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VETERANS' CORNER: Children of vets exposed to Agent Orange, other chemicals should file VA claims

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Everyone knows Agent Orange is bad, and exposed veterans know that it causes certain cancers and other diseases after exposure.

The Department of Veterans Affairs recognizes this, and for all of these cancers and diseases, disability compensation is practically automatic. These are called "presumptive" conditions that are presumed to be caused by the military purely because of time and date in service.

Veterans' children have long been recognized to have birth defects and diseases resulting from their parents' exposure to Agent Orange. Currently, the VA recognizes many such conditions in the children of women veterans, but the list for male veterans' children is significantly shorter. It includes only spina bifida, with the exception of spina bifida occulta.

What a lot of veterans don't know though, is that Agent Orange exposure has also caused numerous, serious birth defects in exposed male veterans' children, besides spina bifida, according to Children of Vietnam Veterans Health Alliance. The list includes Crohn's disease, Lupus, thyroid disease, chronic kidney disease, missing limb parts, and webbed toes. According to COVVHA, the list is much larger than this.

The Agent Orange Act of 1991 went into effect for the purpose of researching the diseases and birth defects found in exposed veterans' children, to find out what they were, and to add them to the list of VA covered conditions. The act began a review of conditions in 1994 and was originally scheduled to run until 2001, but later was extended until Oct. 1, 2014.

Every few years, more conditions are being added to the VA's list. On Oct. 1, the last review will have taken place, so any conditions not included in this report will probably be left out of the VA's list for good, unless more legislation comes into play. It is likely we will see this last report, which covers the data from 2012, 2013, and 2014, sometime in 2015.

If you are a child of an exposed veteran, COVVHA encourages you to file a claim with the VA so that your voices can start being heard. The instructions for doing so and a complete list of diseases and defects, are found at covvha.net/. You will need to provide years your father was in Vietnam and his Social Security number. If your father has passed away, and his death was linked to Agent Orange exposure, make sure you state that information.

[Source](#)