ready to explain the difference.

TIP

If verification fails

Don't panic and don't keep trying over and over. Take a break, read the screen for the reason, and try again with better light. If it still won't work, VA's sign-in help line can point you to other options. See Chapter 11, *Locked Out or Forgot Your Password*.

STAY SAFE

Verification only from a page you opened yourself

Real identity checks only happen when you started at VA.gov and clicked Sign in. Nobody legitimate will call, text or email asking you to photograph your license for them.

CHAPTER 10

Signing In to VA.gov, Step by Step

Once your account is set up, signing in takes less than a minute. Here's the everyday routine.

On a computer or tablet

1. Open your web browser and type **va.gov** in the address bar, then press **Enter**.
2. Click **Sign in** near the top of the page.
3. Choose the service you set up: **Login.gov**, **ID.me** or **CLEAR**.
4. Type your email and password.
5. Enter the code sent to your phone, or use the other method you set up.
6. You land back on VA.gov, signed in. Your name shows near the top of the page.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Save VA.gov as a favorite

Once you're on VA.gov, save it as a bookmark or favorite in your browser. Then you never need to search for it, and you avoid look-alike sites that show up in search ads.

Signing out

When you're finished, click your name near the top of the page and choose **Sign out**. That matters most on a shared or public computer, such as at a library.

HEADS UP

Search ads can lead to look-alikes

If you search for "VA login," the very first results may be ads. Typing **va.gov** yourself is the safest way in every time. The real site ends in **.gov**.

TIP

Signed out by itself?

VA.gov signs you out after a while if you step away. That's a safety feature. Just sign in again.

CHAPTER 11

Locked Out or Forgot Your Password

It happens to everyone. Your password is with your sign-in service (Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR), not with VA, so that's where you reset it.

If you forgot your password

1. Go to **va.gov** and click **Sign in**.
2. Choose the service you use.
3. On its sign-in screen, click the link for a forgotten password.
4. Enter your email. Open the email the service sends you and follow the link to make a new password.
5. Sign in again with your new password.

If you got a new phone number or lost your phone

If you can't get your sign-in code because your number changed or your phone is gone, use a backup method if you set one up. Otherwise, look for the help or account recovery link on your sign-in service's screen. Some services require you to verify your identity again after a reset.

VA's sign-in help line

VA has a help line for sign-in problems: **866-279-3677**, then choose option 1. They can explain your options. They will not ask you for your password.

SCAM ALERT

"Account recovery experts" are a trap

If you search for help, you may find websites or phone numbers offering to recover your VA or ID.me account for a fee. Don't call them. Use only the links on the real sign-in screen, VA's help line, or MyVA411 at **800-698-2411**.

TIP

Write it down

Once you're back in, write down which service you use and the email you sign in with. Keep it with your important papers. There's a fill-in table in Chapter 33, *Your VA.gov Cheat-Sheet*.

PART 3

My HealtheVet: Your Health Care Online

Prescriptions, secure messages, appointments, medical records, supplies and travel pay, all on VA.gov.

CHAPTER 12

Finding My HealtheVet on VA.gov

For years, My HealtheVet was its own website with its own login. Today, its tools are part of VA.gov, and you sign in with the same Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR account you use for everything else on VA.gov.

To get to your health tools

1. Go to **va.gov** and sign in. See Chapter 10, *Signing In to VA.gov, Step by Step*.
2. Look for **My HealtheVet** or **Health care** on the page, and open it.
3. You'll see the main health tools: appointments, messages, medications, medical records and supplies.
4. Click the one you need.

GOOD TO KNOW

Who can use these tools

The health tools are for Veterans who get care through VA. VA says spouses, dependents and survivors enrolled in CHAMPVA can manage some of their care online too, mainly Meds by Mail prescriptions. See Chapter 19, *Medical Supplies and CHAMPVA Meds by Mail*.

TIP

Old bookmarks

If you had a bookmark for the old My HealtheVet site, it may send you somewhere outdated. Delete it and save a new bookmark for **va.gov** instead.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Everything in one place

Because health and benefits now share one website and one sign-in, you can refill a prescription and then download a benefit letter without signing in twice.

HEADS UP

Not for emergencies

None of these online tools are watched around the clock for emergencies. If you're having a medical emergency, call 911. If you're in crisis, call 988 and press 1. See Chapter 31, *Where to Get Help: VA, the County and the Crisis Line*.

CHAPTER 13

Refilling Your VA Prescriptions

This is the most-used tool on the site, and for good reason. Instead of calling the pharmacy line and waiting, you can request a refill in a couple of minutes, any time of day.

To request a refill

1. Sign in to **va.gov** and open your health tools.
2. Open **Medications**.
3. Look through your list. Prescriptions that can be refilled show an option to request a refill.
4. Check the box or button for each prescription you need.
5. Submit your refill request, and read the confirmation on the screen.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why it's worth it

You can refill at 2 a.m. if that's when you remember, see right away which prescriptions are out of refills, and stop playing phone tag with the pharmacy.

When a prescription has no refills left

If a medicine has run out of refills or expired, you can't refill it online. Send your care team a secure message asking for a renewal (see Chapter 15, *Secure Messages to Your Care Team*), or call your VA pharmacy. Do this a couple of weeks before you run out.

TIP

Order early

Mail takes time. Request your refill well before you run out, so a holiday or a weather delay doesn't leave you short.

HEADS UP

Only VA prescriptions show here

Prescriptions filled at a drugstore from a non-VA doctor generally won't appear in your VA refill list. Keep your own list of everything you take, and share it with your VA care team.

CHAPTER 14

Tracking Mailed Prescriptions and Your Medication List

After you refill, the obvious next question is: when will it get here? VA.gov can show you, and it can also give you a complete list of your medications to bring to any doctor.

To track a prescription in the mail

1. Sign in to **va.gov** and open **Medications**.
2. Find the prescription you refilled and open its details.
3. Look for the tracking information, which shows the shipping status for prescriptions mailed in roughly the past two weeks.

Your medication list

The Medications tool lets you review current and past prescriptions and see a full medication list. You can print it or save it, which is handy for a specialist visit, a hospital stay or a family member who helps with your care.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why it's worth five minutes

A printed, up-to-date medication list in your wallet or on the refrigerator helps any doctor or paramedic help you faster and more safely.

SCAM ALERT

Fake "package delivery" texts

Scammers send texts saying a package couldn't be delivered and asking you to tap a link. Real VA tracking lives on VA.gov after you sign in yourself. Don't tap links in surprise delivery texts.

CHAPTER 15

Secure Messages to Your Care Team

Secure messaging is like email, but private and inside VA.gov. You can ask your VA care team a question, request a prescription renewal, or follow up after a visit, without a phone call.

To send a message

1. Sign in to **va.gov** and open **Messages** in your health tools.
2. Choose to start a new message.
3. Pick who it goes to: your care team or clinic from the list.
4. Choose a category if asked, such as medication or test results, and type a short subject.
5. Write your question in plain words. Include the medicine name or date of your visit if it helps.
6. Click **Send**.

STAY SAFE

Secure messages are for non-urgent questions only

Your care team may not read a message right away. VA says if you're in crisis, call 911, call 988 and press 1, or go to the nearest emergency room. Never use a message for chest pain, trouble breathing or thoughts of harming yourself.

Reading replies

When your care team answers, the reply appears in your Messages inbox on VA.gov. Sign in and check your inbox every day or two after you send a message, until you get your answer.

TIP

Keep each message to one topic

One question per message gets you a faster, clearer answer, and it's easier to find later.

SCAM ALERT

A link in a "you have a VA message" email

Even if a notice looks real, the safest habit is to ignore its link, type **va.gov** yourself and sign in. If there's a message, it'll be there.

CHAPTER 16

Checking and Scheduling Appointments

The Appointments tool shows your upcoming and past VA appointments in one place, and lets you schedule some kinds of appointments online.

To see your appointments

1. Sign in to **va.gov** and open **Appointments** in your health tools.
2. Your upcoming appointments are listed by date.
3. Click one to see details: the date and time, the clinic, and whether it's in person, by phone or by video.
4. Look at past appointments to find visits you might want to claim travel pay for. See Chapter 20, *Filing for Travel Pay*.

Scheduling and canceling

VA.gov lets you schedule some appointments online. Which kinds depend on your VA facility and the type of care, so if you don't see the option you need, call your clinic. You can also cancel some appointments online.

HEADS UP

Canceling is real

Canceling an appointment frees the slot for someone else, and you may not get it back. Read the screen carefully before you confirm a cancellation.

TIP

Put it on your phone's calendar

In the VA: Health and Benefits app, you can add an appointment to your phone's calendar and get reminders. See Chapter 27, *What You Can Do in the App*.

SCAM ALERT

"Confirm your appointment" calls asking for your SSN

If someone calls about a VA appointment and asks for your Social Security number, bank details or a code sent to your phone, hang up. Check the appointment yourself on VA.gov or call your clinic at a number you trust.

CHAPTER 17

Your Medical Records and Lab Results

Your VA medical records are yours to see. The Medical records tool lets you review lab and test results, allergies, vaccines, care notes and more, without requesting paper copies.

To review your records

1. Sign in to **va.gov** and open **Medical records** in your health tools.
2. Choose a section, such as lab and test results, allergies, vaccines or your care notes.
3. Click an item to see its details.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why it's worth it

You can look back at last year's blood work before a visit, double-check which vaccines you've had, or make sure an allergy is on file. Being informed makes every doctor visit more useful.

GOOD TO KNOW

Results may show up before your doctor calls

Sometimes a result appears online before anyone has talked with you about it. A number marked high or low isn't always cause for worry. If something concerns you, send a secure message (Chapter 15, *Secure Messages to Your Care Team*) or call your care team.

TIP

Use the zoom

Medical records can have small print. Hold **Ctrl** (on a Mac, **Command**) and press the plus key to make the page bigger. Press **Ctrl** and zero to set it back.

CHAPTER 18

Downloading a Copy of Your Records

Sometimes another doctor, a specialist outside VA, or a family member helping with your care needs a copy of your health history. VA.gov lets you create a downloadable copy you can print or share.

To download your records

1. Sign in to **va.gov** and open **Medical records**.
2. Look for the option to download your medical records reports.
3. Choose what to include and the date range, if asked.
4. Create the file and save it. It usually saves to your **Downloads** folder.
5. Open it to make sure it's what you need, then print it or send it.

STAY SAFE

Treat the file like your wallet

A downloaded health record is private. Don't save it on a shared or library computer. If you email it, send it only to someone you know and trust, and delete it from shared computers when you're done.

TIP

A printer is the simplest way to share

Many specialists are happy with a paper copy. Print the pages they need and bring them to your appointment.

GOOD TO KNOW

You may hear the name "Blue Button"

For years, VA's records download was called Blue Button, and some VA pages still use that name.

CHAPTER 19

Medical Supplies and CHAMPVA Meds by Mail

Two smaller tools round out My HealtheVet on VA.gov: ordering some medical supplies, and online help for family members covered by CHAMPVA.

Ordering medical supplies

VA lists ordering some medical supplies among its online health tools. If you receive supplies through VA, look for **Medical supplies** in your health tools after you sign in. If your supply isn't listed, ask your care team.

CHAMPVA and Meds by Mail

CHAMPVA is a VA health program for certain spouses, dependents and survivors. VA says people enrolled in CHAMPVA can manage some of their care online, mainly Meds by Mail prescriptions.

GOOD TO KNOW

Each person needs their own account

A spouse on CHAMPVA signs in with their own Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR account, not the Veteran's.

TIP

Not sure what's covered?

Call MyVA411 at **800-698-2411** and ask to be connected to the right office.

CHAPTER 20

Filing for Travel Pay

If you're eligible for VA travel pay, you can get reimbursed for mileage when you drive to a VA health appointment. For a simple mileage-only claim, you can file right from your past appointments on VA.gov.

To file a simple mileage claim

1. Sign in to **va.gov** and open **Appointments**.
2. Look at your **past appointments** and choose the one you drove to.
3. Choose to start a travel reimbursement claim.
4. Select **Mileage** as your expense.
5. Answer the two short questions about your trip.
6. Read and sign the travel agreement, then submit your claim.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

No receipts needed for mileage

VA says you don't need receipts to file a mileage-only claim. If approved, VA says you should usually get your payment within 3 to 5 business days.

Rules worth knowing

- **File within 30 days** of the appointment. VA says claims filed later are usually denied.
- **One claim per appointment.**
- **Use the Beneficiary Travel Self Service System (BTSSS)** instead if your trip was one way, started from a different address than the one VA has on file, or you're an eligible caregiver, or if you're claiming parking, tolls, meals or lodging.
- **Paper still works.** VA Form 10-3542 can be mailed or turned in, but it's slower.

TIP

Make it a habit

File the same day you get home from your appointment, while the details are fresh. Then you'll never miss the 30-day window.

PART 4

Your Benefits Online

Benefit letters, claim status and decision letters, payment history, direct deposit and keeping your address up to date.

CHAPTER 21

Downloading Your Benefit Letters

Banks, landlords, property tax offices, state agencies and others often ask for proof of your VA benefits. Instead of waiting for a letter in the mail, you can download one from VA.gov in a few minutes.

Letters you may be able to download

- **Benefit Summary Letter**, sometimes called an award letter. It summarizes your VA benefits.
- **Service history** letters.
- **Disability compensation** letters.
- **Health benefits** letters and other proof-of-eligibility letters.

Which letters you see depends on your benefits and eligibility.

To download a letter

1. Go to **va.gov** and sign in.
2. Find **Download VA benefit letters**. It's listed under records on VA.gov, or type "benefit letters" in the VA.gov search box.
3. VA asks you to confirm the mailing address it has on file. That address prints on the letter, so update it if it's wrong. See Chapter 25, *Keeping Your Address and Profile Up to Date*.
4. Choose the letter you need.
5. Click to download. The letter saves as a PDF file, usually in your **Downloads** folder.
6. Open it, check it, and print or send it.

TIP

If the letter won't open

VA says you need a current version of Adobe Acrobat Reader to open these letters. It's a free program from Adobe. If the file opens blank or shows an error, open it with Adobe Acrobat Reader instead of your web browser.

GOOD TO KNOW

Using a letter for a local program

Some state and local programs ask for a VA letter as proof. Ask the office exactly which letter and which details they need before you download, so you only have to do it once.

CHAPTER 22

Checking a Claim and Getting Decision Letters

If you've filed a disability claim, an appeal, or another VA claim, VA.gov lets you check where it stands and read your decision letters online.

To check your claim or appeal

1. Go to **va.gov** and sign in.
2. Find **Check your claim or appeal status**, or search VA.gov for "claim status."
3. You'll see your open claims and appeals, and closed ones too.
4. Click a claim to see its details and what step it's on.

To get a decision letter

1. On the claim status page, find the closed claim you want and click it.
2. Click **Get your claim letters**.
3. Your letters open in a new window. Save each one as a PDF or print it.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why it's worth it

No more wondering whether a letter got lost in the mail. Your decision is there to read, save and share with whoever is helping you with your claim.

TIP

Uploading evidence from your phone

VA's mobile app lets you review claim and appeal status and submit evidence for a claim. That can be easier than mailing copies. See Chapter 27, *What You Can Do in the App*.

SCAM ALERT

Nobody can "speed up" your claim for a fee

If someone promises to get your claim decided faster or your rating raised in exchange for a fee or a share of your back pay, be very careful. See Chapter 29, *Claim Sharks, Buyouts and Paying for Help*.

CHAPTER 23

Reviewing Your Payment History

Want to confirm that this month's payment went out, or see how much you were paid last year? VA.gov shows your VA payment history.

What you'll see

- **Veterans**: disability compensation, pension and education benefit payments.
- **Survivors**: survivors pension and Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) payments.
- The page can also show the status of certain VA debts, if you have any, and how to pay or ask for help.

To see your payment history

1. Go to **va.gov** and sign in.
2. Find **Review your VA payment history**, or search VA.gov for "payment history."
3. Look through the list of payments by date.

TIP

The app shows payments too

The VA: Health and Benefits app has a payments section where you can see your payment history from your phone. See Chapter 27, *What You Can Do in the App*.

HEADS UP

A payment missing?

If a payment doesn't arrive, first check your payment history and your direct deposit details (Chapter 24, *Changing Your Direct Deposit*). Then call MyVA411 at **800-698-2411**. Never trust a caller who says your payment is "on hold" until you confirm your bank details. See Chapter 28, *VA Scams to Know*.

CHAPTER 24

Changing Your Direct Deposit

If you change banks, you'll need to tell VA where to send your payments. You can do it yourself on VA.gov. This is one of the few places in this guide where a setting really matters, so go slowly.

What you can change online

VA says you can update direct deposit in your VA.gov profile for four kinds of payments: disability compensation, pension, education benefits and Foreign Medical Program claims. You'll need your new bank's routing number and your account number, which are printed on your checks or available from your bank.

To change your direct deposit

1. Go to **va.gov** and sign in with your verified Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR account.
2. Open your **profile** (click your name near the top of the page).
3. Find the **Direct deposit information** section.
4. Choose to edit, and select the type of benefit if asked.
5. Type your new routing number and account number carefully. Read them back twice.
6. Save your changes.

HEADS UP

Keep the old account open for a while

Don't close your old bank account until a VA payment has landed in the new one. That way nothing gets lost in between.

Other ways to change it

VA also accepts direct deposit changes by phone, in person at a VA regional office, or on paper with the Direct Deposit Sign-Up Form (SF-1199a). The phone number is listed on VA.gov's direct deposit page, or you can start with MyVA411 at **800-698-2411**.

SCAM ALERT

The direct deposit scam

Criminals try to redirect Veterans' payments into their own accounts. Never change your direct deposit because someone called, texted or emailed you, and never give anyone your VA sign-in or a code from your phone. Make the change yourself, on VA.gov, only when you changed banks.

CHAPTER 25

Keeping Your Address and Profile Up to Date

Your VA.gov profile holds your mailing address, phone numbers and email. Keeping it current means prescriptions, letters and notices reach you, and benefit letters print with the right address.

To update your address

1. Go to **va.gov** and sign in.
2. Open your **profile** by clicking your name near the top of the page.
3. Find your contact information and the mailing address section.
4. Choose to edit, type your new address, and save.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Why it's worth five minutes

VA mails prescriptions to the address it has on file. An old address can mean a missed medication. Update your profile the same week you move.

TIP

Moving for the winter?

If you spend part of the year somewhere else, think ahead about where your mailed prescriptions should go, and ask your VA pharmacy how to handle a temporary address.

HEADS UP

Phone and email matter too

Keep your cell phone number current in your profile and with your sign-in service. If the number changes and you don't update it, you could get locked out. See Chapter 11, *Locked Out or Forgot Your Password*.

PART 5

The VA: Health and Benefits App

VA's official phone app puts prescriptions, appointments, messages, claims and payments in your pocket.

CHAPTER 26

Getting the VA App on Your Phone

VA's official mobile app is called **VA: Health and Benefits**. It does many of the same things as VA.gov, sized for a phone screen, and it uses the same Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR account.

On an iPhone

1. Open the **App Store**.
2. Tap **Search** and type **VA Health and Benefits**.
3. Find the app from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and tap **Get**. The app costs nothing.
4. Open it and tap to sign in, then choose your sign-in service and follow the screens.

On an Android phone

1. Open the **Play Store**.
2. Tap the search bar and type **VA Health and Benefits**.
3. Find the app from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and tap **Install**.
4. Open it, sign in, and follow the screens.

HEADS UP

Check who made it

Before you install, look at the name under the app. It should be the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Look-alike apps with similar names and VA-style logos are not VA.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Sign in with your face or fingerprint

The app supports signing in with your phone's fingerprint or face recognition, so you don't have to type your password every time. See the Ways to Make Life Easier topic for the details.

CHAPTER 27

What You Can Do in the App

Here's what VA lists for the VA: Health and Benefits app. If you only use one VA tool on your phone, make it this one.

Section	What you can do
Prescriptions	View, track and refill VA-dispensed prescriptions.
Appointments	View, track or cancel appointments, add them to your phone's calendar, and get appointment reminders as notifications.
Messages	Send and read secure messages with your VA health care team (non-urgent only).
Claims and appeals	Review status, submit evidence, view decision letters, and check your disability rating.
Payments	View your VA payment history and update direct deposit securely.
Proof of Veteran status	Show a digital proof of Veteran status on your phone.
Find a facility	Find VA locations near you.
Veterans Crisis Line	Reach the Veterans Crisis Line from inside the app.

TIP

Turn on notifications

When the app asks to send notifications, choose **Allow**. That's how appointment reminders reach you.

GOOD TO KNOW

Some things are easier on a computer

Downloading long medical records and benefit letters is easier on a bigger screen. Use the app for quick jobs and VA.gov on a computer for the bigger ones.

STAY SAFE

Lock your phone

Your health records and payments are now on your phone, so make sure the phone itself has a passcode, fingerprint or face lock.

PART 6

Staying Safe & Getting Help

The scams aimed at Veterans, how family can help the right way, who to call, and your cheat-sheet.

CHAPTER 28

VA Scams to Know

Veterans have steady monthly benefits and a deep sense of trust in anything with the VA name on it. Scammers know both. Here are the patterns to watch for, and one simple rule that beats all of them.

The fake VA call, text or email

Someone claiming to be from VA says there's a problem with your benefits, your sign-in, a refund, or a "new program," and asks you to confirm your Social Security number, bank account, VA sign-in or a code texted to your phone. Caller ID can be faked to show "VA" or a real VA number.

SCAM ALERT

The one rule

Hang up, delete the text, or close the email. Then reach VA yourself: sign in at **va.gov** by typing it in, or call MyVA411 at **800-698-2411**. If there's a real issue, it'll be there.

Other patterns to watch for

- **"Your sign-in is about to be shut off"** with a link. Real sign-in starts at VA.gov. See Chapter 10, *Signing In to VA.gov, Step by Step*.
- **A request for a sign-in code.** A code sent to your phone is for you alone. Nobody from VA, Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR needs you to read it to them.
- **A request to change your direct deposit.** See Chapter 24, *Changing Your Direct Deposit*.
- **"Pay a fee to get your back pay"** or a gift card, wire transfer or cryptocurrency for anything.
- **Offers of secret or new benefits** that require your information first.

STAY SAFE

If you already gave out information

Don't be embarrassed; act quickly. Change your password with your sign-in service, check your direct deposit on VA.gov, call your bank if you shared bank details, and call MyVA411 at **800-698-2411**. You can also report the scam to the FTC at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

TIP

A family safe word

Agree with family on a word that a real relative would know. It helps with "grandparent" scams, which often target the same people.

CHAPTER 29

Claim Sharks, Buyouts and Paying for Help

Some businesses advertise help with VA disability claims and then charge large fees, or take a share of your back pay or future payments. People sometimes call them "claim sharks." Others offer you a lump sum of cash now in exchange for your future VA payments or pension.

Red flags

- They want money up front, or a percentage of your future payments, before anything is filed.
- They promise a higher rating or a faster decision.
- They ask for your VA.gov sign-in so they can "manage" your claim for you.
- They want you to sign a contract on the spot.
- They offer cash now in exchange for your monthly benefits.

SCAM ALERT

Bill's rule: never pay anyone up front to file a VA claim

Before you pay anyone or sign anything, call the Portage County Veterans Service Commission at **(330) 297-3545** and ask what they can do for you. See Chapter 31, *Where to Get Help: VA, the County and the Crisis Line*.

Never hand over your sign-in

Your Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR account is tied to your identity. Anyone who has it can see your records and may be able to change your direct deposit. Don't share it with a claims company, and don't let anyone set up an account for you in their own email.

STAY SAFE

Already signed something?

Don't panic. Gather the paperwork, call the county veterans service office for advice, and change your sign-in password if you shared it.

CHAPTER 30

Helping a Veteran in Your Family

Many Veterans get help with VA.gov from a spouse, son, daughter or caregiver. That's wonderful. A few habits keep the help safe and keep the Veteran in charge.

Good habits for helpers

1. **The account belongs to the Veteran.** Use the Veteran's own email and cell phone number when you set it up.
2. **Sit side by side.** Let the Veteran type the password and read the codes when possible.
3. **Write it down together.** Record which sign-in service they use and keep it with their important papers.
4. **Don't change direct deposit** or cancel appointments without the Veteran's clear say-so.
5. **Respect privacy.** Medical records and messages are personal. Look only at what you've been asked to help with.

GOOD TO KNOW

Caregivers and travel pay

VA says eligible caregivers file travel pay claims through the Beneficiary Travel Self Service System (BTSSS), not the quick mileage form. See Chapter 20, *Filing for Travel Pay*.

TIP

Formal permission is a separate matter

If you need legal authority to act for a Veteran, such as for a claim, ask VA through MyVA411 or the county veterans service office about the proper way. Sharing a password is not the same as having permission.

WHAT THIS DOES FOR YOU

Online isn't required

If the Veteran would rather not go online at all, VA can help by phone, by mail or in person. Nobody should feel pushed into a website.

CHAPTER 31

Where to Get Help: VA, the County and the Crisis Line

Bill can help with the technology. For questions about your benefits or care, these are the right people, and every number below was checked.

If you or a Veteran you know is in crisis

STAY SAFE

Veterans Crisis Line: dial 988, then press 1

Available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also text **838255** or chat online at VeteransCrisisLine.net. You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to use it. In an emergency, call 911.

Everyday VA help

Who	How to reach them
MyVA411	**800-698-2411**. VA's main information line, with live agents 24/7. A good first call when you don't know who to ask.
Sign-in help	**866-279-3677**, then option 1, for help with VA's sign-in changes.
Your VA clinic or pharmacy	The number is on your prescription label and appointment letters.

Right here in Portage County

The **Portage County Veterans Service Commission**, based in Ravenna, helps local Veterans and their families with VA benefits and county veterans services. Call **(330) 297-3545** or visit **portageohvets.gov**. Call ahead to confirm hours and the office location.

TIP

What to bring

When you meet with anyone about a claim, bring your DD-214, any VA letters you've received, and a list of your questions.

CHAPTER 32

When to Call Bill

VA questions belong with VA and the county office. Technology questions belong with me. Here's where I can save you time and frustration.

Good reasons to call

- Setting up your Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR account and getting through identity verification, side by side.
- Your old My HealtheVet or DS Logon login stopped working and you don't know where to start.
- Installing the VA: Health and Benefits app and turning on face or fingerprint sign-in.
- Learning to refill prescriptions, send secure messages and download letters, until it feels routine.
- Getting a printer working so you can print benefit letters and medical records.
- Setting up a password system so you never get locked out again.
- A second opinion on a call, text or email that claims to be from VA.

GOOD TO KNOW

This pairs with Bill's Device Training

My Device Training sessions are patient, one-on-one lessons on your own computer, tablet or phone. A session on VA.gov and the VA app is a natural fit.

SCAM ALERT

I'll never ask for your VA password

When I help, you type your own passwords and codes. If anyone, including someone claiming to be me, asks you to read them a code, hang up.

FROM BILL

How to reach me

Call or text **(330) 200-8042**, or book at **billshometech.com/book**. Bill's Home Tech serves **Portage County, Ohio**, with 30+ years of professional experience. If you reach my assistant **Sophie** on the main line, she can answer simple questions and get you on my schedule. My help is $49 remote · $99 in your home. The guides themselves are free.

— Bill

CHAPTER 33

Your VA.gov Cheat-Sheet

The most-used steps, all in one place.

I want to…	Do this
Sign in	Type **va.gov**, click **Sign in**, choose Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR.
Refill a prescription	Health tools > **Medications** > request refill.
Track a mailed prescription	**Medications** > open the prescription > tracking.
Message your care team	Health tools > **Messages** > start a new message.
See appointments	Health tools > **Appointments**.
Lab results	Health tools > **Medical records**.
Benefit letter	**Download VA benefit letters**, confirm address, download.
Payment history	**Review your VA payment history**.
Travel pay	**Appointments** > past appointment > travel claim, within 30 days.
Direct deposit	Profile > **Direct deposit information**.

Five safety rules

1. Start at **va.gov**, typed in yourself. Never from a link in a text or email.
2. Never read a sign-in code to anyone.
3. Change direct deposit only when you changed banks, and only on VA.gov.
4. Never pay anyone up front to file a VA claim.
5. Unsure? Hang up and call MyVA411 at **800-698-2411**.

Keep this handy

Item	Write it here
My sign-in service (Login.gov, ID.me or CLEAR)	_____
Email I sign in with	_____
Where my backup codes are kept	_____
My VA clinic phone	_____
My VA pharmacy phone	_____
Veterans Crisis Line	Dial 988, then press 1

Item	Write it here
MyVA411	800-698-2411
Portage County Veterans Service Commission	(330) 297-3545
Bill's Home Tech	(330) 200-8042

FROM BILL

You've got this

Every Veteran who uses VA.gov comfortably started exactly where you are. Take it one task at a time, and call me if you'd like a hand.