



VETS HELPING VETS SINCE 1974

AGENT ORANGE: THE BASICS

Start by checking the list of conditions linked to Agent Orange exposure.

In Vietnam, dense foliage gave cover to the enemy, putting American lives at risk. To clear foliage—and destroy enemy food crops—the U.S. adopted a tactic that put even more lives at risk: it sprayed millions of gallons of defoliants. The best-known was Agent Orange. This compound was contaminated with dioxin, one of the most toxic substances on earth.

Over the years, the VA has developed a list of severe medical conditions linked to exposure to Agent Orange. If you're at least 10-percent disabled by any of these conditions, special rules make it very likely that your claim for VA disability compensation will be approved, as long as there's evidence showing that you literally set foot in Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975.

The list of conditions linked to Agent Orange exposure is expanded from time to time. The following list is current as of December 2012. To check for any recent additions, visit www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/diseases.asp.

It doesn't matter when these conditions first appeared, except as noted below.

- **Acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy.** (This condition must have appeared within one year of the last day the veteran was exposed to Agent Orange, and must have been cured within two years after symptoms first appeared.)
- **AL Amyloidosis, also known as primary amyloidosis**
- **Chloracne or similar acneform disease.** (This condition must have appeared within one year of the last day the veteran was exposed to Agent Orange.)

- **Chronic B-cell leukemias, including hairy-cell leukemia and chronic lymphocytic leukemia**
- **Type 2 diabetes mellitus, also known as adult-onset diabetes**
- **Hodgkin's disease**
- **Ischemic heart disease**
- **Multiple myeloma**
- **Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma**
- **Parkinson's disease**
- **Porphyria cutanea tarda.** (This condition must have appeared within one year of the last day the veteran was exposed to Agent Orange.)
- **Prostate cancer**
- **Respiratory cancers** (cancers of the lung, bronchus, larynx, or trachea)
- **Soft-tissue sarcomas** (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma or mesothelioma)

In theory, U.S. military veterans exposed to Agent Orange anywhere in the world can receive VA compensation for any condition.

The special rules for veterans who set foot in Vietnam also apply to veterans who can show that they served on the inland waterways of Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975. They apply as well to certain veterans who served along the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) between April 1, 1968, and August 31, 1971, and to certain veterans who served in Thailand between February 28, 1961, and May 7, 1975.

In theory, if you were exposed to Agent Orange **anywhere in the world** while serving in the United States military, you can receive VA disability compensation for **any** condition—*but only if the VA finds that you were, in fact, exposed to Agent Orange, and that there is sufficient medical evidence linking your condition to Agent Orange.*

Cases involving exposure to Agent Orange in locales not specified above are generally difficult to win. Check with a Veterans Service Organization (VSO) to determine your prospects for success. For a list of VSOs, visit www.stp-sf.org/guides/vsos.

If you were exposed to Agent Orange and have a child with spina bifida, you should apply for VA benefits. Your child may be eligible for medical care, vocational training, and a monthly stipend based upon the level of disability.

So far, spina bifida is the only condition that has been linked to Agent Orange exposure in the children of **male** veterans. However, special rules apply if you're

a **female** veteran who served in Vietnam between February 28, 1961, and May 7, 1975, and have a child with a birth defect. Check with a VSO for more information.

If you're receiving VA disability compensation for any condition on the basis of exposure to Agent Orange, your dependents or survivors may be eligible for education, indemnity compensation, or pension benefits from the VA. A VSO can provide more information.

The VA offers an exceptionally thorough, free medical examination to any veteran concerned about the health effects of Agent Orange exposure. The doctor takes a medical history, conducts a physical exam, and orders a number of basic lab tests. Sometimes the veteran is asked to report for follow-up testing.

Information from the exam is entered in the VA's Agent Orange Registry, which tracks health problems among Vietnam veterans. Participation in the Agent Orange Registry exam does **not** start a claim for VA benefits, or guarantee that you'll receive them. But it's still wise to get the exam.

NOTE

You may have heard about a class-action lawsuit brought by veterans against the manufacturers of Agent Orange. Many veterans did receive payments from a fund established when the lawsuit was settled. However, it's now too late to apply for payment from the fund. If you believe you're entitled to benefits because you were exposed to Agent Orange, you should file a claim with the VA.

Special rules apply if you're a female veteran who served in Vietnam between February 28, 1961 and May 7, 1975, and have a child with a birth defect.

Disclaimer

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