



Chronic Pain Resources for Veteran Families

Chronic pain is more prevalent and of greater intensity in veterans than in the general population. Common forms of chronic pain among veterans include **joint pain** and **back pain** (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020a).

Older adults are at a higher risk for chronic pain (National Institute on Aging, 2021). Most Michigan veterans are **over age 65** (U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2018).

Food insecurity affects as many as 25% of veterans (Widome et al., 2015) and is linked to **chronic pain and obesity**, which are common conditions among veterans (Higgins et al., 2016).

Check out the MSU Extension articles **“Health programs for veterans living with chronic pain”** at <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/health-programs-for-veterans-living-with-chronic-pain> and

“Healthy foods benefit veterans living with chronic pain” at <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/healthy-foods-benefit-veterans-living-with-chronic-pain>.



SUPPORT FOR VETERANS

Michigan State University (MSU) Extension offers evidence-based programs with alternative approaches for pain management:

- **Chronic Pain PATH (Personal Action Towards Health):** In this six week series, participants are provided tools and a supportive environment to become effective self-managers of their chronic pain. Sign up for a class on MSU Extension’s PATH Events page at <https://www.canr.msu.edu/path/events>.
- **Stress Less With Mindfulness:** In this five-week series, participants are introduced to mindfulness concepts and practices to reduce stress and its related symptoms. Sign up for a class on MSU Extension’s Mindfulness Events page at https://www.canr.msu.edu/stress_less_with_mindfulness/events.
- **Michigan Substance Use, Prevention, Education and Recovery (MiSUPER):** This collaborative project combines education and training events to increase awareness of opioid use disorder issues. Learn more at <https://www.canr.msu.edu/misuper/>.

VETERAN AFFAIRS RESOURCES

Unrelieved and persistent chronic pain can contribute to depression, anxiety, poor sleep patterns, decreased quality of life, and substance use disorders. It is also a risk factor for suicide.

- ❖ The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) **Whole Health Initiative** recommends eating an anti-inflammatory diet, rich in fruits and vegetables to help reduce chronic pain caused by inflammation.



In addition to healthy nutrition, the Whole Health Initiative recommends other self-care practices including:

- Physical activity
- Getting enough sleep
- Maintaining healthy relationships
- Breathing exercises and meditation

(U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, 2020b).

Get assistance in making the best decisions about your healthcare and learn about essential elements of good pain care through the VHA’s **Pain Management Program** at <https://www.va.gov/painmanagement>.

HEALTHY FOOD RESOURCES FOR VETERANS

Access to healthy foods can help improve veterans' health outcomes and quality of life.

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture's **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** offers temporary food assistance for eligible low-income families and individuals. Learn more at https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-71547_5527---.00.html.
- The **Food Bank Council of Michigan** aids SNAP enrollment through the **Food & Other Resources Helpline** at (888) 544-8773.
- The **Double Up Food Bucks** program matches fruit and veggie purchases-up to \$20 a day.
 - Double Up Food Bucks is available at more than 250 grocery stores and farmers markets in Michigan. It supports local farmers and helps Bridge Card holders bring home more fruits and veggies.
 - Questions? Email info@doubleupfoodbucks.org or call (866) 586-2796. Learn more at <https://doubleupfoodbucks.org/>.



Photo by [Kindel Media](#) from [Pexels](#)



EXPLORE MICHIGAN FRESH!

Find tips on growing, handling, and preserving Michigan-grown foods as well as delicious healthy recipes at www.canr.msu.edu/mi_fresh.

VETERAN OUTREACH

MSU Extension provides veterans with programs and services supporting personal and financial wellness:

SNAP Outreach for Veterans: This program explains the SNAP benefit and offers enrollment assistance to veterans.

Heroes to Hives: This unique program offers professional training and community development centered around beekeeping.

<https://www.canr.msu.edu/veterans>



REFERENCES

- Higgins, D. M., Buta, E., Dorflinger, L., Masheb, R. M., Ruser, C. B., Goulet, J. L., & Heapy, A. A. (2016). Prevalence and correlates of painful conditions and multimorbidity in national sample of overweight/obese veterans. *Journal of Rehabilitation Research & Development (JRRD)*, 53(1), 71–82. <https://www.rehab.research.va.gov/jour/2016/531/jrrd-2014-10-0251.html>
- National Institute on Aging. (2021). *Pain: You can get help*. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/pain-you-can-get-help#acute>
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2018). Veterans as a percent of county population (FY2017): Michigan. https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/State_Summaries_Michigan.pdf
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2020a). *VA research on PAIN MANAGEMENT*. https://www.research.va.gov/pubs/docs/va_factsheets/Pain.pdf
- U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. (2020b). *Whole health: Information for veterans. Eating to reduce inflammation*. https://www.va.gov/WHOLEHEALTH/veteran-handouts/docs/EatReduceInflam_Final508_07-25-2019.pdf
- Widome, R., Jensen, A., Bangerter, A., & Fu, S. (2015). Food insecurity among veterans of the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. *Public Health Nutrition*, 18(5), 844-849. doi:10.1017/S136898001400072X