

**In this section**

(<https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility-esp/>).

# Eligibility for VA disability benefits

VA disability compensation provides tax-free monthly payments. If you have a service-connected condition, you may be eligible for compensation. A service-connected condition means an illness or injury that was caused by—or got worse because of—your active military service. Keep reading to find out if you may be eligible.

## **The PACT Act expands benefit access for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances**

The PACT Act is a new law that expands access to VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. This law helps us provide generations of Veterans—and their survivors—with the care and benefits they've earned and deserve.

[Learn how the PACT Act may affect your VA benefits and care](https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits)  
(<https://www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits>).

## Am I eligible for VA disability compensation?

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



You may be eligible for VA disability benefits or compensation if you meet both of these requirements.

**Both of these must be true:**

- You have a current illness or injury (known as a condition) that affects your mind or body, **and**
- You served on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training

**And at least one of these must be true:**

- You got sick or injured while serving in the military—and can link this condition to your illness or injury (called an in-service disability claim), **or**
- You had an illness or injury before you joined the military—and serving made it worse (called a pre-service disability claim), **or**
- You have a disability related to your active-duty service that didn't appear until after you ended your service (called a post-service disability claim)

## Presumptive conditions

For some conditions, we automatically assume (or “presume”) that your service caused your condition. We call these presumptive conditions.

If you have a presumptive condition, you don't need to prove that your service caused the condition. You only need to meet the service requirements for the presumption.

Find out more about these categories of presumptive conditions:

- [A chronic \(long-lasting\) illness that appears within 1 year after discharge \(https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/illnesses-within-one-year-of-discharge\)](https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/illnesses-within-one-year-of-discharge).
- [An illness caused by contact with contaminants \(toxic chemicals\) or other hazardous materials \(https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure\)](https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/hazardous-materials-exposure).
- [An illness caused by your time spent as a prisoner of war \(POW\) \(https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/former-pows\)](https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/former-pows).

# What should I do if I received an other than honorable, bad conduct, or dishonorable discharge?

If you've received one of these discharge statuses, you may not be eligible for VA disability benefits.

**There are 2 ways you can try to qualify:**

- [Find out how to apply for a discharge upgrade](https://www.va.gov/discharge-upgrade-instructions/)  
(<https://www.va.gov/discharge-upgrade-instructions/>).
- [Learn about the VA Character of Discharge review process](https://www.va.gov/discharge-upgrade-instructions/#other-options)  
(<https://www.va.gov/discharge-upgrade-instructions/#other-options>).

## How do I file a claim for compensation?

You can file a claim online now. You can also file by mail, in person, or with the help of a trained professional.



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

(<https://www.va.gov/disability/file-disability-claim-form-21-526ez/>).

[Learn about other ways to file a disability compensation claim](https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim)

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

## What conditions are covered by these benefits?

**You may be able to get VA disability benefits for conditions like these:**

- Chronic (long-lasting) back pain resulting in a current diagnosed back disability
- Breathing problems resulting from a current lung condition or lung disease

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

- Scar tissue
- Loss of range of motion (problems moving your body)
- Ulcers
- Cancers or other conditions caused by contact with toxic chemicals or other dangers

**You may also be able to get VA disability benefits for conditions like these:**

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Mental or physical health conditions related to military sexual trauma (MST)  
[Learn about MST and disability compensation](https://www.va.gov/resources/military-sexual-trauma-and-disability-compensation)  
(<https://www.va.gov/resources/military-sexual-trauma-and-disability-compensation>).
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Traumatic brain injury (TBI)

## Get more information

Go to our Compensation 101 videos to learn more about how VA disability compensation works:

[Compensation 101: What is disability compensation? \(YouTube\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3RodE0nGFc)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T3RodE0nGFc>).

[Compensation 101: What is service connection? \(YouTube\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4vKqUlrdys)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h4vKqUlrdys>).

**[How VA assigns disability ratings](https://www.va.gov/disability/about-disability-ratings)**  
(<https://www.va.gov/disability/about-disability-ratings>)

Learn how we assign severity ratings and how they affect your disability payments.

**[Disabilities that appear within 1 year after discharge](https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/illnesses-within-one-year-of-discharge)**  
(<https://www.va.gov/disability/eligibility/illnesses-within-one-year-of-discharge>)

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

If you have signs of an illness that started within a year after you were discharged from active service, find out if you can get disability benefits.

## Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)

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### **[VR&E eligibility \(https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/vocational-rehabilitation/eligibility\)](https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/vocational-rehabilitation/eligibility)**

If your service-connected disability limits your ability to work or prevents you from working, find out if you can get VR&E benefits and services—like help exploring employment options and getting more education or training if required.

### **[Accessing VR&E through the Integrated Disability Evaluation System \(IDES\) \(https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/vocational-rehabilitation/ides\)](https://www.va.gov/careers-employment/vocational-rehabilitation/ides)**

If you've been referred to IDES to determine if you're medically unfit for duty due to a service-connected disability, find out how to access VR&E services as quickly as possible.

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