



Creating More Independence



Welcome to VHA

A guide for your health care journey

416.489.2500 or 1.888.314.6622

What is VHA?



VHA is a not-for-profit, charitable organization founded in 1925. We provide services to people who need help at home, school, work, or long-term care facilities, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Our services include personal support, home care, nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy, speech-language therapy, nutrition consultations and social work, delivered by more than 2,500 qualified providers. VHA is committed to giving you the best service and support possible. We will work with you and your family to understand your needs, help you manage your condition, and support you to achieve more independence. We believe you should be involved in every decision about your care.

VHA Home HealthCare 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 Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) determined you were eligible for our services and decided which and how many hours of service you will receive. VHA and your care coordinator will work together and share information about your progress while you receive care.

VHA's Vision

High quality care delivered with great heart
– for every person, every time,
everywhere.

Our Mission

Creating possibilities for more independence, championing the needs of our clients and families and delivering high quality, integrated care.



Our Core Beliefs

Our care must be:

Client-driven because what matters most to clients and families is what counts

Spectacular and continuously **focused** on quality improvement and safety

Inclusive and **committed** to serving the most vulnerable in our communities

Inspired and **creative**, delivered by a skilled team that has tremendous heart

Integrated and **collaborative** to unearth innovative answers to complex challenges



A Message for You

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. What I remember most of 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 learn the process. If there's one thing I learned about successful home care, it's that communication is key. And if you can't take in all the information, 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 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 & Family

Voice Liaison. 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 insight 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/clientvoice. 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
Former Caregiver of a VHA Client
Current VHA Client & Family Voice Liaison



As a client, you always have a voice at VHA.

Do you have to reschedule your appointment? 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.

Do you have a complaint about your care provider? If you contact us about an issue with your service, here's what you can expect:

ON THE SAME DAY: Our Customer Service Centre 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 was resolved, or if it is being moved to a more senior VHA staff member to address it.

AFTER THE FIRST WEEK: If your issue is not resolved, it continues to move to more senior staff until it is resolved.

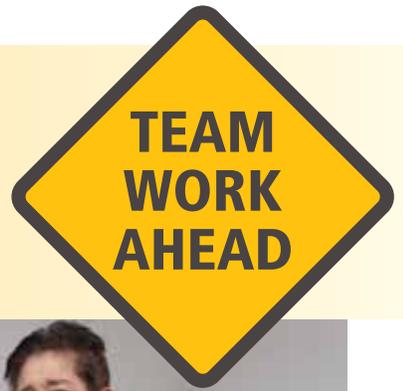
We always want to hear if you think we are doing a great job or if we could do more to meet your needs. Your feedback and service

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!



Your Rights

As a VHA client, you have the right to...



QUALITY CARE

- Receive excellent care from highly skilled care providers.
- Receive fair, equitable and safe service.
- Take part in VHA's routine evaluations of your service provider(s) and care.

RESPECT

- Get courteous, quality service that respects you, your dignity, culture, gender identity, and lifestyle.
- Have your information kept confidential.
- Get a timely, courteous investigation into any service complaint(s) you may have.

INFORMATION

- Be informed of your rights in writing.
- Know who is providing your care, what their role is, and the types of services you will receive.
- Get information about VHA Home HealthCare's complaint process and how to contact VHA with any concerns, complaints or compliments.
- Know how your information is collected and used.



- Be informed of any possible costs (e.g., equipment purchase).

CHOICE

- Accept or refuse our services.
- Play an active role in making decisions about your care and setting your goals.
- Have a friend, family member or other important person present during service or at any meeting with VHA.

Your Responsibilities

This is what we expect from our clients...

RESPECT

- Treat VHA care providers with respect, courtesy and without discrimination or harassment.
- Be available for the scheduled visit time.
- Be ready for the appointment.

COLLABORATION

- Work with your VHA care provider to set goals and make progress towards them.
- Give the VHA care provider information that may help with your care and advise VHA of any changes in your condition.
- Purchase or rent any needed equipment/supplies and make sure they are in good working order.



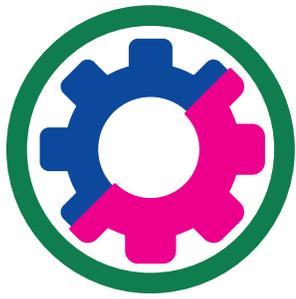
SAFETY

- Provide a safe working environment for the care provider.
- Do not smoke during the visit.
- 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

- Give consent before receiving service.
- Give at least 24 hours' notice to cancel or change the appointment.
- Follow VHA Home HealthCare's complaint process if you are making a complaint.





VHA's Services

Many of our services are free through your LHIN (Local Health Integration Network). VHA also offers some charitable services free of charge. Your LHIN care coordinator should be your first point of contact, but if the LHIN cannot meet all your care needs and it is not a charitable service we offer, you can purchase services directly from VHA.

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 private services, please call 416-489-2500 ext. 4649.

Speech-Language Pathology

Our Speech Therapists treat language, communication and speech difficulties, and assess and treat swallowing and feeding problems.

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.

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 problems, feeding difficulties and fine motor problems.



Nursing

VHA nursing services include post-hospital care; wound and foot care; chronic disease management; infusion therapy; medications, pain and symptom management; and pediatric and palliative care.

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, wound care, 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.

Hoarding and Clutter Support

VHA's professionals compassionately support clients who are living with clutter to help them reclaim their home. Our team evaluates home safety and functioning, develops strategies and plans to help clients stay focused on de-cluttering, and connects clients to clutter removal resources.



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.

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.



Charitable Services

VHA charitable services help people who do not have the financial means to purchase needed services.

Homelessness Prevention and Housing Stability

Hoarding Support Services help people living with extreme clutter which poses health or safety risks. Services include in-home assessment and consultation. Trained staff and volunteers work with clients towards achieving personal goals, discarding items and developing a plan to help manage the home. Locations: Durham Region, London and Middlesex County, and Toronto.

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: Durham Region, London, Toronto and York Region.

Family Support Services

The **Support for Families in Crisis** 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.

The **Parent Relief and Connect** program helps low-income families and those experiencing mental illness 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/families to become more resilient and independent.



Health and Wellness Programs

Our in-person **Mobile Wellness** programs provide information about falls prevention, brain health, and chronic disease prevention. Through our Ring and Reach webinars, VHA also provides family caregivers with free topic-specific support information.

To learn more about our charitable programs, please speak to your VHA care coordinator or call us at 416-489-2500 or 1-888-314-6622.

Virtual Care

VHA is able to offer a variety of services via virtual care depending on the clinical situation. Please speak to your service provider to see if virtual care is right for you.



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 a United Way Toronto & York Region Anchor Agency

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 to 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!

www.vha.ca/cdsm

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.

- a. Wet hands and wrists with warm water.
- b. Apply soap.
- c. 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.
- d. Rinse your hands thoroughly under running water.
- e. Pat your hands dry with paper towel.
- f. 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 your hands when you are 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.

- a. Apply 1 to 2 pumps of the hand sanitizer to the palms of dry hands.
- b. 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.
- c. Let hands dry (do not use paper towel).

Your hands are now safe!





Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

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



GLOVES



GOGGLES



GOWN



MASK



FACE SHIELD

Infectious Diseases Screening

As part of routine care, VHA staff will ask you at every visit:

- If you have a new or worsening cough, shortness of breath or fever
- If you, or someone you have been in close contact with, have travelled in the last 14 days.

Please inform your VHA staff if you have any of the above symptoms.

Where can I buy my own PPE such as cloth (non-medical) 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 are available through many online retailers including:

www.walmart.ca

www.staples.ca

www.amazon.ca

<https://maskcanada.square.site/>

<https://plusguardiancanada.ca/>

<https://ca.shopatshowcase.com/>

VHA has a small number of cloth masks generously donated by members of the community. Clients can reach out to their VHA supervisor to request a cloth mask and can be provided with one if available.

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.



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 use non-slip mats underneath the rugs.
- 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.
- Cover electrical sockets for children's safety.
- Attach large furniture/TVs to the wall.
- Keep blinds/curtain cords out of children's reach.

ENTRANCE

- Secure doors to the outside outdoors with child-proof 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 cleaning supplies, sharp utensils and hot liquids out of children's reach.
- Use child-proof locks on cabinets.
- Keep heavier items in lower cupboards.
- 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.
- Keep your phone or emergency call button in an easy place to reach.

STAIRS

- 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 kids’ reach.
- Consider using a bath chair in the tub.
- 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.

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.
- 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 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.



VHA Home HealthCare's

Information Practices

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

Keeping your personal information private is very important to us. 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 goal achievement 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 professional college audits.

At any time, you may withdraw your consent for VHA to collect, use and/or disclose your personal health information. You have the right to access and request a copy of



your health record (contact VHA Records Management: 416-489-2500 or 1-888-314-6622, ext 8774).

If you have any questions about your personal health information or want to make corrections to your health record, 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 or addressed your requests for access, you may contact VHA's Privacy Officer and/or the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Ontario at 1-800-387-0073 or 416-326-3333; info@ipc.on.ca.

Stay connected on social media:

Facebook: vhahomehealthcare

Twitter: @vhacaregiving

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