

Agent Orange Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

A RESOURCE FOR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS

To help health care providers respond to the Agent Orange exposure concerns of Veterans, WRIISC has compiled a list of frequently asked questions.



WHAT IS AGENT ORANGE?

Agent Orange is a herbicide developed specifically by the United States military for control of vegetation. It was named for the orange band around the storage barrel and sprayed during the Vietnam War. Agent Orange contained chemicals contaminated with dioxin (a highly toxic compound produced as a by product in some manufacturing processes).



WHO MAY HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO AGENT ORANGE?

For Veterans who served on active duty in any of the locations listed below during military service, Veterans Administration (VA) will automatically assume (or “presume”) that they were exposed to Agent Orange.

Between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, the Veteran must have served for any length of time in at least one of these locations:

- In the Republic of Vietnam, or
- Aboard a U.S. military vessel that operated in the inland waterways of Vietnam, or
- On a vessel operating not more than 12 nautical miles seaward from the demarcation line of the waters of Vietnam and Cambodia

Or the Veteran must have served in at least one of these locations that have been added based on the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics (PACT) Act:

- Any U.S. or Royal Thai military base in Thailand from January 9, 1962, through June 30, 1976, or
- Laos from December 1, 1965, through September 30, 1969, or

- Cambodia at Mimot or Krek, Kampong Cham Province from April 16, 1969, through April 30, 1969, or
- Guam or American Samoa or in the territorial waters off Guam or American Samoa from January 9, 1962, through July 31, 1980, or
- Johnston Atoll or on a ship that called at Johnston Atoll from January 1, 1972, through September 30, 1977

Or at least one of these must be true:

- The Veteran served in or near the Korean demilitarized zone (DMZ) for any length of time between September 1, 1967, and August 31, 1971, or
- The Veteran served on active duty in a regular Air Force unit location where a C-123 aircraft with traces of Agent Orange was assigned and had repeated contact with this aircraft due to flight, ground, or medical duties, or

- The Veteran was involved in transporting, testing, storing, or other uses of Agent Orange during military service, or
- The Veteran was assigned as a Reservist to certain flight, ground, or medical crew duties at one of the locations listed here

Eligible Reserve locations, time periods, and units include:

- Lockbourne/Rickenbacker Air Force Base in Ohio, 1969 to 1986 (906th and 907th Tactical Air Groups or 355th and 356th Tactical Airlift Squadrons)
- Westover Air Force Base in Massachusetts, 1972 to 1982 (731st Tactical Air Squadron and 74th Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron, or 901st Organizational Maintenance Squadron)
- Pittsburgh International Airport in Pennsylvania, 1972 to 1982 (758th Airlift Squadron)



ARE THERE VA PRESUMPTIVE CONDITIONS FOR MILITARY AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE?

VA recognizes that certain diseases can be related to a Veteran's qualifying military service. We call these "presumptive diseases." VA has recognized certain cancers and other health problems as presumptive diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides during military service. Veterans and their survivors may be eligible for benefits for these diseases.

Presumptive Conditions for Agent Orange exposure include:

- **AL Amyloidosis:** A rare disease caused when an abnormal protein (amyloid) enters tissues or organs.
- **Bladder Cancer:** A type of cancer that affects the bladder where urine is stored before it leaves the body.
- **Chronic B-cell Leukemias:** A type of cancer that affects white blood cells. This includes all chronic B-cell leukemias, including, but not limited to, hairy-cell leukemias and chronic lymphocytic leukemia.

- **Chloracne (or similar acneform disease):**
A skin condition that occurs soon after exposure to chemicals and looks like common forms of acne seen in teenagers. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10 percent disabling within 1 year of exposure to herbicides.
- **Diabetes Mellitus Type 2:** A disease characterized by high blood sugar levels resulting from the body's inability to respond properly to the hormone insulin.
- **Hypertension (high blood pressure):**
A condition where pressure in your blood vessels is too high.
- **Hodgkin's Disease:** A malignant lymphoma (cancer) characterized by progressive enlargement of the lymph nodes, liver, and spleen, and by progressive anemia.
- **Hypothyroidism:** A condition that causes the thyroid gland to not produce enough of certain important hormones.
- **Ischemic Heart Disease:** A disease characterized by a reduced supply of blood to the heart, that leads to chest pain.
- **Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS):** A condition in which an atypical protein is found in the blood. The protein is called monoclonal protein or M protein.
- **Multiple Myeloma:** A cancer of plasma cells, a type of white blood cell in bone marrow.
- **Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma:** A group of cancers that affect the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue.
- **Parkinsonism:** Any condition that causes a combination of abnormal movements. These include slow movements, trouble speaking, stiff muscles, or tremors.
- **Parkinson's Disease:** A progressive disorder of the nervous system that affects muscle movement.
- **Peripheral Neuropathy, Early-Onset:**
A nervous system condition that causes numbness, tingling, and motor weakness. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10 percent disabling within one year of herbicide exposure.
- **Porphyria Cutanea Tarda:** A disorder characterized by liver dysfunction and by thinning and blistering of the skin in sun-exposed areas. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10 percent disabling within 1 year of exposure to herbicides.
- **Prostate Cancer:** Cancer of the prostate; one of the most common cancers among men.
- **Respiratory Cancers (includes lung cancer):**
Cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea, and bronchus.
- **Soft Tissue Sarcomas (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma):** A group of different types of cancers in body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues.



IS AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE RELATED TO SPINA BIFIDA AND OTHER BIRTH DEFECTS IN CHILDREN?

VA maintains a program for Vietnam Veterans' children with spina bifida (with the exception of spina bifida occulta) for dependents of Veterans presumed to have Agent Orange exposures during the Vietnam era. This was based on previous review assessments that spina bifida could be associated with Agent Orange exposure. However, two recent committees of the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM - Vietnam Veterans and Agent Orange Vol 11 and 12), have re-evaluated the evidence and did not find an association from the available research. Based on these NASEM reviews (Veterans and Agent Orange, Vol 10 and 11), there is inconclusive or inadequate evidence of an association with Agent Orange or other tactical herbicides and any birth defects (including spina bifida).



WHAT VA BENEFITS ARE RELATED TO AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE?

VA offers health registry exams, health care, disability compensation, and other benefits to eligible Veterans. Their dependents and survivors also may be eligible for benefits.

- **Agent Orange Registry health exam**, a free exam for possible long-term health problems related to herbicide exposure. Veterans who served in Vietnam, the Korean DMZ, or other areas where Agent Orange was sprayed, may be eligible.
- **Health care benefits**, a full range of medical benefits. There are many ways a Veteran may qualify. VA encourages all Veterans who believe they have a health condition related to their time in service to apply for benefits. For information on how to apply visit: <https://www.benefits.va.gov/BENEFITS/Applying.asp>
- **Disability compensation for Veterans**, Veterans may be eligible for disability compensation if they have a disability related to Agent Orange exposure during service and were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions. Learn more about disability compensation for Agent Orange: <https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardousmaterials-exposure/agent-orange/>



ARE THERE ANY VA BENEFITS FOR AGENT ORANGE EXPOSURE FOR DEPENDENTS/SURVIVORS?

Surviving spouses, dependent children, and dependent parents of Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange or other herbicides during service and died as the result of diseases related to the exposure may be eligible for health care, compensation, education, and home loan benefits.

Learn more: <https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/benefits/survivors.asp>



WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION ON AGENT ORANGE?

- **Agent Orange - Public Health (va.gov)**
<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange> Information on the VA public health website. The site discusses Agent Orange related diseases, exposure locations, and available benefits.
- **Blue Water Veterans and Agent Orange Exposure**
<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/locations/blue-water-veterans.asp> Information on Agent Orange exposure/Blue Water Navy Veterans on the VA public health website.
- **Agent Orange Newsletter**
<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/publications/index.asp> Latest publication by HOME focused on Agent Orange exposure.
- **Environmental Exposure Programs and Services Brochure**
<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/benefits/registry-evaluation.asp> HOME brochure describing voluntary, focused medical evaluations for Veterans who may have been exposed to certain environmental hazards during their military service.
- **Vietnam Era Health Retrospective Observational Study**
<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/epidemiology/studies/heroes/index.asp> Find information about a nationwide study designed to assess the current health and well-being of Vietnam Veterans.
- **Directory of Environmental Health Coordinators**
<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp> Use this site to locate an environmental health coordinator in a specific geographic area.
- **Health and Medicine Division Reports on Agent Orange**
<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/publications/health-and-medicine-division.asp> Review evidence on the long-term health effects of Agent Orange and other herbicides on Vietnam Veterans. This organization was formerly known as the Institute of Medicine.
- **Agent Orange Registry**
<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/benefits/registry-exam.asp> Find out how to participate in VA's Agent Orange Registry program.
- **VA's PACT Act/VA Benefits**
<https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/> Includes FAQ's about VA's law, the PACT Act, as well as information about VA benefits/presumptive conditions.

INFORMATION SHEET ADAPTED FROM:

<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/index.asp>

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