Unhealthy alcohol use can affect women Veterans of all ages. But with a proper support team and treatment plan, recovery is achievable. As we observe Alcohol Awareness Month during April, it’s an important time to learn more about at-risk alcohol use and its potential impact on women Veterans, the fastest growing demographic of the U.S. Veteran population.

Understanding alcohol’s unique risks to women Veterans is vital to making healthy choices. Research has shown that women break down alcohol at a slower rate than men. That means that after drinking the same amount, women will have higher alcohol levels in their bloodstream and for longer periods of time.

On average, women develop medical complications of drinking alcohol, such as liver disease, sooner than men. Drinking alcohol during pregnancy can lead to ongoing developmental problems in children who were exposed to alcohol in the womb.

Woman Veterans are connecting with resources to help them

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, approximately 5.3 million U.S. women over the age of 18 had an alcohol use disorder in 2018. Among women Veterans who received VA care, 24% had engaged in binge drinking. In addition, rates ranged between 3% and 16% for a substance use disorder (SUD) among women Veterans overall.

VA health care provides many options for those seeking help through a comprehensive continuum of Substance Use Treatment Services. Every day, Veterans from all military branches and eras connect with resources and support to work on overcoming problems with alcohol.

There are health, wellness, substance abuse services and treatment programs at VA to help women Veterans who need alcohol-related interventions, including:

- Primary health care support at your local VA medical center
- Individual and group therapy
- Medications
- Online tools and mobile apps to manage alcohol use or locate help.

Visit VA.gov for more information about women's health care.

To search for SUD treatment through VA in your state, visit va.gov/directory/guide/SUD.

VA’s Women’s Health Services Office is part of The Women Veterans Health Program, created in 1988, to streamline services for female Veterans to provide more cost-effective medical and psychosocial care. VA’s Women’s Health Services Office provides programmatic and strategic support to implement positive changes in the provision of care for all women Veterans.