

# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS ENVIRONMENTAL EXPOSURE POCKET CARD

A resource for clinical providers

★ AGENT ORANGE AND OTHER HERBICIDES ★ BURN PIT SMOKE ★

## A. ASK THE VETERAN ABOUT EXPOSURE CONCERNS

- What...** ▶ were you exposed to?  
*Chemical (pollution, solvents, etc.), Biological (infectious disease), or Physical (radiation, heat, vibration, etc.)*
- ▶ precautions were taken?  
*Avoidance, PPE, Treatment, etc.*
- How...** ▶ were you exposed?  
*Inhaled, On Skin, Swallowed, etc.*
- ▶ concerned are you about the exposure?
- Where...** ▶ were you when you were exposed?
- When...** ▶ were you exposed?
- Who...** ▶ else may have been affected?

## B. BECOME INFORMED

- ▶ Find current information on military exposures  
[www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/)

## C. CREATE A CARE PLAN

- ▶ **Perform a broad health screen.** Exposures may affect any system of the body, but the most common sites are the skin and the nervous, respiratory, and cardiovascular systems.
- ▶ **Do not rule out current or latent effects based on routine labs.** In some cases, routine labs can indicate moderate or severe effects of an exposure. Depending on the type of hazard and the dose, however, signs and symptoms may be subtle or may not occur until years later and can be nonspecific.
- ▶ **Follow up with your patient.** Have the patient return periodically for check-ups to monitor their health. The response or lack of response to standard treatments can be an important factor to consider in Veteran patients with possible environmental exposures.
- ▶ **Encourage healthy living.** Advise your patient to incorporate healthier habits into their everyday lives. While the long-term effects of exposures may not be established, eliminating risk factors like smoking and obesity can help prevent the occurrence of significant health issues for many Veterans.

FUEL ★ PESTICIDES ★ IONIZING AND NON-IONIZING RADIATION ★ TCDD/DIOXIN ★ ASBESTOS ★ OIL WELL FIRES ★ NERVE AGENTS

★ HEXAVALENT CHROMIUM ★ TRICHLOROETHYLENE ★ DEPLETED URANIUM ★ TOXIC EMBEDDED FRAGMENTS ★ LEAD

★ VINYL CHLORIDE ★ ENDEMIC DISEASES ★ BENZENE ★ PARTICULATE MATTER ★ JET

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## C. DISCUSS VA SERVICES WITH THE VETERAN

VA offers specialized programs to address health issues related to deployment. Providers should encourage their patients to enroll in the VA in order to take advantage of these services as part of their overall healthcare plan.

### VA Environmental Health Clinics:

- ▶ Environmental Health Clinicians provide specialized knowledge on potential environmental exposures.
- ▶ Exams are conducted for all VA Registry programs [Ionizing Radiation, Agent Orange, Gulf War (including OIF and OND), and Depleted Uranium].
- ▶ For a directory, visit: [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp)

### War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC):

- ▶ Three locations nationwide provide telephone or inter-facility consultations:
  - East Orange, NJ
  - Palo Alto, CA
  - Washington, DC
- ▶ Medical evaluations and treatment plans are provided for chronic, difficult-to-diagnose conditions related to deployment.
- ▶ For additional information, visit: [www.warrelatedillness.va.gov](http://www.warrelatedillness.va.gov)

## USEFUL WEB SITES

- ▶ Exposure Fact Sheets and Newsletters for Veterans  
[www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/resources.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/resources.asp)
- ▶ Benefit Information  
[www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/benefits.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/benefits.asp)
- ▶ Environmental Health Continuing Medical Education  
[www.publichealth.va.gov/vethealthinitiative](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/vethealthinitiative)

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Office of Public Health  
Post-Deployment Health Strategic Healthcare Group  
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