

# ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURES PROGRAMS AND SERVICES FOR VETERANS

[WWW.PUBLICHEALTH.VA.GOV/EXPOSURES](http://WWW.PUBLICHEALTH.VA.GOV/EXPOSURES)

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration  
Patient Care Services



## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has resources for Veterans who may have been exposed to certain environmental hazards during their military service. There are steps you can take to access VA's specialized programs and services.

- **Visit a VA Environmental Health Clinic if you are concerned about your health as a result of potential exposure.**
  - For certain exposures, special registry evaluations are available at no-cost. Registry data helps VA understand and respond to the health problems of Veterans more effectively.
  - Learn more about the registry evaluation by contacting a local Environmental Health Coordinator. An online listing of Coordinators is available at [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp).
- **Veterans should enroll in VA health care to improve their health.**
  - There are many ways a Veteran may qualify for VA medical benefits.
  - To determine if you qualify, visit <http://hbexplorer.vacloud.us>.
  - VA staff is available to assist with the eligibility and enrollment process.
- **Learn about filing a claim for compensation if your health has been affected.**
  - Veterans who have a service-connected disability and were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions may be eligible for disability compensation.
  - To be considered for disability compensation, you must file a claim. VA will check military records to verify exposure to the claimed environmental hazard and qualifying military service.
  - Visit [www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/types-disability.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/types-disability.asp).

VA's health registry programs provide focused evaluations for certain environmental exposures during military service. If you do not feel your situation falls under the following categories, be sure to visit your health care provider to discuss your exposure concerns.

### AGENT ORANGE

Agent Orange was a mixture of herbicides used by the U.S. military from 1962 to 1975 to remove leaves from trees that provided cover for enemy forces during the Vietnam conflict. Agent Orange was also used, tested, or stored at some military bases in the United States and other foreign locations.

### AIRBORNE HAZARDS AND OPEN BURN PITS

Veterans who deployed to countries including Iraq, Afghanistan, and Djibouti since 1990 may have been exposed to airborne hazards, including smoke from open burn pits (trash fires), oil-well fires, dust, and pollution.

### DEPLETED URANIUM (DU)

DU is a byproduct of the uranium enrichment process used by the U.S. military in projectiles and tank armor during the Gulf War in 1990. It is most hazardous when internalized through shrapnel, contaminated wounds, or inhalation.

### GULF WAR

Gulf War-related exposures from 1990 and on include a variety of potentially harmful substances: pesticides; pyridostigmine bromide (anti-nerve agent); infectious diseases; chemical and biological warfare agents; vaccinations (including anthrax and botulinum toxoid); oil-well fires, smoke, and petroleum; and depleted uranium.

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## IONIZING RADIATION

Since 1941, some Veterans have been exposed to ionizing radiation from a variety of sources, including nuclear weapons testing or other activities during service.

## TOXIC EMBEDDED FRAGMENTS

Some Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans were exposed to a blast or similar traumatic incident, which resulted in embedded fragments (also called “shrapnel”) that remained in their bodies. The word “toxic” refers to fragments made from potentially harmful materials used in improvised explosive devices (IEDs), bombs, mines, and shells.

## SPECIAL ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH REGISTRY EVALUATION PROGRAMS

VA’s Environmental Health Registries gather information about the health of Veterans exposed to certain environmental hazards during military service. Some Veterans may qualify for more than one registry. Use the chart to the right to help determine your eligibility. If you have any health concerns, talk to your health care provider. For more information about any of the registries, go to [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures).

## MILITARY EXPOSURES CLASSIFICATIONS

PERIOD OF MILITARY SERVICE	AGENT ORANGE	AIRBORNE HAZARDS AND OPEN BURN PIT	DEPLETED URANIUM FOLLOW-UP	GULF WAR	IONIZING RADIATION	TOXIC EMBEDDED FRAGMENTS
1940s–1950s					●	
1960s	●				●	
1970s	●					
1990s		●	●	●		
2000s–Present		●	●	●		●

A health registry evaluation is not a claim for VA benefits and may not confirm exposure to environmental hazards during military service. Veterans who want to be considered for disability compensation for exposure-related health problems must file a claim. More information is available at [www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/types-disability.asp](http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/types-disability.asp).

To schedule a registry evaluation, contact an Environmental Health Coordinator at any VA medical facility. A list of Coordinators is available online at [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp).

For the Toxic Embedded Fragments registry, contact an OEF/OIF/OND Clinical Coordinator at your nearest VA medical facility to schedule a registry evaluation.



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Patient Care Services

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