

1ST DISTRICT SERVICE OFFICER VA & R REPORT FOR MAY 2022



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Did you know new research indicates deaths from heart disease, especially among those veterans with brain injuries and those with other combat injuries place veterans at risk for hypertension, coronary artery disease, diabetes and other chronic illnesses?

On March 1, 2022, VA announced its intention of adding nine rare respiratory cancers to the list of presumed service-connected disabilities in relation to exposure to toxic chemicals in the air, water, or soil for veterans who served any amount of time in the Southwest Asia theater of operations. Veterans, dependents and survivors who had claims previously denied for any of the respiratory cancers would be encouraged to file a new or supplemental claim for benefits once the rule-making process is complete.

Air Force pilots, crew members, and mechanics who worked on planes daily had a significant risk of asbestos exposure since asbestos-containing components were employed to protect aircraft from catching fire. Examples of asbestos-containing products include paint, fireproofing material, cockpit, engine insulation, etc.

Vehicle parts like gaskets and construction materials all contained asbestos— anyone who spent time in Army vehicles and bases was at risk of exposure.

Apart from that, veterans in the Coast Guard and Marine Corps were also at a high risk of exposure. There was also a risk of second-hand asbestos exposure to family members who lived on military bases. Even though the military discarded tons of asbestos from various sites, veterans are at risk of exposure as many site structures around the globe still contain this dangerous mineral.

Asbestos was a highly toxic mineral widely used in every military branch until the early 1980s due to its affordability and resistance to hot and cold temperatures. The military was unaware of the hidden dangers of asbestos as the manufacturers never disclosed this information to the government and the public. As a result, many veterans are now at a high risk of developing mesothelioma. While the government cannot guarantee veterans a healthy life, it can provide veterans financial relief and compensation via VA benefits, which they can claim in case of a mesothelioma diagnosis.

For stroke Symptoms Call 911 right away if you have any of the following, even if the symptom seems to get better:

- Weakness in an arm, hand, or leg
- Numbness on one side of the body
- Sudden dimness or loss of vision, particularly in one eye
- Sudden difficulty speaking
- Inability to understand what someone is saying
- Sudden dizziness or loss of balance
- Sudden, excruciating headache, unlike headaches you've had before, or a severe headache accompanied by nausea and vomiting

- Seizure

F.A.S.T. is an easy way to remember the signs of a stroke. When you see these signs, you will know that you need to call 911 fast.

F.A.S.T. stands for:

- **F** is for face drooping. One side of the face is drooping or numb. When the person smiles, the smile is uneven.
- **A** is for arm weakness. One arm is weak or numb. When the person lifts both arms at the same time one arm may drift downward.
- **S** is for speech difficulty. You may notice slurred speech or difficulty speaking. The person can't repeat a simple sentence correctly when asked.
- **T** is for time to call 911. If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if they go away, call 911 right away. Make note of the time the symptoms first appeared.

Veterans who served in OIF, or the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations and other locations, may now be entitled to compensation for medical conditions presumed to be related to exposure to fine particulate matter.

Veterans and survivors who believe they may be eligible for compensation for asthma, rhinitis or sinusitis that emerged within a 10-year period after separation from military service are encouraged to file a claim for benefits.

Veterans who served in the following locations are presumed to have been exposed to particulate matter and may be entitled to the new presumption:

- Southwest Asia Theater of Operations beginning August 2, 1990, to the present.
- Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Syria or Djibouti beginning September 19, 2001, to the present.

The Southwest Asia Theater of Operations refers to these locations and the air space above them:

- 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.

As veterans age, one thing they should consider planning for is if the care and benefits of a nursing home or long-term care facility are needed or wanted.

One step to help choose a veteran-friendly facility is finding out about the cost — How much is it? How is the veteran going to pay for it? What care or services are included for that cost? Often Social Security income, pensions, veteran's benefits, long-term care insurance and other private pay sources may contribute to the cost. While Medicare helps covered skilled nursing for rehabilitation, it does not pay for long-term care. When a veteran's savings or other resources have been spent down, a veteran may qualify for Medicaid/SoonerCare to contribute to the cost.

Another thing to consider in choosing a veteran-friendly facility, is location. Consider a facility that is close to the doctor or VA hospital that you or your loved-one wants to continue using. While facilities have their own doctors to provide care, veterans have the right to use the doctor of their choice. Facilities are not required to offer transportation to such services; however, they are required to honor the veterans' choice.

An additional step in choosing a veteran-friendly facility is to consider the overall environment it provides. How accessible it is for family and friends to visit the veteran as they are vital support and contribute to the veterans' overall well-being? How varied is their activity calendar? Are the current residents awake and dressed? Are they being treated with dignity and respect?

If you're a Vietnam veteran or the eligible survivor of a veteran with a presumptive health condition, you may be eligible for VA disability compensation. A presumptive condition is a condition VA assumes is related to a veteran's qualifying military service. If you have an illness that is not on the list of presumptive diseases, but you believe it is connected to military exposure, you can still file a claim for VA disability benefits. However, you will need to submit more evidence to support your claim. You can file a claim or appeal a decided claim on your own or with help from an accredited attorney, claims agent or Veterans Service Officer (VSO). These professionals are trained and certified in the VA claims and appeals processes and can help you with VA-related needs.

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has proposed adding nine rare cancers to the presumptive list of service-connected disabilities for veterans who served in the Southwest Asia theater of operations. The VA has determined through a focused review of scientific and medical evidence that there is the plausibility that airborne hazards may have caused certain cancers of the respiratory tract in Gulf War veterans.

The Elizabeth Dole Foundation has launched The Hope Fund for Critical Financial Assistance to offer immediate financial aid to vulnerable military caregivers. With

generous support from the Bob & Dolores Hope Foundation, the Foundation will provide dedicated financial grants in times of crisis for Americans caring for a wounded, ill, or injured veteran at home. The Hope Fund is the centerpiece of a phased approach at the Foundation for creating healthier caregiving families.

When chemicals in the brain are out of balance, it can lead to issues like PTSD or depression. Fortunately, medications can be used to correct the imbalance. The four medications recommended to treat PTSD are Zoloft, Paxil, Prozac and Effexor. Research shows that these medications work for about half of the people who take them. PTSD medications are antidepressants. They should also help any depression symptoms. If one medication doesn't work for you, a different one might. When the medications are working, you will experience improvements in most, if not all, of your symptoms.

Please Remember..... That all gave some, but many gave all!

