

Women's Health Newsletter

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2025



My Fellow Veteran,

In this edition of our newsletter, you will discover content for February and March 2025. We certainly have had quite the cold winter to date so I hope this finds you all well and warm.

It was March of 1987 when congress declared the month of March as National Women's History Month. It is a time to reflect, observe, and honor the many contributions our foremothers have made to our great nation. I am honored to join you in being part of the fastest growing groups in the Veteran population and proud to be able to serve you and your needs.

Please mark your calendars for March 20th—we will be hosting a focus group in the conference room on 8D and would love to have you join us. Additionally, please be on the lookout for information coming separately regarding our next public forum and baby shower currently scheduled for April 10, 2025.

If there are any specific topics you would like to see featured in future editions of our monthly newsletter, please don't hesitate to reach out to our Program Support Assistant, Jamie Harrigan at (518)626-7274 or Jamie.Harrigan@va.gov.

As always thank you for your service to our great nation.

Respectfully,

Christine Goodwill, BSN, RN

Women's Health Program Manager
Albany Stratton VA Medical Center



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U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs
Stratton VA Medical Center

Did you know stroke is the third most common cause of death in women? In fact, one in five women will have a stroke in their lifetime. Surprised? You’re not alone. Women Veterans may not know that high blood pressure, post-traumatic stress disorder, and unhealthy lifestyles post-service may put you at greater risk.

While it’s easy to let your health fall to the bottom of your list, knowing and managing your risk for stroke may save your life. Most strokes are preventable! Managing blood pressure is key, along with lifestyle habits like staying active, eating well, reducing stress, smoking cessation and limiting alcohol. Your VA health care team is here to support you with lifelong risk reduction, risk assessments and screenings, diagnosis and treatment, blood pressure management, and more. And you have access to VA resources for nutrition, exercise, and mental health care.

Don’t skip a beat on your heart or brain health! Give yourself one less thing to worry about and schedule your next checkup to speak with your VA health care provider about your risk. Focusing on the [American Heart Association’s Essential 8](#) can keep you healthier and reduce your risk for stroke and other heart conditions. This includes eating better, being more active, quitting tobacco, getting healthy sleep, managing weight, controlling cholesterol, managing blood sugar, and managing blood pressure.

Visit the [Women Veterans Heart Health page](#) or the [American Stroke Association](#) to learn more. Call, text, and chat with the [Women Veterans Call Center](#) (1-855-VA-WOMEN) to speak to a real person who can help you enroll, schedule an appointment, and connect you to care you can trust.

The good news? Four in five strokes are preventable! Managing blood pressure is key, along with [lifestyle habits](#) like staying active, eating well, reducing stress, and limiting smoking or alcohol. Even focusing on just one or two of these changes at a time can make a big difference for your heart health.

Your VA health care team can provide lifelong risk reduction, risk assessments and screenings, blood pressure management, diagnosis and treatment, and healthy lifestyle support through resources for nutrition, exercise, mental health care, smoking/alcohol cessation, and more.

1 IN 5 U.S. WOMEN WILL HAVE A STROKE

4 Out of 5 Strokes Are Preventable



WOMEN VETERAN RISK FACTORS

- High blood pressure/cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Obesity
- Substance use
- Poor diet and exercise
- Family history and race
- History of preeclampsia
- Mental health (PTSD, depression)

SYMPTOMS OF STROKE

If you experience these symptoms, **call 911.**

- Face drooping
- Numbness or weakness of limbs
- Difficulty speaking and confusion
- Sudden trouble seeing
- Dizziness and trouble walking
- Severe headache

Speak to your VA health care provider about your risks.

STROKE WARNING SIGNS

Stroke is an emergency and every minute counts! Knowing how to spot the signs and act quickly can help save a life and reduce the long-term effects of stroke. Use the F.A.S.T. method to remember: Face, Arms, Speech, Time to act. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z6N3fHJch2o>

Not sure how to recognize a stroke when it happens? Play these interactive games to learn the warning signs and F.A.S.T.! <https://www.stroke.org/en/fast-experience>



Did you know that February is one of the most frequently misspelled words in the English Language?

SHE WEARS THE BOOTS

[She Wears the Boots: A Podcast for Women Veterans](#) is an official VA sponsored podcast that focuses on topics relevant to Servicewomen and women Veterans. The goal of this podcast is to enhance the lives of women Veterans by sharing information on women's health care services offered through VA.

All episodes are created for Veterans but employees and family members of Veterans may benefit from listening as well. Each episode is around 15-20 minutes long so they can be digested in one sitting. New episodes come out about once a month. Several foundational episodes were recorded at the beginning of the series in 2020 while more recent topics focus on health care topics that might be of specific interest to women Veterans.

Women Veterans may have unique factors related to their military service that increase their risk of heart disease. Listen to this She Wears the Boots episode to learn more. <https://www.spreaker.com/episode/chronic-pain-in-women-veterans--50086869>



NATIONAL CHOPSTICK DAY

Each year on National Chopsticks Day, people worldwide celebrate the humble and ancient utensils on February 6th.

Around 1200 B.C., Chinese cooks began using chopsticks to prepare food. These tools were likely long enough to reach into hot cooking pots. Then about 400 B.C., when fuels for cooking became scarce, food was prepared in smaller pieces reducing the number of resources needed to cook it. At the same time, the need for sharp eating utensils faded, and shorter chopsticks entered the scene.

Once these handy eating tools found their way to the dinner table, they spread around the world. Portable and elegant in their design, they also vary in style from region to region.

Today chopsticks may be made from wood such as bamboo or aspen. Elaborately carved chopsticks may be cut from jade, ivory, or wood, and artisans may ornately paint some chopsticks with miniature scenes.



How do I get started?

- * Visit the My HealthVet site at
www.myhealth.va.gov
- * Select the SIGN IN OR CREATE ACCOUNT
BUTTON
- * Select SIGN IN THROUGH OUR VA.GOV
SIGN-IN PAGE
- * Then select either



- * You only need to create ONE of these sign
in accounts
- * Then select CREATE AN ACCOUNT

Both ID.me and Login.gov will allow you to
verify your identity online, in-person OR
through a video appointment. You will be
prompted to choose which option you want.

For additional assistance please contact your Facility
My HealthVet Coordinator 518-626-5000 Ext. 61514

Lost Access To Your My HealthVet Account? Let's Get You Back In!



Visit www.myhealth.va.gov for more information



NATIONAL WEAR RED DAY®

Friday, Feb. 7

**RED IS OUR COLOR.
READY TO ROCK YOURS?**

Our No. 1 killer, cardiovascular disease, unfairly targets women. We have been left out of research, testing, treatment and funding. Fortunately, women have an amazing resource – each other.

Women at every age, stage and season of life need our support, and that's why we Go Red.

TO BE SEEN.

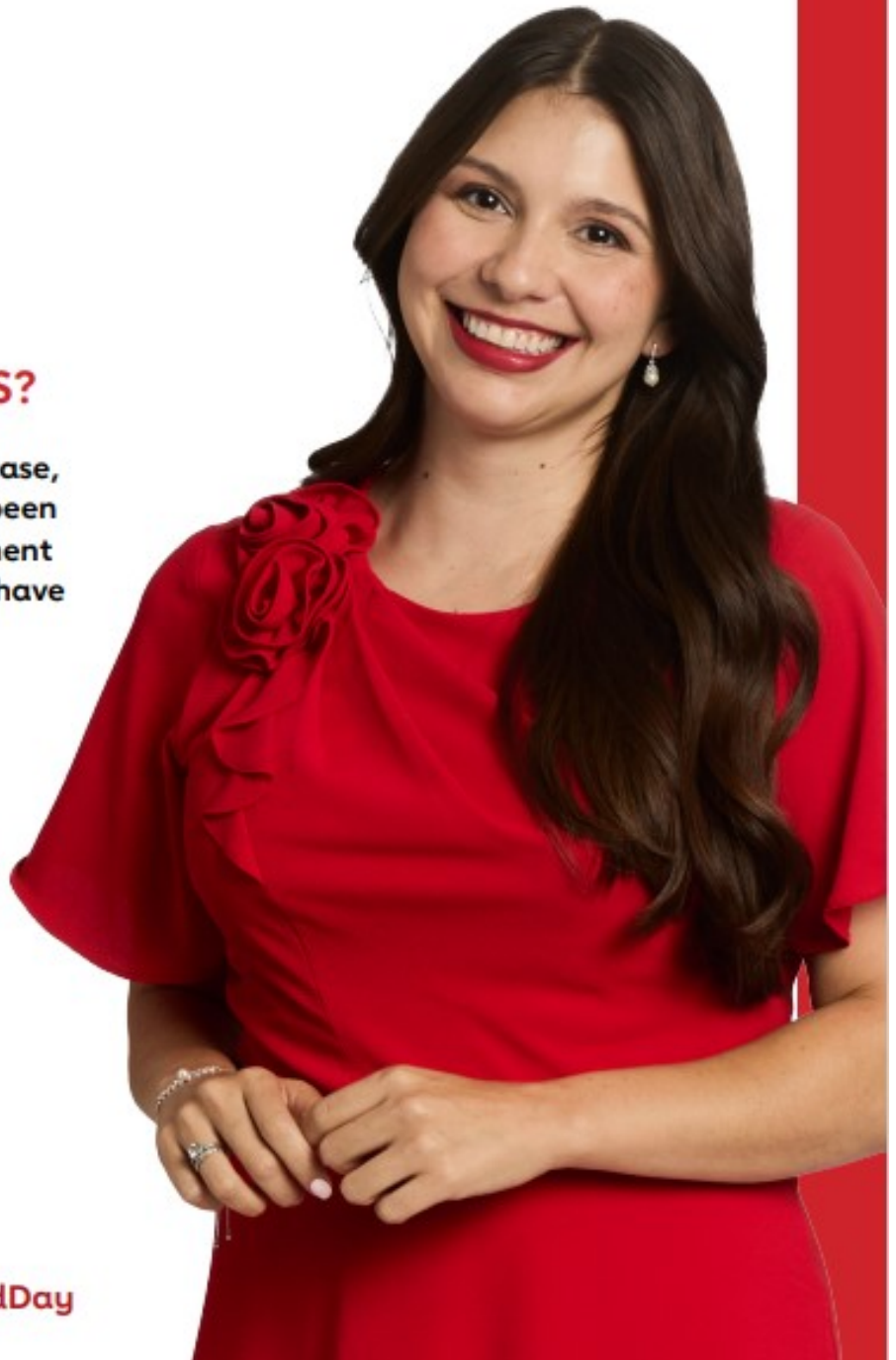
TO BE COUNTED.

TO BE HEARD.

TO MAKE AN IMPACT.

On Friday, Feb. 7, share your heart as we **WEAR RED** together.

WearRedDay.org | [#WearRedDay](https://twitter.com/WearRedDay)





WOMEN AND STRESS

Chronic Stress and Women's Health

Adapting to stress is important because chronic, unmanaged stress can lead to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. These problems impact 1 in 5 women each year.



Stress can also lead to unhealthy habits:



Overeating



Physical inactivity



Smoking

Healthy Ways to Cope with Stress



Speak to your doctor about stress in your life and how it may impact your health.



Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.



Connect with your community or faith-based organizations. Get in touch online, through social media or by phone or mail.



Take breaks from watching, reading or listening to news stories.

Take care of your body.



Eat healthy, well-balanced meals.



Exercise regularly.



Get plenty of sleep.



Avoid tobacco and excessive alcohol use.



Take deep breaths, stretch regularly.

Learn More at heart.org/Stress

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SEARCH
ALBANY VA MINUTE
WHEREVER YOU GET
YOUR PODCASTS

**NEW PODCAST
EPISODE:
LEARN ABOUT
NY/NJ
VETERANS
AFFAIRS
TELE EMERGENCY
SERVICES**



SCAN ME

Tele Emergency
Services with Dr. Nahvi



BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Black History Month is an annually observed commemorative month originating in the United States, where it is also known as **African-American History Month**. It began as a way of remembering important people and events in the history of the African diaspora, initially lasting a week before becoming a month-long observation since 1970. It is celebrated in February in the United States and Canada, where it has received official recognition from governments, and more recently has also been celebrated in Ireland and the United Kingdom where it is observed in October.

Since its inception, Black History Month has expanded beyond its initial acceptance in educational establishments. Carter Woodson's organization, now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), designates a theme each year. For example, "Black Health and Wellness" in 2022 focused on medical scholars, health care providers, and health outcomes. The theme for Black History Month 2025 is "African Americans and Labor," focusing on the significant contributions of Black people to the workforce across various industries, highlighting both the challenges and achievements related to labor in the Black American experience. *The Wall Street Journal* describes Black History Month as "a time when the culture and contributions of African Americans take center stage" in a variety of cultural institutions, including theaters, libraries, and museums.

Black History Month has garnered attention from the U.S. business community. In 2018, Instagram created its first Black History Month program with the help of its Head of Global Music & Youth Culture Communications, SHAVONE. Instagram's Black History Month program featured a series of first-time initiatives, including a #BlackGirlMagic partnership with Spotify and the launch of the #CelebrateBlackCreatives program, which reached more than 19 million followers.



SAINT VALENTINE

The story of Saint Valentine and his association with bees dates back to the third century in Rome. At that time, beekeeping was a common practice, and the bees were believed to have a special connection to Saint Valentine.

Legend has it that Saint Valentine was a beekeeper himself and had a great love for the creatures. He was known for his gentle and caring treatment of the bees, and it is said that he would often talk to them and bless them with his prayers.

According to one popular story, while Saint Valentine was imprisoned for performing marriages in secret, he came across a blind girl who had a great love for bees. He taught her how to care for them and soon, she was able to see again. This miracle was attributed to the healing powers of the bees, and from then on, they became a symbol of Saint Valentine's compassion and care for others. As a result, many beekeepers have come to regard Saint Valentine as their patron saint, and they celebrate his feast day on February 14th by placing honey and wax candles on his altar. They believe that his blessing will help their hives thrive and that his intercession will protect their bees from harm.



Major General Marcelite J. Harris was born in Houston, Texas on Jan. 16, 1943. She graduated from Spelman College, earning her Bachelor of Arts degree in speech and drama. She completed Officer Training School at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, in 1965 and held a variety of assignments in the Air Force.

Harris' career included many "firsts," including being the first female aircraft maintenance officer, one of the first two female air officers commanding at the United States Air Force Academy and the Air Force's first female director of maintenance. She also served as a White House social aide during the Carter administration. Her service medals and decorations include the Bronze Star, the Presidential Unit Citation and the Vietnam Service Medal.

Harris retired as a major general in 1997, the highest ranking female officer in the Air Force, and the nation's highest ranking African-American woman in the Department of Defense. She died September 7, 2018 and was buried with full military honors on February 7, 2019, alongside her husband, Lt. Col. Maurice Harris, in Arlington National Cemetery.



Save the Date

WOMEN'S HEALTH FOCUS GROUP

03|20|25

10:30AM TO 1:00 PM

ALBANY STRATTON VA MEDICAL CENTER
113 HOLLAND AVE - ALBANY
WOMENS HEALTHCONF. RM. D805

CHARRED SCALLION DIP

INGREDIENTS:

- 12 medium scallions (bout 2 bunches)
- 1 medium lemon
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1/4 cup whipped cream cheese
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 2 teaspoons rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon onion powder
- Salted potato chips, preferably kettled cooked or raw veggies, for serving.



DIRECTIONS:

1. Trim 12 medium scallions. Halve 10 of the scallions & set aside for charring; finely chop the remaining 2 & place in medium bowl.
2. Heat a medium cast iron skillet or grill pan over high heat. Add the halved scallions & sear flipping occasionally, until charred in spots, 4 to 5 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, prepare the following, adding each to the bowl of chopped scallions as you complete it: Finely grate the zest of medium lemon until you have 1 teaspoon; juice the lemon until you have 1 tablespoon. Add 1/2 cup sour cream, 1/4 whipped cream cheese, 1/4 cup mayonnaise, 2 teaspoons rice vinegar, 1 teaspoon kosher salt, & 1 teaspoon onion powder. Stir with flexible spatula or whisk until combined.
4. Let the charred scallions cool for a few minutes, then transfer to a cutting board. Coarsely chop, then add to the dip & stir to combine. Serve with salted chips and/or veggies.

Let's Talk Endometriosis – Here is What You Need to Know

Do you experience painful periods but tend to brush your symptoms aside? Could it be more than just “bad cramps?” For many women, severe pain, heavy bleeding, or other symptoms could be signs of endometriosis.

Endometriosis is a condition where tissue that is similar to the inner lining of the uterus grows outside the uterus, causing inflammation, pain, and sometimes irregular bleeding. Here are **five things you should know** about endometriosis:

- **Severe pelvic or abdominal pain during your period, sex, or bowel movements is not normal.** If over-the-counter pain medications don't help and the pain disrupts everyday tasks for several days each month, it's time to get help.
- **Early diagnosis matters.** Left untreated, pain and symptoms can worsen. Talk to your VA health care provider about your symptoms and concerns.
- **About 1 in 10 women of reproductive age experience endometriosis.** Despite being common, it often takes years to diagnose due to lack of symptom awareness.
- **Endometriosis can make it more difficult to get pregnant.** Between 30-50% of women with endometriosis may experience infertility.
- **Endometriosis is often a chronic condition—VA can help.** Your VA clinician can diagnose endometriosis and help you manage pain and symptoms through medications, hormone therapy, or surgery.

VA recognizes how overwhelming it can feel to manage chronic pain. Endometriosis tends to be a chronic condition that requires a long-term treatment plan. Your VA health care provider will work with you to determine the best treatment options for you, which may include medication, hormone therapy, or surgery.

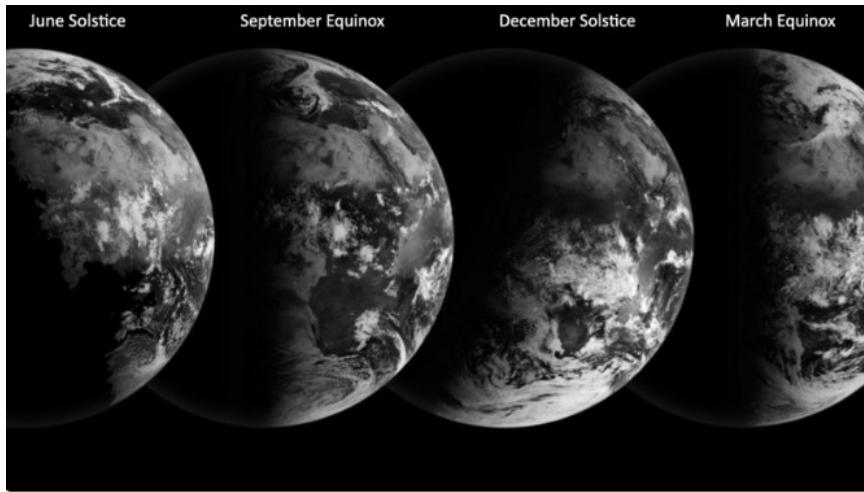
Remember, severe pain during your period is not normal. Compassionate VA women's health primary care providers are available and will listen to your concerns. To learn more about endometriosis, download the [Women Veterans Endometriosis brochure](#). Need help getting started? Call, text, or chat with the [Women Veterans Call Center](#) at 1-855-VA-WOMEN to speak to a real person who can help you enroll, schedule an appointment, and get connected to care you can trust.



MARCH EQUINOX

The March equinox – aka the *vernal equinox* – marks the sun’s crossing above Earth’s equator, moving from south to north. Earth’s tilt on its axis is what causes this northward shift of the sun’s path across our sky at this time of year. Earth’s tilt is now bringing spring and summer to the Northern Hemisphere. At the same time, the March equinox marks the beginning of autumn – and a shift toward winter – in the Southern Hemisphere.

The sun crosses the celestial equator – a line directly above Earth’s equator – at **9:01 UTC** on March 20, 2025 (4:01 a.m. CDT). No matter where you are on Earth, the equinox brings us a number of seasonal effects, noticeable to nature lovers around the globe.



Did you know that before 150 B.C. March was originally considered the first month of the year?

BORROWING DAYS

The last three days of March (March 29, 30, 31) have a reputation for being stormy. Scottish folklore proposes that these three days were borrowed from April so that March might extend his power. The Spanish story about the borrowing days is that a shepherd promised March a lamb if he would temper the winds to suit the shepherd’s flocks. But after his request was granted, the shepherd refused to deliver the payment. In revenge, March borrowed three days from April, in which fiercer winds than ever blew to punish the deceiver.

A Scottish proverb describing these days:

March borrow it from April
Three days, and they were ill:
The first was frost, the second was snaw [snow],
The third was cauld [cold] as ever’t could blaw [blow].

Relationship Health and Safety Screening

- Who: All Veterans enrolled in VA Healthcare
- What: A screening to assess relationship health and safety
- Where: At VA medical centers and clinics
- When: Annually or as needed
- Why: To identify relationship stress and provide resources to support your health, safety, and wellbeing

Ask about the Relationship Health and Safety screening at your next VA appointment.



Contact Your VA Coordinator
Intimate Partner Violence Assistance Program
www.socialwork.va.gov/IPV/Coordinators.asp

The National Domestic Violence
HOTLINE
1.800.799.SAFE (7233) • 1.800.767.2294 (TTY)

HISTORY OF MARDI GRAS

The origins of Mardi Gras can be traced to **medieval Europe**, passing through Rome and Venice in the 17th and 18th centuries to the French House of the Bourbons. From here, the traditional revelry of "Boeuf Gras," or fatted calf, followed France to her colonies. On March 2, 1699, French-Canadian explorer Jean Baptiste Le Moyne Sieur de Bienville arrived at a plot of ground 60 miles directly south of New Orleans, and named it "**Pointe du Mardi Gras**" when his men realized it was the eve of the festive holiday. Bienville also established "Fort Louis de la Louisiane" (which is now Mobile) in 1702. In 1703, the tiny settlement of Fort Louis de la Mobile celebrated America's very first Mardi Gras.

New Orleans was established in 1718 by Bienville. By the 1730s, Mardi Gras was celebrated openly in New Orleans, but not with the parades we know today. In the early 1740s, Louisiana's governor, the Marquis de Vaudreuil, established elegant society balls, which became the model for the New Orleans Mardi Gras balls of today. The earliest reference to Mardi Gras "Carnival" appears in a 1781 report to the Spanish colonial governing body. That year, the Perseverance Benevolent & Mutual Aid Association was the first of hundreds of clubs and carnival organizations formed in New Orleans.

In 1872, a group of businessmen invented a **King of Carnival, Rex**, to preside over the first daytime parade. To honor the visiting Russian Grand Duke Alexis Romanoff, the businessmen introduced Romanoff's family colors of purple, green and gold as Carnival's official colors. Purple stands for justice; gold for power; and green for faith. This was also the Mardi Gras season that Carnival's improbable anthem, "If Ever I Cease to Love," was cemented, due in part to the Duke's fondness for the tune.

The following year, floats began to be constructed entirely in New Orleans instead of France, culminating with Comus' magnificent "The Missing Links to Darwin's Origin of Species," in which exotic paper-mache' animal costumes served as the basis for Comus to mock both Darwin's theory and local officials, including Governor Henry Warmoth. In 1875, Governor Warmoth signed the "**Mardi Gras Act**," making Fat Tuesday a legal holiday in Louisiana, which it still is.



GROUNDHOG DAY

Groundhog Day falls on February 2! Will Punxsutawney Phil see his shadow? Find out what the result means for gardening. Plus, learn about the ancient origins of this holiday, once named Imbolc (the midpoint between the winter solstice and spring equinox), which is also celebrated as Candlemas.

According to our weather predictions, February 2, 2025, will bring snow showers and cold weather. We think that when Punxsutawney Phil—that Seer of Seers, Sage of Sages, Weather Prognosticator Extraordinary—emerges from his burrow (with a little help from his handlers) to make his much-anticipated forecast, **he will NOT see his shadow**, which indicates an early spring!

What most don't realize is that Groundhog Day is actually rooted in astronomy—and the movement of the Earth around the Sun. In the Northern Hemisphere, this date marks the midpoint between the winter solstice in December and the spring equinox in March. In fact, the holiday stems from an ancient Celtic celebration called Imbolc, which is something called a cross-quarter day.



Lisa Marie Franchetti born 25 April 1964) is a United States Navy admiral who has been the 33rd chief of naval operations since 2 November 2023. She is the first woman to be chief of naval operations, and the first woman to serve on the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Before this she most recently served as the 42nd vice chief of naval operations from September 2022 to November 2023 and as acting chief of naval operations (CNO) from August to November 2023. A surface warfare officer, Franchetti previously served as director for strategy, plans, and policy of the Joint Staff (J5) from 2020 to 2022, the second deputy chief of naval operations for warfighting development in 2020, and commander of the United States Sixth Fleet from 2018 to 2020. She has also commanded carrier strike groups and U.S. Naval Forces Korea during her career. She was the second woman promoted to four-star admiral in the United States Navy. She was also the second female Vice Chief of Naval Operations in the history of the navy.

Franchetti's operational assignments have included auxiliaries officer and first division officer on USS *Shenandoah* (AD-44), navigator and jumboization coordinator on USS *Monongahela* (AO-178), operations officer on USS *Moosbrugger* (DD-980), combat systems officer and chief staff officer for Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 2, executive officer of USS *Stout* (DDG-55), and assistant surface operations officer on the USS *George Washington* Carrier Strike Group staff. She commanded USS *Ross* (DDG-71) and Destroyer Squadron 21, embarked on USS *John C. Stennis* (CVN-74). She also served as commander of Pacific Partnership 2010, embarked on USNS *Mercy* (T-AH-19). Ashore, she has been assigned as commander of United States Naval Reserve Center Central Point, Oregon; aide to the Vice Chief of Naval Operations; protocol officer for the commander of United States Atlantic Fleet; 4th Battalion officer at the United States Naval Academy; division chief of Joint Concept Development and Experimentation on the Joint Staff, J7; deputy director of International Engagement and executive assistant to N3/N5 on the Navy staff; and military assistant to the Secretary of the Navy.

During her time as commander of the U.S. Sixth Fleet, based in Italy, Franchetti oversaw the first-ever use of Tomahawk missiles launched by a *Virginia*-class submarine. The missiles were fired from USS *John Warner* at targets in Syria. On 6 May 2020, Franchetti was nominated as deputy chief of naval operations for Warfighting development (OPNAV N7), while keeping her other roles.

In April 2022, Franchetti was nominated for promotion to admiral and appointment as Vice Chief of Naval Operations. The Senate confirmed her promotion in May 2022.^[21] She assumed the position on 2 September 2022. On 21 July 2023, President Biden nominated her to replace Michael M. Gilday as chief of naval operations (CNO). On August 14, 2023, upon Gilday's retirement, Franchetti became acting CNO.

Franchetti was confirmed by the Senate to become the CNO on 2 November 2023, and was sworn in on the same day, becoming the first female CNO and, due to having that position, the first woman on the Joint Chiefs of Staff.



POWER UP TO MOVE MORE

Do you have trouble staying energized for your post-workday workout? We feel you! Try these tips to keep your energy going strong so you can move more.



Hydrate: Drink water throughout the day and especially before, during and after physical activity.



Fuel up: Snack on healthy carbs, such as vegetables, fruits and whole grains, when your energy is starting to lag.



Fight fatigue: Alternate sitting and standing during the day. Wear comfy shoes you can easily walk in to keep your legs and feet feeling fine.



Refresh: Try stress-relieving activity breaks, such as lunchtime walks, meditation and yoga to rejuvenate and refresh anytime.



Breathe: Practice breathing deeply by inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth slowly to deliberately send more oxygen to your brain and body.



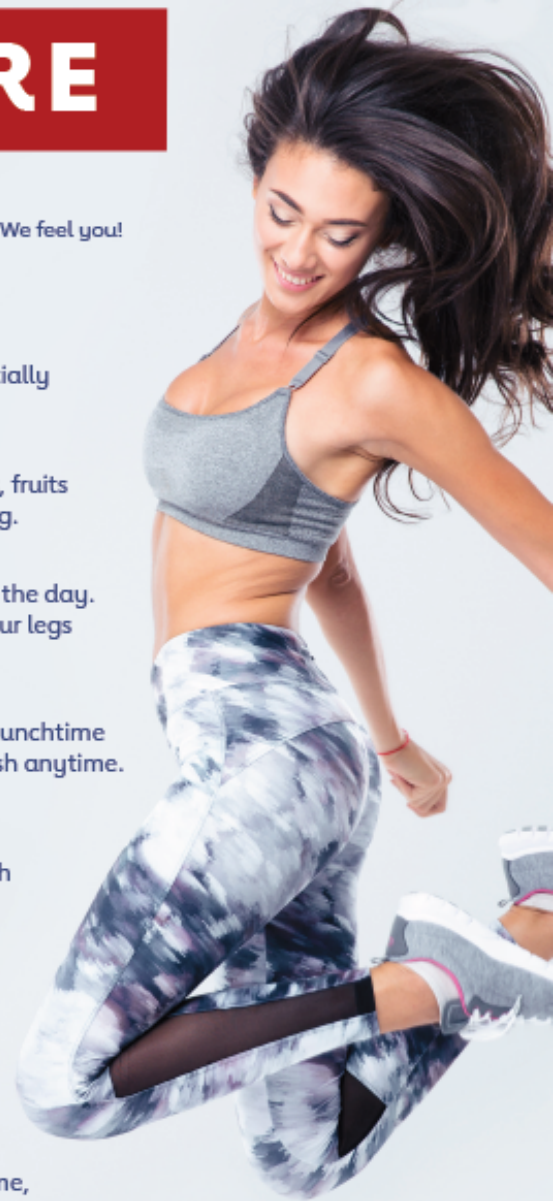
Eat for energy: Avoid eating saturated fats. They digest slowly and can take away oxygen and energy-delivering blood from your muscles.



Don't wait: Make it a habit to go right from work or school to your workout or activity. If you stop at home, you may be tempted to skip it.



Refuel: Refuel after your workout with lean protein, healthy carbs — such as a turkey sandwich on whole grain bread — and plenty of water so your body can recover more quickly.



EAT SMART MOVE MORE BE WELL

Find more ways to be Healthy for Good at
heart.org/HealthyForGood.

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VETERAN'S NIGHT OUT



**ALBANY COUNTY AND THE MVP ARENA INVITE VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES
TO ENJOY A FREE* ALBANY FIREWOLVES LACROSSE GAME.**

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 2025

MVP ARENA, 51 S. PEARL STREET, ALBANY

7PM GAME: FIREWOLVES VS. BUFFALO BANDITS



**SCAN HERE TO REGISTER OR
VISIT: WWW.ALBANYCOUNTY.COM/VETERANS
DEADLINE TO REGISTER: 3/21/2025**

FOR QUESTIONS OR MORE INFORMATION

CALL: (518) 447-7710 OR EMAIL: SCOTT.LESLIE@ALBANYCOUNTYNY.GOV

***TICKETS ARE AVAILABLE WHILE SUPPLIES LAST AND ARE LIMITED TO FOUR PER INDIVIDUAL/FAMILY OR TEN PER ORGANIZATION.
TICKETS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PICKUP AT THE MVP ARENA BOX OFFICE THE NIGHT OF THE EVENT.**



Daniel P. McCoy
Albany County Executive



**U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs**
Stratton VA Medical Center