

**Your VA Claim Exam**

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## VA Claim Exams

### FACT SHEET

#### BACKGROUND

On May 28, 2020, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) resumed in-person disability compensation and pension (C&P) medical exams performed by VA contractors. As of December 31, 2020, the available C&P exam locations for scheduling grew to 42,516 U.S. zip codes. As of June 1, 2021, examinations requiring the removal of personal protective equipment (PPE) have resumed in all US locations, as determined by the examiner.

The Medical Disability Program Office (MDEO) administers the Medical Disability Exam (MDE) contract program. MDEO contracts allow vendors to provide examinations to Veterans and service members who are seeking disability benefits from VA. The goal of the program is to reduce claims processing time by increasing access to examinations.

#### QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

##### **Q: What is a VA claim exam, also known as a Compensation and Pension (C&P) exam?**

A: If you've filed a claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for disability compensation or pension benefits, VA may ask you to go to an examination as part of the claim process. For disability compensation, this exam helps VA determine if your disability is service connected, and the severity of your condition if you are already service-connected. In the case of pension claims, the exam documents the level of your disability.

A VA claim exam is different from a regular medical appointment because the examiner won't prescribe any medicine or treat you – for instance, you won't receive a referral to a specialist. The examiner will only address the claimed disabilities that VA determined warrant an examination. Following your exam, your exam results will be uploaded to your VA claims file. These results will be used along with the evidence of record to make a decision on your claim.

##### **Q: Is everyone scheduled for a VA claim exam?**

A: No, not everyone is required to attend a VA exam. After you apply for disability compensation and/or pension, you may receive a phone call or a letter from VA or a VA contract examiner to schedule you for your C&P exam. If you claimed benefits for several disabilities, you may be asked to report for one or more exams, so each disability can be assessed by an appropriate examiner. The C&P exams may be completed at a VA facility or with a VA contract examiner. Not every claim will require an exam; it depends on what medical evidence was included with the application.

## Q: How is the VA claim exam or C&P exam scheduled?

A: VA or a VA contract examiner will either mail you a letter or call you with your appointment date and time. If you are receiving treatment at a VA medical center, make sure the facility has your current address, phone number and email information. The wrong information could cause your appointment letter to be delayed and not reach you in time.

You can request the specific sex of your medical provider for any examination during the scheduling process. Also, if your claim is related to a mental or physical health condition resulting from Military Sexual Trauma (MST), the law permits that you may choose the sex of your examiner. Please notify your scheduler if you have a preference for the sex of your examiner.

**VA may also contact you via e-mail to inform you that one of VA contact providers (LHI, QTC, VES) will be contacting you to schedule your examination. This email will provide you with contact providers contact information.**

Prior to your exam, contact the VA or VA contract examiner to confirm your exam date, time, and location. If you don't show up to your exam, it may delay your claim. Additionally, your claim may be decided based on the evidence of record.

## Q: The date and/or time of my C&P exam doesn't work for me. Can I reschedule my exam?

A: If your scheduled exam date or time does not work due to some other life event, immediately call the number provided and try to reschedule. Unless it is an emergency situation, requests to reschedule should be completed at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled appointment. Not responding to a phone or letter request for scheduling an exam or missing the exam could cause VA to delay its decision on your claim.

## Q: How early should I arrive for my VA claim exam?

A: It is recommended you arrive at least 15 minutes prior to your scheduled exam time. Please note, many examiners will not perform your exam if you are late, due to scheduling restrictions.

## Q: What can I expect during my VA claim exam?

A: Unlike a typical medical exam, the VA claim exam will not give you any treatment or prescribe any medicine. The examiner may ask you questions, observe you, and/or perform a limited physical exam.

The purpose of the exam is to have an examiner assess your condition and review claim-related medical records and your claim file (c-file/e-file). The c-file typically includes medical records from Department of Defense (DoD), DoD personnel records, treatment records from your health care providers and any other documents submitted.

## Q: How long will my VA claim exam take?

A: The length of your VA claim exam depends how much information the examiner needs to review, and the type of examination being completed. You can expect to spend anywhere from 15 minutes to over an hour. Each exam is different depending on the Veteran and the information that has been included with the claim.

Following your exam, the examiner completes a report that includes any test results and opinions that were requested. You have the right to request and receive copies of your exam results by contacting your VA Regional Office.

It's important to remember that the in-person visit is only one part of the claim review process. The doctor will also spend time outside the exam carefully reviewing

## **Q: Where does the VA claim exam fit within the claim process?**

A: After you submit your claim, VA reviews it and begins to gather information pertinent to your claim. If an examination is needed, one will be requested. After your exam, results are uploaded to your electronic claims file. Once all development for pertinent records is completed, VA then performs a final review of your claim package and will decide your claim.

## **Q: Can the VA examiner or VA contract examiner tell me the status of my claim?**

A: No, the examiner only performs the exam and provides the results to VA; they are not part of the decision-making process and they do not make the decisions. The examiner will never know the outcome of your pending claim. Only a VA regional representative can answer questions regarding your application or claim status. To get a claim status update, contact VA at **1-800-827-1000**; a representative will **answer your questions**.

To ensure that claimants have access to responsible and qualified representation on their VA benefits claims, VA's Office of General Counsel accredits attorneys, agents, and Veterans Service Organization (VSO) representatives. For more information about VA-accredited representatives, go to [Accredited Representatives Home \(va.gov\)](https://www.va.gov/accrued-representatives); to conduct a state-by-state search for an accredited representative, go to [OGC - Accreditation Search \(va.gov\)](https://www.va.gov/accrued-representatives).

## **Q: Can I bring new medical records that I did not submit with my claim to my VA claim exam?**

A: If you have new non-VA medical records, please submit them to VA before your appointment. You may bring records to your appointment, but the provider cannot submit these records for you. All new information should be uploaded online, submitted to your accredited VSO representative or mailed to VA using the appropriate address found at [How To File A VA Disability Claim | Veterans Affairs](https://www.va.gov/accrued-representatives) or [Mailing Address for Disability Compensation Claims - Compensation \(va.gov\)](https://www.va.gov/accrued-representatives).

## **Q: Can I bring my spouse or family member to my VA claim exam?**

A: For everyone's safety, we are asking that family members do not accompany Veterans to exams unless they are essential caregivers. Please check with your contract medical examiner before your visit.

## **Q: I missed my scheduled VA claim exam. What should I do?**

A: If you have any questions concerning your claim exam or need to reschedule your appointment(s), please contact the VA Benefits Hotline at **1-800-827-1000** for assistance.

## Q: My claim exam is scheduled far away from where I live. Does VA cover travel costs?

A: Veterans traveling to a claim exam in the United States are eligible for travel reimbursement to and from the examination. Veterans scheduled for a claim exam or C&P exam with a contract vendor will receive mileage reimbursement from the contract vendor. You should expect to receive reimbursement within 14 days of the completed appointment. The current mileage reimbursement rate is **41.5 cents per mile**.

**Note:** Active-duty service members are not eligible for mileage reimbursement.

## Q: How are exams being rescheduled?

A: If you have previously informed VA that you did not want to attend examination due to COVID-19 concerns and you are currently willing to reschedule, call the VA Benefits Hotline at **1-800-827-1000** for assistance.

## Q: What about my previously scheduled C&P exam?

A: If a VA contract provider has not contacted you to reschedule the examination, call the VA Benefits Hotline at **1-800-827-1000**.

## Q: Will my claim be denied if I need an exam but can't attend one during COVID-19?

A: No. In cases where an in-person exam is needed, no final action will be taken where the Veteran has notified VA/VA contractors that the inability to report is a result of COVID-19 concerns.

## Q: Some claims are being denied during COVID-19. Why is this happening?

A: During COVID-19, VA can complete many claims through normal processes that may not require an in-person exam. These include tele-C&P exams and reviews of acceptable clinical evidence (ACE).

## Q: What else can I do to provide evidence in support of my claim?

A: You can still [submit private treatment records](#) or request that VA obtain those records on your behalf in support of your claim. Work with a VA [accredited Veterans Service Organization representative, or an accredited attorney or claims agent](#) for assistance in completing claims for VA benefits. You can always get more information and assistance online [here](#).