

Apply for a Disability Rating



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Choose VA

This guide will help you submit a disability claim and obtain a disability rating. This rating is between 0%–100%. Your rating may give you access to certain VA benefits, such as compensation and on-going health care.

A checklist to help you file your disability claim and get your disability rating:

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PREPARATION

- 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)
 - **Military medical records**
 - **VA medical records/hospital reports** related to your disability
 - **Private medical records/hospital reports** related to your disability
- Submit any medical evidence related to your illness or injury (like doctor's reports, X-rays, and medical test results)

APPLICATION

- Apply by submitting all documents in **one** of these ways:
 - Submit a claim **online** by visiting <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim>
 - Complete a claim form **in person** at a VA Regional Office

REVIEW AND DECISION

- Visit us **online** at <https://www.va.gov/claim-or-appeal-status> to **track the status** of your claim
- Provide more information/documentation** if requested by VA
- Attend VA medical examination(s) if requested by VA

NEXT STEPS

If approved, take steps to access the benefits you are eligible for:

- Review your award letter** to understand your rating
- Review the VA benefits handbook** that is sent to you

GET HELP

You can receive free help with preparing your claim from a VA-accredited representative or an employee at a VA Regional Office. Refer to back for more information.

WHERE CAN I FIND MY DISCHARGE PAPERS?

*To find out more about how to get your military service records **visit** <https://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records>*

CAN VA HELP OBTAIN PRIVATE MEDICAL RECORDS?

Yes, you can obtain records from private doctors or hospitals yourself or you can sign a release authorizing VA to obtain these records for you.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

The length of time it takes to process a claim depends on:

- *The type of claim filed*
- *How many injuries/disabilities you claimed*
- *How long it takes for VA to gather supporting evidence*
- *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: If you believe you have an illness or injury that you believe was caused - or made worse - by your military service, you should file a claim with VA.

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 your VA Regional 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 made its first decision on the claim.

- To find a representative, visit us **online** at <https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits/VSO-search>
- To locate **your nearest VA Facility**, visit <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>

How do I file a claim?

- There are several ways to get your claim started. **Review the chart below** to determine what best fits your circumstances. For more information, **visit:** <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/when-to-file>

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE:

Why is receiving a disability rating important?

If you have a service-connected disability, you may be entitled to additional VA benefits and services, including:

- Disability compensation
- Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)
- Level of VA health care coverage
- Increased preference in federal hiring
- VA Home Loan fee exemption
- Specially Adapted Housing Assistance
- To find out more please **visit:** https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/derivative_sc.asp

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** us at: 800-827-1000, or visit us **online** at <https://www.va.gov/disability>

| WHEN YOU FILE | HOW TO FILE | WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE? |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Pre-discharge More information at: https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/when-to-file/pre-discharge-claim | Benefit Delivery at Discharge (BDD) | Filed 180 - 90 days before separation; processed faster than post-discharge claims |
| Post-discharge More information at: https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/fully-developed-claims | Standard | VA can help you gather documents |
| | Fully-developed | You gather your own documents; processed faster than a standard claim |