



Live Whole Health

Official news from VA Puget Sound Health Care System

Special Issue: PACT Act

2022 Winter | Issue 10

What is PACT Act?

The PACT Act, signed into law August 10, 2022, expands health care eligibility to several groups of Veterans who may not have been eligible before:

- Veterans who participated in a toxic exposure risk activity (as defined by law) while serving on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training.
- Veterans assigned to a duty station in (including airspace above) certain locations during specific periods of time on or after:
 - August 2, 1990, in Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, or United Arab Emirates
 - September 11, 2001, in Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Uzbekistan, or Yemen, or any other country determined relevant by VA.
- Veterans who deployed in support of:
 - Operation Enduring Freedom
 - Operation Iraqi Freedom
 - Operation Freedom's Sentinel
 - Operation New Dawn
 - Operation Inherent Resolve
 - Resolute Support Mission

The PACT Act also adds 20+ new presumptive conditions.



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Observances

December

- 13: U.S. National Guard Birthday
- National Human Rights Month

January

- 17: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

February

- American Heart Health Month
- Black History Month
- National Salute to Veteran Patients

What are the new health care eligibility criteria?



The PACT Act helps advance a top VA priority: getting more Veterans into VA care by expanding eligibility for and the availability of health care services for Veterans.

The law expands health care eligibility to several groups of Veterans who may not have been eligible before and requires VA to phase in hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care for any illness to three new categories of Veterans.

- Category 1: Veterans who participated in a toxic exposure risk activity (as defined by law) while serving on active duty, active duty for training, or inactive duty training.
- Category 2: Veterans who were assigned to a duty station in (including airspace above) certain locations during specific periods of time:
 - On or after August 2, 1990, in the following countries: Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia or the United Arab Emirates;
 - On or after September 11, 2001, in the following countries: Afghanistan, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Uzbekistan, or any other country determined relevant by VA.
- Category 3: Veterans who deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Freedom's Sentinel, Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn, Operation Inherent Resolve, or Resolute Support Mission.



Between October 1, 2022, and October 1, 2023, Veterans who served on active duty in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Persian Gulf War or in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities after November 11, 1998, and who were discharged between September 11, 2001, and October 1, 2013, may receive care and apply for enrollment for VA health care. Enrollment is free, there are no annual costs, and your care may be free as well.



The current schedule for eligibility for Veterans identified in Categories 1 and 2 begins:

- October 1, 2024, for Veterans who were discharged or released between August 2, 1990, and September 11, 2001.
- October 1, 2026, for Veterans who were discharged or released between September 12, 2001, and December 31, 2006.
- October 1, 2028, for Veterans who were discharged or released between January 1, 2007, and December 31, 2012.
- October 1, 2030, for Veterans who were discharged or released between January 1, 2013, and December 31, 2018.

Veterans identified in Category 3 will be eligible beginning October 1, 2032.

VA may modify this schedule to an earlier date if it determines appropriate based on the number of Veterans receiving care and services and the resources available to VA. If VA determines it will modify a date, it must notify Congress and publish the modified date in the Federal Register. Veterans who served in the Republic of Vietnam (between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975), in Thailand at any US or Royal Thai base (between January 9, 1962, and June 30, 1976), Laos (between December 1, 1965, and September 30, 1969), certain provinces in Cambodia (between April 16, 1969, and April 30, 1969), Guam or American Samoa or their territorial waters (between January 9, 1962, and July 31, 1980), or the Johnston Atoll (or a ship that called there) (between January 1, 1972, and September 30, 1977) will also be eligible to enroll in VA health care. This will go into effect immediately for eligible Veterans who are terminally ill, homeless, under extreme financial hardship, are over 85 years old or otherwise can demonstrate sufficient cause. All others will be eligible beginning October 1, 2022.

Surviving family members may be eligible for benefits



Surviving family members and dependents of a Veteran may be eligible for:

- A monthly VA Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (VA DIC) payment for survivors of a Veteran who died from a service-connected disability. You can apply now for VA DIC, even if your claim was denied before. If VA denied your claim in the past and we think you may be eligible now, we'll try to contact you. But you don't need to wait for us to contact you before you reapply.
- A one-time accrued benefits payment for survivors of a Veteran whom VA owes unpaid benefits at the time of their death.
- A Survivors Pension for the surviving spouse or child of a Veteran with wartime service. Burial benefits and memorial items such as a gravesite in a VA national cemetery or a free headstone, marker, or medallion.
- A burial allowance to help with the Veteran's burial and funeral costs.

- Education and training for survivors of a Veteran who died in the line of duty or as a result of service-connected disabilities.
- Health care through the Civilian Health and Medical Program of the Department of Veterans Affairs (CHAMPVA) for survivors and dependents of a Veteran with a service-connected disability.
- A VA-backed home loan for the surviving spouse of a Veteran.



Special Enrollment Period

Veterans who served on active duty in a theater of combat operations during a period of war after the Persian Gulf War or in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities after November 11, 1998, and who were discharged or released between September 11, 2001, and October 1, 2013, may enroll in VA health care between October 1, 2022 and October 1, 2023.

The PACT Act: 4 easy ways to apply to VA health care

The PACT Act is a historic law that expands VA health care and benefits for Veterans exposed to burn pits and other toxic substances. There are four ways to apply for health care:

- Apply online at va.gov/PACT
- Mail a completed, signed Application for Health Benefits VA Form 10-10EZ.
- Call the toll-free hotline 877-222-8387, Monday – Friday, 5 a.m. – 5 p.m. PT.
- Bring a completed, signed VA Form 10-10EZ to the nearest VA Medical Center or clinic.

Learn more!
Sign up at va.gov/PACT
Call Us at 1-800-MyVA411
(1-800-698-2411)



Toxic Exposure Screenings

As a general matter, there are several types of possible exposures or hazards Veterans may have experienced during their military service, including:

- Air Pollutants
- Chemicals
- Radiation
- Warfare Agents
- Occupational Hazards

As of November 8, 2022, every Veteran enrolled for VA health care will receive an initial toxic exposure screening and a follow-up screening at least every five years. Eligible Veterans who have not enrolled in VA health care will have an opportunity to enroll and receive the screening.

If you file a PACT Act benefits claim between now and Aug. 10, 2023, you may receive benefits paid back to Aug. 10, 2022.

What does toxic exposure mean?

As a general matter, there are several types of possible exposures or hazards Veterans may have experienced during their military service, including:

- **AIR POLLUTANTS:** Burn pits, oil well fires, sulfur fire, sand, dust, and particulates.
- **CHEMICALS:** Agent Orange or other herbicides, burn pits, Camp Lejeune water supplies, pesticides, depleted uranium, chromium, or industrial solvents.
- **RADIATION:** nuclear weapons testing, x-rays, or depleted uranium.
- **WARFARE AGENTS:** Chemical warfare agents, nerve agents, mustard gas, herbicide tests, and storage.
- **OCCUPATIONAL HAZARDS:** Asbestos, lead, fuels, industrial solvents, radiation, vibration, noise, special paint on military vehicles, and some coolants or insulating fluids.

What conditions will be added to service-connected illnesses and when will they be in effect for Veterans to file

Veterans can file claims for all conditions outlined in the PACT Act immediately.

For Gulf War and post 9-11 Veterans, that includes:

- Brain cancer
- Glioblastoma
- Respiratory (breathing-related) cancer of any type
- Gastrointestinal cancer of any type
- Head cancer of any type
- Lymphoma of any type
- Lymphatic cancer of any type
- Neck cancer
- Pancreatic cancer
- Reproductive cancer of any type
- Kidney cancer
- Melanoma
- Asthma that was diagnosed after service

- Chronic rhinitis
- Chronic sinusitis
- Constrictive bronchiolitis or obliterative bronchiolitis
- Emphysema
- Granulomatous disease
- Interstitial lung disease (ILD)
- Pleuritis
- Pulmonary fibrosis
- Sarcoidosis
- Chronic bronchitis
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)

For Vietnam and Cold War era Veterans, that includes two agent orange presumptive conditions:

- Monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS)
- High blood pressure (also called hypertension)





Message from our Director

VA Puget Sound Veterans,

The PACT Act was signed into law on August 10, 2022. It fulfills President Biden's top priority of addressing military environmental (toxic) exposures and keeping our Nation's promise to care for Veterans with such exposures and their families. This is a historic moment for Veterans. The law ensures generations of Veterans who were exposed to toxic substances or other hazards – and their survivors – get the benefits and care they've earned and deserve.

The expanded health care eligibility outlined in the law now allows new Veterans to become eligible for VA care or increases health care benefits for impacted Veterans already receiving care.

To help equip you with relevant information, we've dedicated this issue of our newsletter to PACT Act, and the VA has published a dedicated web page on www.va.gov/resources/the-pact-act-and-your-va-benefits/.

Happy holidays and warmest regards,

Thomas Bundt, PhD., FACHE
VA Puget Sound Health Care System Executive Director



PACT Act: 4 easy ways to get started with claims

- Learn more at va.gov/PACT
- Call Benefits hotline at 1-800-827-1000
- Visit a VBA Regional Office
- Work with an accredited VSO

Key phone numbers:

Central Appointments: 800-329-8387

Community Care: 800-329-8387 x64545 and 253-582-8440 x64545

Patient Advocates: 253-583-2585 and 206-764-2160

Travel Office Call Center: 206-764-2120



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
VA Puget Sound Health Care System

Official news from:

VA Puget Sound Health Care System
Office of Public Affairs, MS S-00-PA
1660 S. Columbian Way
Seattle, WA 98108
206-762-1010

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American Lake
9600 Veterans Dr.
Lakewood, WA 98493
253-582-8440



Main Campuses



Seattle
1660 S. Columbian Way
Seattle, WA 98108
206-762-1010



Edmonds
21616 76th Ave. West,
Suites 107 and 112
Edmonds, WA 98026
206-716-5858

Outpatient Clinics

Port Angeles/North Olympic
1114 Georgiana St.
Port Angeles, WA 98362
360-565-7420



Mount Vernon
307 S. 13th St.
Suite 200
Mount Vernon, WA 98274
360-848-8500



Everett
220 Olympic Boulevard
Everett, WA 98203
Doors open Oct. 3, 2022

Puyallup
Sunrise Medical Center
11216 Sunrise Blvd. East
Bldg. 3, Suite 209
Puyallup, WA 98374
253-583-3821



Olympia
Memorial Medical Plaza
500 Lilly Rd. NE, Suite 201,
Olympia, WA 98506
253-583-2621

Silverdale
9177 Ridgetop Blvd. NW
Silverdale, WA 98383
360-307-6920

Community Resource & Referral Centers

Community Resource
& Referral Center
305 S. Lucile St.
Seattle, WA 98108
206-764-5149



Community Resource
& Referral Center
419 South 2nd Street
Suite 2
Renton, WA 98057
425-203-7201

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Story ideas?

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