



## **Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)**

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) is a progressive disease that affects the nerve cells in the brain and spinal cord. Early signs may include muscle weakness and stiffness. Symptoms can progress to further weakness, muscle wasting, and paralysis of muscles that control limbs, talking, swallowing and breathing.

People who served in the military are at greater risk of getting ALS. This is regardless of whether the person served during peace time or during a war/conflict. It is not known what aspect of military service increases the risk of getting and dying from ALS. Research continues in this area.

How quickly ALS will progress varies. More than half of all patients live more than three years after diagnosis. Many live for five years or more. People with ALS are living longer due to advances in managing the disease and its symptoms. Take advantage of the many benefits the VA can provide.

It is important to know as much as possible about ALS and how to manage and cope with the symptoms of ALS. The ALS Association has several booklets and videos available free of charge. The material addresses the common concerns and issues of people living with ALS. Some of the material can be viewed or printed from their website [www.alsa.org](http://www.alsa.org). Most can be ordered from their web site [www.alsa.org](http://www.alsa.org). The *Living with ALS* series is very helpful. Each of the six manuals addresses a different topic. You can choose the topics related to your current needs.

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