Annie App for Veterans

Quick Start Guide

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
Office of Connected Care

September 2016

Overview

The Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) Annie mobile application (app) is a Short Message Service (SMS) text messaging capability that promotes self-care for Veterans enrolled in VA health care. When your provider or a member of your VA health care team signs you up for Annie for a health issue, you will receive automated messages that prompt you to track your own health. You are asked to reply to messages so that Annie can let you know how you are doing. Annie also can send you appointment reminders and messages from your local VA medical facility.

You can use Annie if you have a basic cell phone that includes a texting feature (also known as SMS text messaging). If you have a smartphone, you can use the texting feature of the phone, or use the Annie App for Veterans. You can also use the Annie App with a computer or mobile device connected to the Internet. Whichever way you choose, Annie can help you track your health on your own.

IMPORTANT: Annie is for self-care. Your text and message replies to Annie are kept in a computer system. Your VA health care team will be able to view the messages, but will not routinely review them. Annie is not a way to text your VA clinician. You are responsible for your own health and should contact your VA health care team directly when you have health issues. Text messaging is not secure (texts can be read by anyone with access to your phone) and has costs, depending on your plan.

Annie is named after Lieutenant Annie G. Fox, the first woman to receive the Purple Heart for combat. She was Chief Nurse in the Army Nurse Corps at Hickman Field, Pearl Harbor.

To use the Annie App, you must:

1. Be enrolled in VA health care.

2. Have a DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) Account – If you do not have this account, or you are not sure, visit ***mobile.va.gov/dslogon*** for more information.

3. Have a smartphone and/or a computer with Internet access. **NOTE:** SMS text messaging costs will depend on your messaging preference and cell phone usage plan.

1

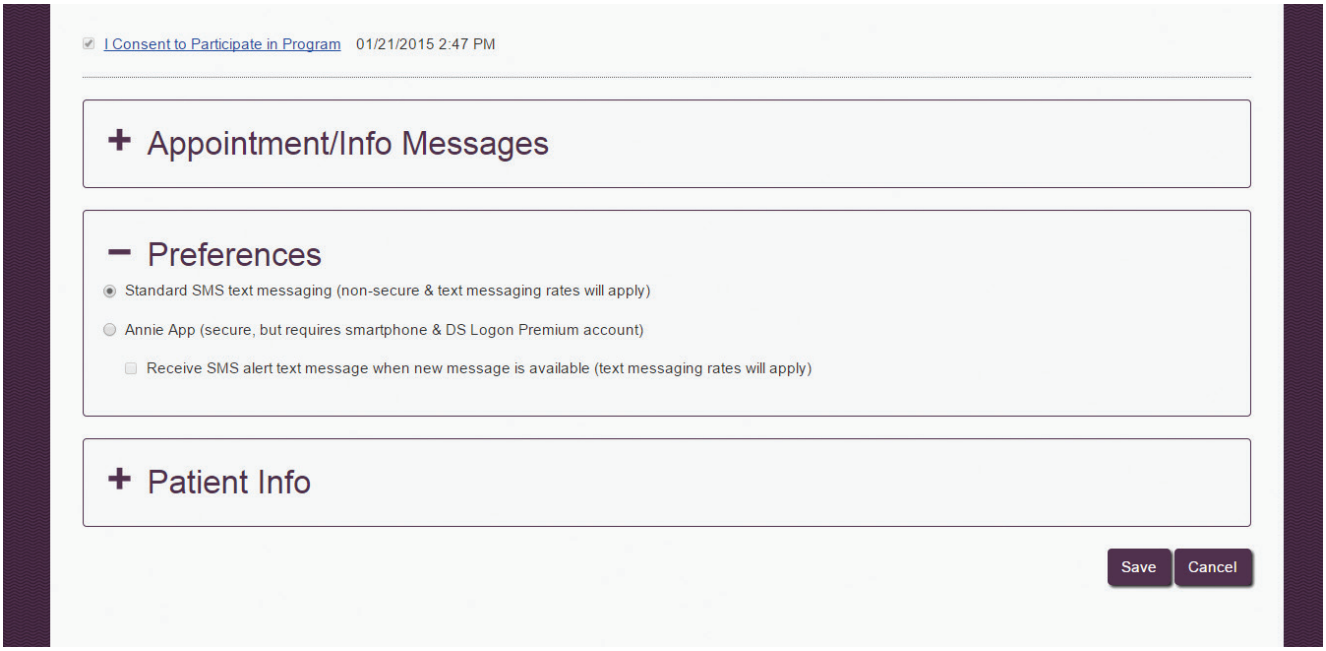
Setting Up the App

When you first use the Annie App, you will need to review and accept the terms of the End User License Agreement (EULA) and Notice of Privacy Practices (Notice). You can then sign in using your DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) Account user name and password. If you have not yet provided your Right of Access for another VA app, then you will go to a Right of Access screen. Read the Request for Access to your Health Information, and tap **Next**. If you agree, then tap **Verify** to "sign" the form. If you have not registered previously, then you will see the Account screen and will need to review the consent information and give your consent to participate in the program. You will also see three available tabs. You can tap a tab to expand your settings options and later adjust your settings at any time:

- **Appointment/Info Messages** – Tap the checkbox(es) next to Appointment Reminders (which will be sent three days and one day before an appointment) and/or VA Medical Center (VAMC) Facility Messages to indicate the types of messages you would like to receive. If you checked VAMC Facility Messages, tap the bar under Select a Facility, and tap the name of the medical facility from which you would like to receive messages from the drop-down menu that appears.
- **Patient's Preferences** – Tap the circle next to the type of device you use. If you elect to use the smartphone app for messages, you can also check the box to sign up to receive a SMS text alert from Annie indicating that you have received a new message within the app.
- **Patient Info** – Your name and other identifying information will appear. **NOTE:** This information is pulled from official records and cannot be edited in the app (if your information is not correct, please inform your VA health care team). Type in your mobile phone number. Tap the bar under Time Zone, and tap your preferred time zone from the drop-down menu that appears. If desired, type in your home phone number and email address.

Tap **Submit**, and you will see a Registration Success! screen. You will receive a message from Annie on the mobile device associated with the number you registered. Follow Annie's instructions in the message to respond, which will complete your registration.

The next time you log in, you will proceed directly into the app after you enter your DS Logon Level 2 (Premium) Account user name and password.



2

Reading Your Messages

Annie keeps messages that you receive and your replies, so you can review them at any time. To view your past messages, tap the **Messages** tab at the top of the screen. Messages that you received and responses that you sent to Annie will be shown, including dates and times. Scroll through the messages by using the bars to the right and below the messages.

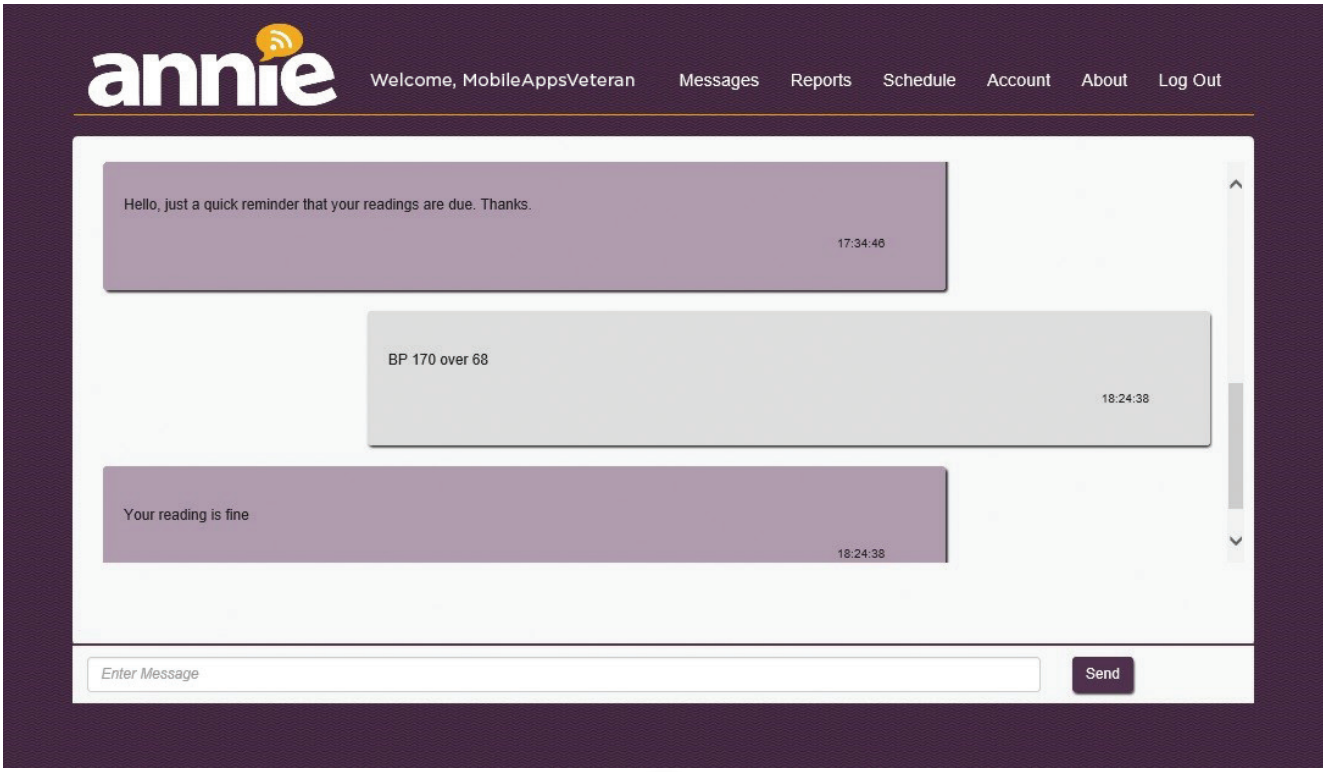
3

Sending a Message

You can send a message to Annie by using the Annie App or by using your phone's text messaging feature. For either method, Annie will first send a message that asks you to respond with a health measure. When you respond to Annie by sending your readings (such as your blood pressure measurement), you MUST START your message with a keyword or abbreviation so that Annie understands your message. Annie uses these keywords to know what kind of information you are sending. The letters can be upper or lower case. Spelling has to be EXACT. Depending on the information you send, begin your message with one of the following keywords or abbreviations (see terms in bold):

When Annie asks you to send this information	Start your message response with
Blood Pressure	**BP** or **BLOOD**
Pulse Oximetry (SpO2) or Oxygen level	**OX** or **OXYGEN**
Blood Glucose or Sugar	**BG** or **GLUCOSE** or **SUGAR**
Glucose Before Eating	**BGB** or **BEFORE**
Glucose After Eating	**BGA** or **AFTER**
Weight Loss	**WE** or **WEIGHT**
Caloric Intake	**CAL** or **CALORIES**
Amount of Exercise	**EXERCISE**
Temperature	**TEMP**
Pulse	**PULSE**

For example, if Annie asked for you to send your temperature, and your reading at home is 98˚F, you would type: **TEMP 98** or **temp 98**. If you responded with **98**, without the 'Temp', Annie would ask you to send it again. If you use the Annie app on your smartphone, tap **Messages** at the top of the screen. Type **Temp 98** in the Enter Message box at the bottom. Tap **Send**.



4

Stopping, Pausing and Resuming Annie

You can stop/start and pause/resume messages with Annie at any time using simple texts or message replies.

- Stop/Start – To stop receiving messages from Annie, type and send the message: "STOP". To start receiving messages again, type and send the message: "START." **NOTE:** You will have to notify your VA health care team that you have begun using Annie again so that your VA health care team can re-enable your protocols or create new protocols for you.
- Pause/Resume – To halt messages from Annie temporarily, type and send the message: "PAUSE." To start receiving messages again, type and send the message "RESUME." Annie will automatically begin sending you messages again.

NOTE: Stopping or pausing messages from Annie will not cease the sending of Appointment Reminders and VAMC Facility Messages, but you can stop these messages by changing your Appointment/Info Messages preferences under the Account tab. If you send the command Help to Annie, Annie will respond with help desk information and a list of the available Annie commands.

Commands can be sent either from your registered mobile phone or by using the Annie App for Veterans. The following commands are recognized:

- START - Confirm your participation and begin receiving messages from the Annie system.
- STOP - Stop receiving messages from the Annie system.
- PAUSE - Temporarily stop receiving messages from the Annie system.
- RESUME - Resume receiving messages from the Annie system.
- HELP - Annie system responds with help desk information and a list of the available text commands.

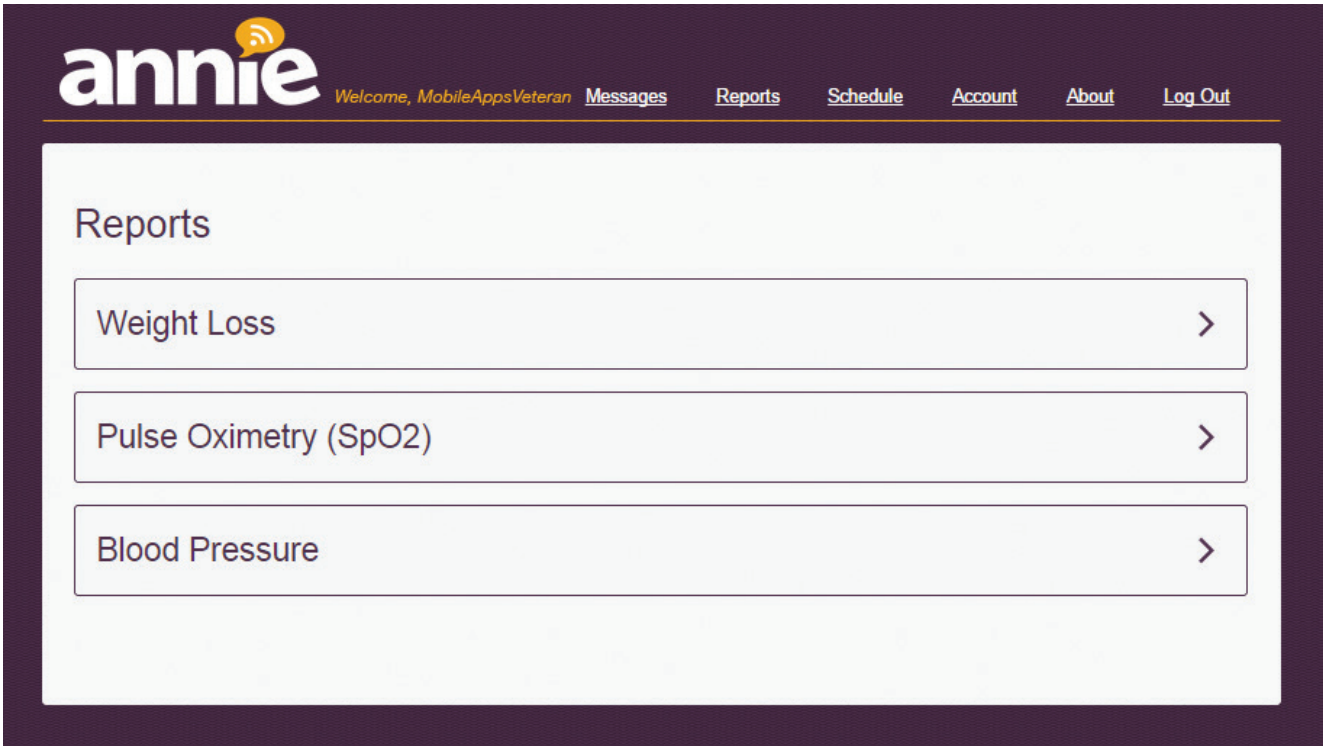
5

Viewing Your Reports

You will be able to see reports that show your health readings that you sent to Annie when you use the Annie App. Tap the **Reports** tab at the top of the screen, and choose the type of health information you would like to see (such as blood pressure, weight, etc.). Annie will show you a report of the readings that you sent.

The report consists of two sections – a Chart and a Table – and each shows the readings you sent to Annie, and the date and time you sent the information. You can change the information shown in a report by adjusting the chart. To return to the Reports screen, tap **Back** in the upper left corner.

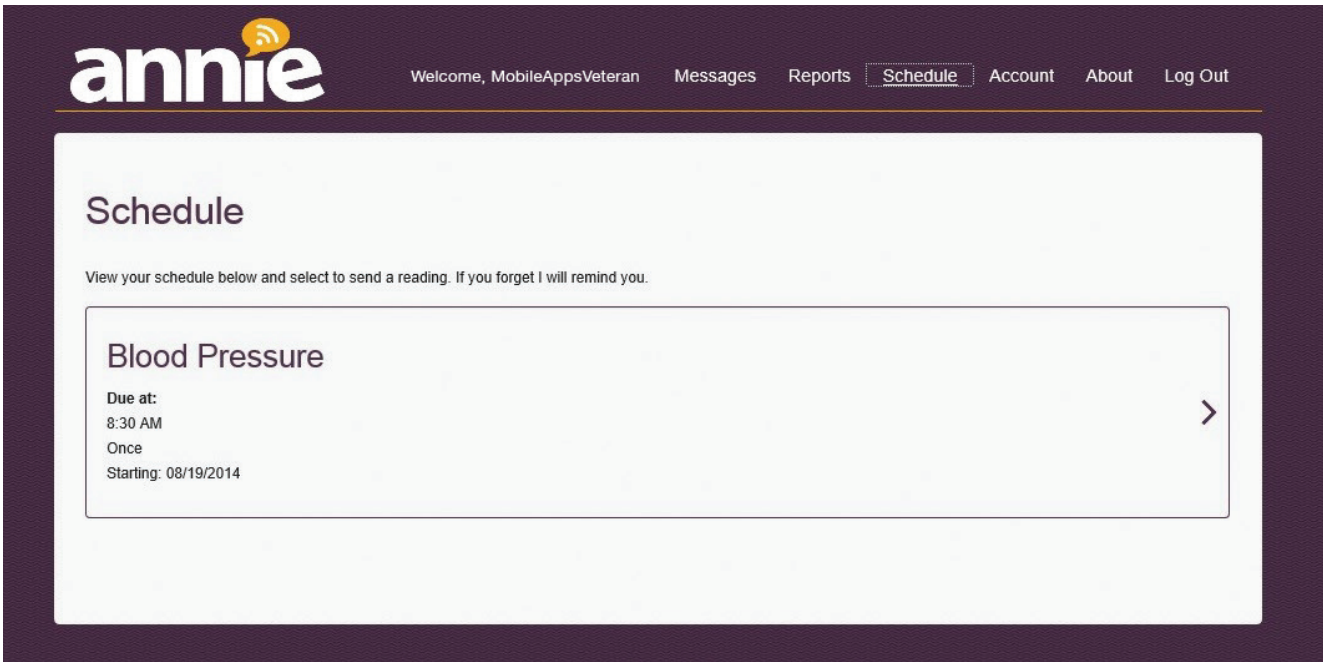
NOTE: You may find problems when seeing your readings using **Reports**. If you encounter difficulties, please do not limit the readings in the reports using the From/To Boxes, or the scroll bar and buttons. Additionally, it is best to view your information in landscape, if viewing on a smart phone.



6

Viewing Your Schedule

Tap the **Schedule** tab at the top of the screen. You will see a list of the upcoming messages that will be sent to you by Annie, including requests from Annie for health readings that you are tracking. For each, you can see its name or the type of information requested, when and how often messages are sent, and the date when you started getting messages from Annie. To send in a message pertaining to a reading Annie tracks, tap on the item. All messages that you received and sent to Annie will be shown, including the date and time of the messages. Scroll to the bottom, type a new message in Enter Message bar, and tap **Send**.



Help and Additional Information

The best way to use Annie is to partner with your VA health care team. If you have questions about using Annie or about your health readings, contact your VA health care team.

Additional Training Materials for the Annie App

More resources, such as a User Manual, Slideshow and FAQs, can be found on ***mobile.va.gov/appstore***, and search for the app to access the resources. You can access these materials from the app by tapping **About** > A pop-up box will appear that describes the function of the app > Tap the Training Materials hyperlink, and you will go to ***mobile.va.gov/training/veterans***.

Additional information about other available VA Apps may be found at ***mobile.va.gov/appstore*** and ***VA Mobile Apps General FAQs***.

Help Desk Information

If you need any help or technical assistance using the Annie App, or to report a problem with the program, call 1-877-470-5947 to speak with a VA representative. The Help Desk is open weekdays from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Central Time. For TTY assistance, dial 711.

DS Logon Help

If you have questions about your DS Logon Account, visit ***mobile.va.gov/dslogon*** or dial ***1-800-983-0937*** for assistance.

Emergencies

Annie is not for urgent or emergency issues. If you have an emergency, call your local medical center or dial 911. If you think that any of your health information has been seen by others due to loss or theft, contact your local VA medical facility and ask for the Privacy Officer. To locate your local VA facility, visit VA's Facility Locator: at ***http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/home.asp?isflash=1***.