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# Industrial Solvents

Many Servicemembers use industrial solvents in regular military tasks such as cleaning, degreasing, paint stripping, and thinning oil-based paints. Too much exposure to some industrial solvents can cause short-term and long-term health effects.

## Health effects of exposure to solvents



Exposure to solvents may impact your health depending on the specific chemicals, level of concentration, length of exposure, and how it enters the body.

- Inhaled vapors: These may irritate the eyes, cause drowsiness, difficulty with breathing and if severe, neurological damage
- Direct eye contact: This may cause burning and tearing and if severe, visual problems.
- Skin contact: This may cause skin dryness, irritation, rashes or chemical burns.
- Ingested: Although rare, this can cause serious illness.

## Specific solvents

For information on specific solvents, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) provides the following fact sheets:

- [Benzene](#) (55 KB, PDF) (and other aromatic hydrocarbons)
- [Perchlorate](#) (66 KB, PDF)
- [Perfluorooctane sulfonate](#) (135 KB, PDF) (and other perfluorinated surfactants)
- [Tetrachloroethylene \(PCE or PERC\)](#) (145 KB, PDF)
- [Trichloroethylene \(TCE\)](#) (76 KB, PDF) (and other chlorinated hydrocarbons)
- [Vinyl chloride](#) (59 KB, PDF), which can form when TCE and PCE are broken down

## Health concerns?

If you are concerned about exposure to industrial solvents during military service, talk to your health care provider or local [VA Environmental Health Coordinator](#).

Veterans not enrolled in the VA health care system, [find out if you qualify for VA health care](#).

## VA benefits

Veterans may be eligible for VA [disability compensation benefits](#) and [health care benefits](#) for health problems associated with exposure to industrial solvents during military service.

Veterans' dependents and survivors also may be eligible for benefits. Read [Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors](#) to learn more.