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Presumptives for Disability Compensation

What is a Presumptive?

When veterans with similar experiences have higher rates of certain types of illnesses, the federal government may create a presumptive for that illness. By doing so, they “presume” that the illness was caused by the military service.

This is easier to understand by looking at an example. It was discovered that veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange have a statistically greater likelihood for developing prostate cancer. Since Agent Orange was used widely in Vietnam, and any veteran who served in or around Vietnam was likely exposed to Agent Orange, the VA will presume that any prostate cancer found in a Vietnam Veteran was caused by Agent Orange. This decreases the burden on the veteran, as they don't have to prove that they were exposed to Agent Orange or that their prostate cancer was a result of Agent Orange.

For more information on the environmental hazards that have contributed to many of the current presumptives, visit the VA's [Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards](#) website.

If I Have a Presumptive Condition, Should I Still Get the Assistance of a Service Officer to Apply for Disability?

Yes. Having a presumptive will make the application easier, but we still recommend veterans retain an accredited service officer to assist them.

What are the Current Presumptives?

Below are the categories of veterans who have presumptives established.

Recent Separatees

If a veteran is diagnosed with chronic diseases, such as arthritis, diabetes, or hypertension, within one year of their release from active duty, the VA will presume that the condition originated during military service.

Vietnam Veterans and Agent Orange

If a Vietnam Veteran has any of the following conditions, the VA will presume that the condition was caused by exposure to Agent Orange.

- Hodgkin's Disease
- Multiple Myeloma
- Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma
- Acute and Subacute Peripheral Neuropathy
- Prostate Cancer
- Respiratory Cancers
- Soft-tissue Sarcoma
- Diabetes Mellitus (Type II)
- Spina Bifida (for the children of Vietnam Veterans)
- B Cell Leukemias, such as Hairy Cell Leukemia
- Parkinson's Disease
- Ischemic Heart Disease.

For more information about Agent Orange, visit the VA's [Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards](#) website, or call the VA's Agent Orange Program.

[VA Agent Orange Program](#) (800) 749-8387

Former Prisoners of War

Veterans who were former prisoners of war also have presumptive conditions, some of which are listed below.

If a former POW, regardless of the amount of time they were held in captivity, has any of the following conditions, the VA will presume that the condition was caused by their captivity.

- Psychosis
- Dysthymic disorder, or depressive neurosis
- Post-traumatic osteoarthritis
- Any of the Anxiety States
- Cold Injury
- Stroke and complications
- Heart Disease and complications

If a former POW who was held for 30 or more days has any of the following conditions, the VA will presume that the condition was caused by their captivity.

- Avitaminosis
- Chronic Dysentery
- Helminthiasis
- Malnutrition, including associated Optic Atrophy deficiency
- Peptic Ulcer Disease
- Beriberi
- Cirrhosis of the Liver
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome
- Pellagra and any other nutritional deficiency
- Peripheral Neuropathy, except where directly related to infectious causes

More information can be found at the VA's [American Former Prisoners of War](#) website. In addition, the White River Junction VA Medical Center has a Former Prisoner of War Coordinator.

White River Junction Former Prisoner of War Coordinator (866) 687-8387
x5362

“Atomic” Veterans

Veterans exposed to radiation from atomic weapons, fallout, and nuclear reactors also have presumptive conditions. There are 21 different types of cancers related to exposure to radiation. We recommend any veteran who was exposed to radiation and later develops cancer to apply for Disability Compensation. For more information, visit the VA's [Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards](#) website.

Gulf War Illness

In 2009 three presumptives for Gulf War Illness were identified. In addition to these presumptives, Gulf War Veterans may receive Disability Compensation for chronic disabilities from undiagnosed or medically unexplained illnesses. Examples of these are headaches, skin disorders, muscle pain, joint pain, respiratory disturbances, gastrointestinal disturbances, etc. Gulf War veterans with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), otherwise known as Lou Gehrig's Disease, should also apply for Disability Compensation. For more information, visit the VA's [Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards](#) website.

- Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS)
- Fibromyalgia Syndrome (FMS)
- Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS)

VA Gulf War Veterans Help Line (800) 749-8387

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) is a presumptive condition for veterans with 90 days or more of continuously active service in the military. Any veteran with ALS should apply for Disability Compensation.