Apply for a disability rating

This guide will help you submit a disability claim and obtain a disability rating, which is based on how much your service-connected disability impacts your capacity to earn a living. This rating is between 0%–100%. Your rating may give you access to certain VA benefits, such as compensation and on-going health care.





	cklist to help you file your disability	
m	and get your disability rating:	GET HELP
	PREPARATION	You can receive free help with preparing your claim from a VA-accredited representative or an employee at a local VA Offic
		Refer to back for more information
	Learn about different types of claims you can file (refer to back)	
	Collect the documents necessary to file a claim:	
	→ Discharge papers (DD214 MEMBER-4 or equivalent)	WHERE CAN I FIND MY
	Military medical records	DISCHARGE PAPERS?
	VA medical records/hospital reports related to your disability Private medical records/hospital reports related to your disability.	Visit eBenefits.va.gov to request
	→ Private medical records/hospital reports related to your disability	a copy of your DD214 records.
	□ Submit Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs) if desired	
	APPLICATION	WHAT ARE DBQs?
	☐ Apply by submitting all documents in one of these ways:	DBQs are filled out by your
	→ Submit a claim online using eBenefits: eBenefits.va.gov	private doctor to provide medical evidence to support
	→ Complete a claim form in person at a VA Regional Office	your claim. They may allow VA to grant your claim without
		the need for a medical examination.
	REVIEW AND DECISION	examination.
	☐ Visit us online at eBenefits.va.gov or VA.gov to track the status of your claim	HOW LONG WILL
	☐ Provide more information/documentation if requested by VA	IT TAKE?
	☐ Attend VA medical examination(s) if requested by VA	The length of time it takes to process a claim depends on:
	***************************************	The type of claim filed
	NEXT STEPS	How many injuries/ disabilities you defined.
	If approved, take steps to access the benefits you are eligible for:	disabilities you claimed How long it takes for VA to
	☐ Review your award letter to understand your rating	gather supporting evidence
	☐ Review the VA benefits handbook that is sent to you	 How many claims were in line when yours was filed

Information you'll need to know to file your claim and get your disability rating:

Am I eligible for benefits?

You may be eligible for VA disability benefits **if VA finds you have a disease, injury, or condition that resulted from service or was made worse during your military service**.

Common conditions include:

- Hearing loss/ringing in the ears
- Knee, ankle, or back pain/injury
- PTSD, anxiety, depression
- Traumatic brain injury
- · Respiratory disease
- Ulcers
- · Loss of range of motion
- Cancer (due to hazardous exposures)

Note: Work with VA to find out if you are eligible for disability benefits by filing a disability claim as soon as possible.

Who can file a disability claim?

- Veterans
- Servicemembers preparing to separate from the military
- Survivors/family seeking benefits owed to Veterans on a pending claim
- Veterans Service Organization (VSO) on behalf of Veterans/ Servicemembers

Who can help me?

You can receive free help with preparing your claim from a VA-accredited representative or an employee at a local VA Office.

Accredited representatives are individuals or organizations who are familiar with the process of filing a claim. Many accredited representatives work for Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs), and may provide help free of charge.

Note: It is unlawful for any person or organization to charge a fee for assistance in preparing an application for VA benefits. VA-accredited agents and attorneys may charge fees for assisting with a claim for VA benefits only after VA has decided the claim and claimant has filed a notice of disagreement.

- To find a representative, visit us online at www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation (search by state) or eBenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/VSO-search
- To locate your nearest VA Facility, visit va.gov/find-locations

What are the different types of claims?

The type of claim you want to apply for depends on if you've filed before, if your conditions have changed, and how much responsibility you want to take to gather required documents. **Review the chart below** to determine what type of claim you should file.

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE:

Why is receiving a disability rating important?

You need a service-connected disability with a rating in order to access certain VA benefits and services, including:

- Disability compensation
- Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E)
- · Level of VA health care coverage
- Increased preference in federal hiring
- Fee exemption for VA home loans

Note: You can apply for a disability rating anytime throughout your life.

How does my disability rating affect my family?

If you are eligible for disability compensation, you may be paid additional amounts if you have a spouse, dependent child(ren), or dependent parents, and they may be eligible for additional benefits.

→ To learn more, call your Regional Benefits Office or visit us online at www.benefits.va.gov/compensation

What if my condition doesn't affect my everyday life?

A 0% disability rating does not qualify you for compensation, but you may be eligible for other VA services, such as VA Health Care. While you might feel your condition is not serious, you should still consider applying for a rating.

WHEN YOU FILE	TYPE OF CLAIM	WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?
Pre-discharge More information at: www.benefits. va.gov/predischarge/index.asp	Benefit Delivery at Discharge (BDD)	Filed 180 - 90 days before separation; processed faster than post-discharge claims
Post-discharge	Standard	VA can help you gather documents
More information at: www.benefits.va.gov/fdc	Fully-developed	You gather your own documents; processed faster than a standard claim