

In this section

[\(https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim-esp/\)](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim-esp/)

How to file a VA disability claim

Find out how to file a claim for disability compensation or increased disability compensation.

How do I prepare before starting my application?

- Find out if you're eligible for VA disability compensation.
[Learn about eligibility \(https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/\)](https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/)
- Be sure to fill out your claim completely.
- Gather any evidence (supporting documents) you'll submit yourself when you file your VA disability claim. We encourage you to send in all your supporting documents along with your claim. This will help us process your claim quickly.
[Learn about fully developed claims \(https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/fully-developed-claims/\)](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/fully-developed-claims/)
- Find out if you'll need to turn in any additional forms with your claim.
[Learn about additional forms you may need to file \(https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/additional-forms/\)](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/additional-forms/)

To learn more about filing a disability claim, you can play our disability claims video.

[Go to our disability claims video on YouTube \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ORYYo-Q2Jc\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8ORYYo-Q2Jc)

[Learn what the PACT Act means for your VA benefits >](#)



What evidence do I need to support my claim?

You can support your VA disability claim by providing these documents:

- **VA medical records and hospital records.** These could relate to your claimed illnesses or injuries or they could show that your rated disability has gotten worse.
- **Private medical records and hospital reports.** These could relate to your claimed illnesses or injuries or they could show that your disability has gotten worse.
- **Supporting statements.** These could be from family members, friends, clergy members, law enforcement personnel, or people you served with. These statements could tell us more about your claimed condition and how and when it happened or how it got worse.

Depending on the type of claim you file, you may gather supporting documents yourself, or you can ask for our help to gather evidence.

[Learn more about the evidence we'll need for your claim](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/)
(<https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/>).

We'll also review your discharge papers (DD214 or other separation documents) and service treatment records.

Do I have to submit evidence with my claim?

No. You don't have to submit any evidence to support your claim. But we may need to schedule a claim exam so we can learn more about your condition.

You should also know that you have up to a year from the date we receive your claim to turn in any evidence. If you start your application and need time to gather more supporting documents, you can save your application and come back later to finish it. We'll recognize the date you started your application as your date of claim as long as you complete it within 365 days.

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How do I file a claim for compensation?

You can file a claim online now.



[File for disability compensation online](https://www.va.gov/disability/file-disability-claim-form-21-526ez/)

[\(https://www.va.gov/disability/file-disability-claim-form-21-526ez/\)](https://www.va.gov/disability/file-disability-claim-form-21-526ez/)

You can also file for disability compensation in any of these 3 ways

By mail

File your claim by mail using an Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits (VA Form 21-526EZ).

[Get VA Form 21-526EZ to download \(https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-21-526ez/\)](https://www.va.gov/find-forms/about-form-21-526ez/)

Print the form, fill it out, and send it to this address:

Department of Veterans Affairs
Claims Intake Center
PO Box 4444
Janesville, WI 53547-4444

In person

Bring your application to a VA regional office near you.

[Find a VA regional office near you \(https://www.va.gov/find-locations/?facilityType=benefits\)](https://www.va.gov/find-locations/?facilityType=benefits)

With the help of a trained professional

You can work with a trained professional called an accredited representative to get help filing a claim for disability compensation.

[Get help from an accredited representative \(https://www.va.gov/disability/get-help-filing-claim/\)](https://www.va.gov/disability/get-help-filing-claim/)

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Should I submit an intent to file form?

If you plan to file for disability compensation using a paper form, you may want to submit an intent to file form first. This can give you the time you need to gather your evidence while avoiding a later potential start date (also called an effective date). When you notify us of your intent to file, you may be able to get retroactive payments (compensation that starts at a point in the past).

Note: If you file for disability compensation online, then you don't need to notify us of your intent to file. This is because your effective date gets set automatically when you start filling out the form online—before you submit it.

[Find out how to submit an intent to file form](https://www.va.gov/resources/your-intent-to-file-a-va-claim)
(<https://www.va.gov/resources/your-intent-to-file-a-va-claim>).

What happens after I file my VA disability claim?

[Find out what happens after you file](https://www.va.gov/disability/after-you-file-claim) (<https://www.va.gov/disability/after-you-file-claim>).

You don't need to do anything while you're waiting unless we send you a letter asking for more information. If we schedule exams for you, be sure not to miss them.

 [Check your VA claim status](https://www.va.gov/claim-or-appeal-status) (<https://www.va.gov/claim-or-appeal-status>).

How long does it take VA to make a decision?

103.3 days

Average number of days to complete disability-related claims in September 2023

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More information about filing disability claims

Claim types and when to file

(<https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/when-to-file>)

Learn about standard claims, supplemental claims, secondary claims, and more.

Evidence needed for your disability claim

(<https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed>)

Find out what evidence we'll need to support your disability claim.

Disabilities that appear within 1 year after discharge

(<https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/illnesses-within-one-year-of-discharge>)

Find out if you can get disability benefits if you have signs of an illness within a year after being discharged from service.

Get help from an accredited representative

(<https://www.va.gov/disability/get-help-filing-claim>)

Find out how to work with a trained professional called an accredited representative to file your claim.

Supporting forms for VA claims

(<https://www.va.gov/supporting-forms-for-claims>)

Find additional forms that you may need to support your claim.

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