Presumptive Disability Benefits

What is “Presumptive” Service Connection?

VA presumes that certain disabilities were caused by military service. This is because of the unique circumstances of a specific Veteran’s military service. If a presumed condition is diagnosed in a Veteran within a certain group, they can be awarded disability compensation.

What are “Presumptive” Conditions?

If you are diagnosed with a chronic disease within one year of active duty release, you should apply for disability compensation. Examples of chronic disease include: arthritis, diabetes or hypertension.

Or, if you served continuously for at least 90 days and are diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) after discharge, you can establish service connection for the disease.

Veterans in the following groups may qualify for “presumptive” disability benefits:

- **Former prisoners of war** who:
  - Have a condition that is at least 10 percent disabling
  - Depending on length of imprisonment, specific conditions are presumed
    - Imprisoned for any length of time:
      - Psychosis
      - Any of the anxiety states
      - Dysthymic disorder (or depressive neurosis)
      - Organic residuals of frostbite
      - Post-traumatic osteoarthritis
      - Heart disease or hypertensive vascular disease
      - Stroke and the residual effects
      - Osteoporosis, when the Veteran has posttraumatic stress disorder
- **Imprisoned for at least 30 days:**
  - Beriberi (including beriberi heart disease)
  - Chronic dysentery
  - Helminthiasis
  - Malnutrition (including optic atrophy)
  - Pellagra
  - Other nutritional deficiencies
  - Irritable bowel syndrome
  - Peptic ulcer disease
  - Peripheral neuropathy
  - Cirrhosis of the liver
  - Avitaminosis
  - Osteoporosis

- **Vietnam Veterans** who were:
  - Exposed to Agent Orange
  - Served in the Republic 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 between Jan. 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975
  - Specific presumed conditions are:
    - AL amyloidosis
    - B-cell leukemia
    - Chronic lymphocytic leukemia
    - Multiple myeloma
    - Type 2 diabetes
    - Hodgkin’s disease
    - Ischemic heart disease (including but not limited to, coronary artery disease and atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease)
    - Non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma
    - Parkinson’s disease
    - Parkinsonism
    - Prostate cancer
    - Respiratory cancers
    - Soft-tissue sarcoma (not including osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi’s sarcoma or mesothelioma)
    - Bladder cancer
    - Hypothyroidism
- The following conditions, if they become greater than 10 percent debilitating within a year of exposure to an herbicide agent:
  - Acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy
  - Chloracne or other similar acneform disease
  - Porphyria cutanea tarda

- **Atomic Veterans exposed to ionizing radiation** and who experienced one of the following:
  - Participated in atmospheric nuclear testing
  - Occupied or were prisoners of war in Hiroshima or Nagasaki
  - Served before Feb. 1, 1992, at a diffusion plant in Paducah, Kentucky, Portsmouth, Ohio or Oak Ridge, Tennessee
  - Served before Jan. 1, 1974, at Amchitka Island, Alaska Specific presumed conditions are:
    - All forms of leukemia, except chronic lymphocytic leukemia
    - Cancer of the thyroid, breast, pharynx, esophagus, stomach, small intestine, pancreas, bile ducts, gall bladder, salivary gland, urinary tract, brain, bone, lung, colon or ovary
    - Bronchioloalveolar carcinoma
    - Multiple myeloma
    - Lymphomas, other than Hodgkin’s disease
    - Primary liver cancer, except if there are indications of cirrhosis or hepatitis B

- **Gulf War Veterans** who:
  - Served in the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations
  - Have a condition that is at least 10 percent disabling by Dec. 31, 2026
  - Specific presumed conditions are:
    - Medically unexplained chronic multi-symptom illnesses that exist for six months or more, such as:
      - Chronic fatigue syndrome
      - Fibromyalgia
      - Irritable bowel syndrome
    - Any diagnosed or undiagnosed illness that warrants a presumption of service connection, as determined by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs
• Signs or symptoms of an undiagnosed illness include:
  • Fatigue
  • Skin symptoms
  • Headaches
  • Muscle pain
  • Joint pain
  • Neurological or neuropsychological symptoms
  • Symptoms involving the upper or lower respiratory system
  • Sleep disturbance
  • Gastrointestinal symptoms
  • Cardiovascular symptoms
  • Weight loss
  • Menstrual disorders

• **Gulf War Veterans** who:
  • Served in the Southwest Asia Theater of Operations or in Afghanistan on or after September 19, 2001
    • Manifest one of the following infectious diseases to a degree of 10 percent or more within 1 year of separation:
      • Brucellosis
      • Campylobacter jejuni
      • Coxiella burnetii (Q fever)
      • Nontyphoid Salmonella
      • Shigella
      • West Nile virus
      • Malaria (or when accepted treatises indicate the incubation period began during a qualifying period of service)
    • Manifest to a degree of 10 percent or more at any time after separation:
      • Mycobacterium tuberculosis
      • Visceral leishmaniasis
• Gulf War Deployed Veterans who:
  • Served any length of time in the Southwest Theater of Operations during the Persian Gulf War, or
  • Served any length of time in Afghanistan, Syria, Djibouti or Uzbekistan on or after September 19, 2001 and
  • Manifests one of the following to any degree within 10 years from the date of separation from military service:
    o Asthma
    o Rhinitis
    o Sinusitis, to include rhinosinusitis