

Military Health History

Pocket Card for Health Professions Trainees and Clinicians

A Veteran's perspective:

"Help me understand my medical condition."

"I had some unique experiences while serving our country, many that civilians would never have. Some of them may be affecting my health, and that is why I am here at VA."

"Please be patient with me. Some of my memories are difficult to discuss."

Asking the questions on this card will clarify a Veterans' medical concerns.

- Ask these questions in a safe and private place.
- Engage with good eye contact.
- Use a supportive tone of voice.
- Thank Veterans if they disclose stressful or traumatic experiences.
- If you suspect someone is actively at risk for suicide, do not leave them alone.

Suicide Prevention Questions

- Would it be okay if I asked you about suicide? (self-directed violence includes suicidal thoughts, self-harm, attempts of suicide, etc.)
- Are you having thoughts of suicide? Have you ever exhibited self-destructive behavior, such as drug abuse, risky use of weapons, etc.?



VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Crisis Line

Dial 988 then Press 1

Ask All Military Service Members and All Veterans

General Health Questions

Would it be okay if I asked about your current state of health?

- Have you been diagnosed with any illnesses?
- Are you currently taking any medications?
- Are you experiencing any chronic pain?
- Are your vaccinations up to date?

Military-Related Questions

Would it be okay if I talked with you about your military experience? When and where did you/do you serve and in what branch? What type of work did you/do you do while in the service?

If your patient answers "yes" to any of the following questions, ask: Can you tell me more ... ?

- Did you ever become ill while you were in the service?
- Were you or anyone you knew wounded, injured or hospitalized?
- Did you have a head injury with loss of consciousness, loss of memory, "seeing stars" or being temporarily disoriented?
- Were you deployed overseas?
- Did you see combat, enemy fire or casualties?
- Were you a prisoner of war?

Living Conditions

Would it be okay to talk about your living situation?

- Where do you live and who do you live with?
- Is your housing safe?
- Are you at risk of losing your housing?
- Do you need assistance in caring for yourself and/or dependents?

Veterans who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness are strongly encouraged to contact the National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 1-877-4AID-VET for assistance. Veterans are also encouraged to call or visit their local VA medical center and ask for a Homeless Coordinator.

Interpersonal Violence Experience

Would it be okay to ask you about interpersonal violence you may have experienced?

Interpersonal violence can include intimate partner violence, sexual assault/harassment and human trafficking.

- Have you ever experienced physical or emotional abuse, harassment (sexual or identity related) or sexual trauma?
- Is that incident(s) causing you concern now, such as difficulty sleeping, depression, anger, etc.?
- Many Veterans find it helpful to get support, VA is here to help. Would you like a referral to discuss support services?

Compensation and Benefits

Do you have medical conditions you feel may be connected to your service?

Would you like assistance with filing for compensation for injuries/illnesses related to your service?

- Call VA at 1-800-827-1000 or 1-800-698-2411

Questions Focused on Exposure Concerns and Behavior

Exposure Concerns

Would it be okay if I asked about any environmental factors you may have been exposed to during your service?

What (refer to list below)... were you exposed to?

- Chemical (pollution, solvents, weapons, etc.)
- Biological (infectious diseases, weapons)
- Psychological trauma or abuse
- Physical injury
 - Blast or explosion
 - Excessive noise
 - Heat
 - Munitions or bullet wound
 - Radiation
 - Shell fragment
 - Vehicular crash
 - Other injury

What precautions were taken? (avoidance, PPE, treatment)

How long was the exposure?

How concerned are you about the exposure?

Where were you exposed?

When were you exposed?

Who else may have been affected? Unit name, etc.

Behavior

Would it be okay if we talked about emotional responses related to your service?

PTSD

- Have you been concerned that you might suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder? Symptoms can include numbing, re-experiencing symptoms, hyperarousal/being on guard and/ or avoiding situations that remind(s) you of the trauma.

Depression

- Have you been experiencing sadness, feelings of hopelessness/helplessness, lack of energy, difficulty concentrating and/or poor sleep?

Risk Assessment

- Have you had thoughts of harming yourself or others?

Blood Borne Viruses (Hepatitis and HIV)

- Do you have tattoos? Have you ever injected or snorted drugs, such as heroin, cocaine or methamphetamine?
- Have you ever been tested for Hepatitis C or HIV? If not, would you like to be tested for these?

General Exposure Concerns

- Burn Pit Smoke
- Cold Injuries Contaminated Water – (Benzene, Trichloroethylene, Vinyl Chloride)
- Endemic Diseases
- Heat Stroke/Exhaustion Hexavalent Chromium
- Herbicides and other Dioxins like Agent Orange
- Mustard Gas
- Nerve Agents
- Noise-Induced Hearing Loss/Ringing in the Ears
- Pesticides
- Radiation (Ionizing and Non-Ionizing)
- Sand, Dust, Smoke and Particulates

Occupational Hazards: Asbestos, Chemical Agent Resistant Coating (CARC), Fuels, Industrial Solvents, Lead, Noise/Vibration, PCBs, Radiation

Gulf War/Southwest Asia (Afghanistan, Kuwait, Iraq)

- Animal Bites/Rabies
- Blunt Trauma
- Burn Injuries (Blast Injuries)
- Chemical or Biological Agents
- Chemical Munitions Demolition
- Combined Penetrating Injuries
- Depleted Uranium (DU)
- Dermatologic Issues
- Embedded Fragments (Shrapnel)
- Hearing Loss
- Malaria Prevention: Mefloquine/Lariam
- Mental Health Challenges
- Multi-Drug Resistant Acinetobacter
- Oil Well Fires
- Reproductive Health Issues

Immunizations: Anthrax, Botulinum Toxoid, Cholera, Hepatitis B, Meningitis, Polio, Smallpox, Tetanus, Typhoid, Whooping Cough, Yellow Fever

Infectious Diseases: Brucellosis, Campylobacter Jejuni, Coxiella Burnetii, Malaria, Mycobacterium Tuberculosis, Nontyphoid Salmonella, Shigella, Visceral Leishmaniasis, West Nile Virus

Vietnam, Korean DMZ and Thailand

- Agent Orange Exposure
- Cold Injuries
- Hepatitis C Risk

Cold War

- Chemical Warfare Agent Experiments
- Nuclear Weapons Testing or Cleanup

World War II and Korean War

- Chemical Warfare Agent Experiments
- Cold Injuries
- Nuclear Weapons Testing or Cleanup
- Biological Warfare Agents

Tell your patients about VA's
www.myhealth.va.gov Gateway to
Veteran Health Benefits and Services

Important Resources

- Office of Academic Affiliations Military Health History Pocket Card
- Compensation & Pension Benefits
- Post-Deployment Health Services
- VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines
- Veterans' Health Initiative Independent Study Courses
- War Related Illness and Injury Study Center
- Military Exposures