VA Gulf War Registry health exam for veterans

VA's Gulf War Registry health exam alerts veterans to possible long-term health problems that may be related to environmental exposures during their military service. The registry data helps VA understand and respond to these health problems more effectively. Contact your local VA environmental health coordinator about getting a Gulf War Registry health exam.

Veterans who served in the Gulf during the 1990-1991 Gulf War, Operation Desert Shield, Operation Desert Storm, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation New Dawn are eligible for the Gulf War Registry examination. Veterans do not need to be enrolled in VA health care to take part.

This comprehensive health exam includes an exposure and medical history, laboratory tests and a physical exam. A VA health professional will discuss the results face-to-face with the veteran and in a follow-up letter. Important points about registry health exams:

- They are free to eligible veterans and no co-payment is required.
- This is not a disability compensation exam and enrollment in the VA health-care system is not required.
- Based on veterans' recollection of service, not on their military records.
- Veterans can request a follow-up exam if new problems develop.

Getting help

- For assistance with filing a VA claim, visit **www.legion.org/serviceofficers** to locate a Department Service Officer or download The American Legion Claims Coach Mobile App from iPhone App Store or Google Play. The Claims Coach is also available for download onto your desktop.
- You can also call (202) 861-2700 and ask for information for your local Department Service Officer.

Other resources

- VA claim information: (800) 827-1000
- VA Gulf Illnesses homepage: www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/
- Deployment Health Clinic: (800) 796-9699.
- DoD Gulf Illnesses homepage: www.gulflink.osd.mil

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THE AMERICAN LEGION

Gulf War Era

Benefits & Programs

A guide for veterans and their families

Basic benefits for Gulf War veterans and families

Military service distinguishes some of America's men and women who were willing to sacrifice their time – and perhaps much more – when the nation called. Veterans who served on active duty during the Gulf War era are eligible for the same benefits offered to U.S. veterans of other wartime periods.

The government has a wide variety of programs that acknowledge the contributions of veterans. These benefits are available to the men and women who served on active military service in the Southwest Asia theater of military operations. This includes Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone between Iraq and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea and the airspace above these locations, during the Gulf War era (Aug. 2, 1990-present) or in Afghanistan on or after Sept. 19, 2001.

Basics on benefits

To find out what benefits you are eligible for contact an American Legion department service officer. Search for one at **www.legion.org/serviceofficers.**

Education – Honorable discharge is a must. Various GI Bill benefits are available. **www.gibill.va.gov**

GI Bill home loans - Certificate of eligibility must be obtained. **www.homeloans.va.gov**

Insurance – Veterans can convert their Servicemembers Group Life Insurance (SGLI) to Veterans Group Life Insurance (VGLI) within 120 days of discharge without a medical exam. An application for VGLI after the 120-day period must be accompanied by proof of good health and be submitted within one year after SGLI. **www.insurance.va.gov**

VA pension – Economically disadvantaged veterans who are permanently and totally disabled from non-service related disabilities and served during an official period of war may be eligible to receive annual payments. **www.benefits.va.gov/pension**

Veterans preference – This gives eligible veterans preference in appointments to federal positions. It does not apply to internal agency actions such as promotions, transfers, reassignments, and reinstatements.

Upgraded discharges – A discharge that is not officially stamped "honorable" can limit access to VA benefits and affect employment opportunities. For assistance, call The American Legion at (202) 861-2700.

Presumptive conditions

VA has listed presumptive conditions as a result of active duty service in the Southwest Asia theater of military operations. These are conditions either diagnosed or undiagnosed that began during active military service (during Southwest Asia theater of military operations) or before Dec. 31, 2016. VA presumes the following certain chronic symptoms existing for six months or more as related to Gulf War service. These presumptive diagnosed conditions are:

- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome
- Fibromyalgia
- Functional gastrointestinal disorders. Symptoms may include but not be limited to irritable bowel syndrome, dyspesia, vomiting, constipation, bloating, abdominal pain syndrome and dysphagia.

Undiagnosed illnesses with symptoms considered as "medically unexplained, chronic (lasting six months or more) multi-symptom illnesses."

These symptoms may include fatigue, skin irritations, headache, muscle or joint, neurological issues, neuropsychological distress, upper and lower respiratory issues, sleep disturbances, gastrointestinal distress, abnormal weight loss, menstrual disorders or cardiovascular irregularities.

VA provides a free Gulf War Registry health exam to eligible veterans and provides alerts to long-term health problems that may be associated with environmental exposures during service. **www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/registry**

Returning servicemembers

Veterans who have served in the region of combat after Nov. 11, 1998, are eligible for an extended period of eligibility for health care for five years after discharge. The five-year eligibility period begins on the date of discharge and/or separation from active duty service.

Reservists and members of the National Guard are eligible if they served on active duty in a combat theater after Nov. 11, 1998, and were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions. For information regarding health-care eligibility, go to **www.va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/returning_servicemembers.asp**