

Veterans' Health in South Carolina

Introduction to the Veteran Population

In 2012, two studies came out stating that male and female veterans and active duty military across the US report poorer health and unhealthier lifestyles than civilians^{1,2}.

There are approximately 20 million adult veterans living in the US³. Over 400,000 of them live in South Carolina (SC)³, which represents 10% of the adult population in the state⁴. In SC, veterans are primarily non-Hispanic white (72%); male (89%); age 65 or older (40%); and 40% have a disability^{4,5}.

Primary Prevention

Preventing chronic disease starts with you. Your lifestyle, including maintaining a healthy diet, being physically active, and reducing risky behaviors, greatly impacts your health and overall quality of life.

Keep up the good work!

Regardless of differences in sex and age, compared to non-veterans, veterans are more likely to:

Have gotten a flu shot in the past year	80% higher
Be a non-smoker	20% higher
Have not engaged in binge drinking in the past 30 days	30% higher

Although the proportion of those participating in leisure time physical activity in the past 30 days does not differ between veterans and non-veterans, we are exceeding the Healthy People 2020 goal (HP2020)⁶ in SC!

SC VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS	HP2020
73%	67%

We all have room to improve!

There is no difference between veterans and non-veterans in regards to the proportion of those:

Have not engaged in heavy/binge drinking in the past 30 days	93%
Consuming fruit 1 or more times per day*	53%
Consuming vegetables 1 or more times per day*	75%

Screening for Disease

Visiting a doctor regularly and following screening recommendations for cancers and chronic diseases is important for preventing disease or early diagnosis.

Keep up the good work!

Regardless of differences in sex and age, compared to non-veterans, veterans have better odds of:

Having seen a doctor for a checkup in the past year	70% higher
Meeting the cervical cancer screening recommendations (women ages 21-65)	120% higher
Meeting the colorectal cancer screening recommendations (ages 50-75)*	30% higher
Getting their blood sugar tested in the past three years	60% higher

All women have room to improve!

The proportion of those meeting the breast cancer screening recommendation (ages 50-74) does not differ between veterans and non-veterans, and we are not meeting the Healthy People 2020 (HP2020) goal⁶ in SC.

SC VETERANS AND NON-VETERANS	HP2020
76%	81%

Chronic Diseases

An unhealthy lifestyle and not seeing your doctor regularly can lead to chronic diseases, which are leading causes of death and disability in the US⁷. However, successfully managing a chronic disease is possible, which reduces complications and early death.

Keep up the good work!

Regardless of differences in sex and age, compared to non-veterans, veterans have better odds of:

Not having hypertension	20% higher
Not currently having asthma	30% higher

We all have room to improve!

There is no difference between veterans and non-veterans in regards to the proportion of those:

Living with diabetes	12%
Living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	8%

Information about Services

US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA): va.gov

My HealtheVet: <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/mhv-portal-web/web/myhealthvet/home>

Dorn VA Medical Center (Columbia): <https://www.columbiasc.va.gov/>

Johnson VA Medical Center (Charleston): <https://www.charleston.va.gov/>

Social Media

Johnson VA Medical Center (Charleston):
f <https://www.facebook.com/VAMCCCharleston/>
t @CharlestonVAMC

Dorn VA Medical Center (Columbia):
f <https://www.facebook.com/VAColumbiaSC>
t @VAMCColumbiaSC

VA:
f <https://www.facebook.com/VeteransAffairs/>
t @VeteransHealth

Transportation Resources

Lieutenant Governor's Office on Aging:
<https://www.getcaresc.com/guide/transportation>
1-800-868-9095

Hands on Health South Carolina:
http://www.handsonhealth-sc.org/golocal/golocalmap.php?mplus_topic_id=L134
1-843-792-3303



Information about Health Topics

Veterans Health Library: <http://www.veteranshealthlibrary.org/>

Whole Health Library: <http://projects.hsl.wisc.edu/SERVICE/veteran-materials/index.html>

Tobacco and Health: <https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/quit-tobacco/>

Telephone Numbers

Veterans Health Administration: 1-800-293-8262 (toll free) or 803-776-4000 (local)

Veterans Benefit Administration: 1-800-827-1000

Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 [Press 1]

Data Details

Data on adult behaviors and health conditions are collected in SC from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). The data presented here are from 2015-2016. Indicators marked with an asterisk (*) are from 2015 only. Veteran status was determined by this question: "Have you ever served on active duty in the United States Armed Forces, either in the regular military or in a National Guard or military reserve unit?" The SC BRFSS is administered by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control.

*Disability is defined as reporting: being limited in any way in any activities because of physical, mental or emotional problems; having a health problem that requires the use of special equipment; being deaf or having serious hearing loss; being blind or having serious difficulty seeing; having serious difficulty remembering, concentrating, or making decisions; having serious difficulty walking or climbing stairs; having difficulty dressing or bathing; or having difficulty doing errands alone due to a physical, mental, or emotional condition.

Developed by:

Division of Surveillance, Bureau of Health Improvement and Equity, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, in collaboration with staff from the Dorn VA Medical Center in Columbia, SC

For more information about SC BRFSS data, contact:
Chelsea Richard, MSPH (richarcl@dhec.sc.gov; 803-898-1047)

References

1. Lehavot K et al. Am J Prev Med. 2012;42(5):473-480.
2. Hoerster K et al. Am J Prev Med. 2012;43(5):483-489.
3. Veteran Population. National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics. Accessed 27Jun2018. [URL: https://www.va.gov/vetdata/veteran_population.asp].
4. American Community Survey. US Census Bureau. Accessed 27Jun2018. [URL: https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml?src=bkml].
5. South Carolina Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (2015-2016). Division of Surveillance, Bureau of Health Improvement and Equity, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control.
6. Healthy People 2020. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Accessed 27Jun2018. [URL: <https://www.healthypeople.gov/>].
7. Chronic Disease Overview. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accessed 27Jun2018. [URL: <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/overview/index.htm>].