

UPDATE FOR GULF WAR VETERANS: 2014

INFORMATION FOR VETERANS WHO SERVED IN OPERATIONS DESERT SHIELD AND DESERT STORM AND THEIR FAMILIES

March 2014

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) continues to provide health care and other benefits specific to the needs of Gulf War (GW) Veterans. We continually strive to increase our understanding of how military service and deployment affects your health and to develop effective treatments to ensure you receive the best health care possible. Although the term “Gulf War Veterans” could legally refer to Veterans of all conflicts in the Southwest Asia theater of operations on or after August 2, 1990, its use in this update refers to Veterans of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm.

Nearly 700,000 Veterans served in the Gulf War from August 1990 to June 1991. To understand the health effects of your deployment, VA's Epidemiology Program surveyed GW and non-deployed Gulf War-era (GW-era) Veterans in 1995, 2005, and 2012. The surveys asked both GW and GW-era Veterans about their health. Results from the 2012 survey are undergoing analyses with results expected in mid-2014. Results from the 2005 survey showed that GW Veterans are three times more likely to have chronic multi-symptom illness (CMI) compared to non-deployed GW-era Veterans (37 percent versus 12 percent). CMI symptoms include fatigue, weakness, gastrointestinal problems, problems with concentration, sleep disturbances,

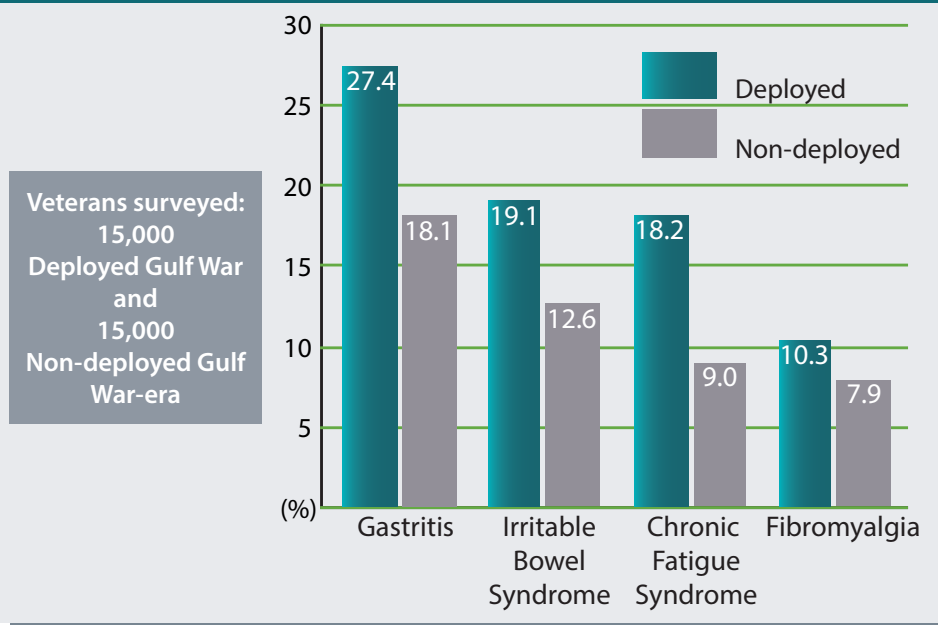
headaches, skin rashes, respiratory conditions, and mood changes (see chart). Research from VA and others suggest these symptoms may be associated with many factors, including a range of environmental and chemical hazards that carry potential health risks, but the exact cause or causes remain unknown. Wellness and health promotion is important for all Veterans. Visit www.publichealth.va.gov and www.prevention.va.gov to learn more about things you can do to maintain and improve your overall health. Scientific papers discussing results of previous surveys are available online at www.publichealth.va.gov/epidemiology/index.asp. In addition to conducting these health

studies, VA provides funding for additional research related to service in the Gulf War. Visit the VA Office of Research and Development website at www.research.va.gov for information about VA-sponsored research.

VA periodically asks the National Academy of Sciences' Institute of Medicine (IOM) to form committees of experts to conduct independent, scientific assessments of published research and evaluate the association between illness and service in the Gulf War. The findings from these assessments inform VA policy decisions about which conditions may be associated with GW service. Based on the

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Responses to the question “Has your doctor ever told you that you have...”



Source: Kang, HK, et al. Health of US Veterans of 1991 Gulf War: A follow-up survey in 10 years. *Journal of Occupational Environmental Medicine*, 2009, 51: 401-410.

findings from the IOM, the VA Secretary may decide to issue what is referred to as a “presumption.” A presumption does not require a case-by-case determination of service connection to a health condition in order for Veterans with that condition to obtain benefits. VA presumes that the following chronic, unexplained health conditions existing for 6 months or more are related to GW service regardless of the cause: chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS), fibromyalgia, functional gastrointestinal disorders, and undiagnosed illnesses with a variety of symptoms. In addition, certain infectious diseases are presumed to be related to military service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations during the first Gulf War. Visit www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar for more information on presumptions for GW Veterans.

VA Health-Related Benefits for Gulf War Veterans

VA offers a variety of health-related benefits to GW Veterans, including health care, free registry health evaluations, and disability compensation. You must first enroll with VA to receive health care. Once enrolled, you should discuss your deployment concerns with your primary care provider.

VA provides priority enrollment for Veterans who have disabilities determined to be service-connected.

Veterans may receive cost-free care and medications for service-connected illnesses. You may apply online at www.1010ez.med.va.gov/ or call 1-877-222-8387.

Free Registry Health Evaluation

Veterans do not need to be enrolled to receive a free registry health evaluation. VA offers a free Gulf War Registry health evaluation to all Veterans who served in the Persian Gulf area from August 1990 to the present. A registry health evaluation may include additional testing to evaluate symptoms for which a diagnosis has not been determined. You are encouraged to discuss your deployment health concerns with a VA health care provider during the registry evaluation so that VA can help you obtain appropriate health care and benefits. Veterans do not need a registry exam to apply for benefits. See www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/benefits/registry-exam.asp for more information.

Note: registry eligibility does not extend to Operation Enduring Freedom service in Afghanistan.

Disability Compensation

VA provides disability compensation for Veterans who have a service-connected disability and were discharged under other than dishonorable conditions. GW Veterans with presumptive illnesses, as described above, do not need to prove a connection between illness and their military service in the Southwest Asia theater of operations. You may also seek service connection for any other diseases and illnesses that you believe are related to service in the Gulf War. Contact your nearest VA benefits office at 1-800-827-1000.

War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC)

Enrolled Veterans with complex, chronic, difficult-to-diagnose illness or who need a detailed evaluation of exposures related to military service may benefit from a referral by their primary care provider to the WRIISC. Visit the WRIISC Web site at www.warrelatedillness.va.gov for more information.

Service at Camp Lejeune

Public Law 112-154 requires VA to provide health care to Veterans who served on active duty and eligible family members who resided at Camp Lejeune (North Carolina) for a minimum of 30 days between January 1, 1957, and December 31, 1987, for one or more of 15 specified illnesses or conditions. This information is included for GW Veterans who meet these specific eligibility requirements. For more information, visit:

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/camp-lejeune/index.asp.

Additional VA Services and Programs

GW Veterans may also be eligible for other VA programs and services, including education, home loans, and vocational rehabilitation. Please read “Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors” to learn more. Visit the Gulf War Veterans’ Illnesses website at www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar to keep up to date with news and available services and to subscribe to email notification of updates.

Learn more:

www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar

For VA's Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses:

www.va.gov/rac-gwvi/

Locate the nearest VA facility:

www.va.gov/directory

Apply for health care:

www.1010ez.med.va.gov/

Apply for disability compensation:

www.ebenefits.va.gov

For Women Veterans Health Care:

www.womenshealth.va.gov/

For Women Veterans Call Center:

1-855-VA-WOMEN
(1-855-829-6636)

For information on VA's Homeless Program:

www.va.gov/homeless or
1-877-424-3838

For information on PTSD:

www.ptsd.va.gov

For Veterans Crisis Line:

1-800-273-8255, press 1



Scan this QR code to visit the Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses website and to subscribe for Gulf War updates.

Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry

VA encourages all GW Veterans to sign up for the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry which will be available in the spring of 2014. The registry, established by Public Law 112-260, provides an opportunity for Veterans to receive information updates and to help VA improve its understanding of deployment-related health effects. During deployment, GW Veterans may have been exposed to smoke from burn pits, oil-well fires, and air pollution. Veterans will be able to participate in the registry by completing an online health questionnaire. For more information, visit www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/.

Do you know a Vietnam Veteran who does not receive the Agent Orange Update?
Do you know a Gulf War Veteran who does not receive the Gulf War Update?
Do you know an OEF OIF Veteran who does not receive the OEF OIF Update?
Do you know an Atomic Veteran or other Veteran exposed to ionizing radiation during military service who does not receive the Ionizing Radiation Update?

Maybe it is you!

If you or a fellow Veteran want to read one of the Updates on line, go to www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/publications. All of the publications may be found there.



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Gulf War Update

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WHO SERVED IN THE GULF WAR
MARCH 2014

Gulf War Update

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