

issues up front

Get an Agent Orange Exam: Protect Your Health

Some 371,307, or 14%, of the 2.6 million Americans who served on the ground in Vietnam have received physical examinations under VA's registry.

by Tim Dyhouse

Any and all Vietnam veterans who have not had an Agent Orange exam should do so immediately, according to VFW. Especially if they have cancer.

"If a Vietnam veteran has recorded documentation of a cancer that VA considers to be caused by Agent Orange exposure—such as prostate cancer—he will more than likely have a disability rating within two weeks," says John McNeill, deputy director of VFW's National Veterans Service. "VA is very quick on that."

Before visiting VA for an exam, McNeill says veterans should see a service officer for guidance. The service officer can explain the 12 conditions (see information box) that VA presumes to have been caused by Agent Orange exposure and that make a vet eligible for VA compensation.

Of the 12 diseases, McNeill says, VA grants most compensation claims for diabetes and prostate cancer. The two diseases are prevalent in the general population as well. Some 18.2 million people in the United States, or 6.3% of the population, have diabetes. And after skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer in American men.

VFW urges all Vietnam vets to take the exam, which is part of VA's Agent Orange Registry program. By becoming part of the registry, Vietnam vets receive updates from VA on new diseases that have been added to the list or those that are being researched.

As of February 2005, some 371,307 Vietnam veterans had registered with VA's program and taken an initial Agent Orange exam.

As required by law, VA reviews research on herbicide exposure every two years and adds any diseases that may have been caused by Agent Orange.

The latest disease added was chronic lymphatic leukemia in January 2003.

Currently, VFW is pushing for melanoma—a deadly skin cancer—to be included. VFW delegates called for this last year when they approved Res. 698 at the organization's national convention.

McNeill says it's important for

Vietnam vets who have diabetes or prostate cancer to get registered immediately because they could be losing VA compensation.

"VA gives veterans with an active cancer an initial 100% service-connected disability rating," he says. "This rating stays in place while the vet undergoes

All Vietnam Vets Eligible for Exams

Since 1978, VA has offered free physical exams for Vietnam veterans based on their possible exposure to Agent Orange. Here is what VA provides:

- a pre-exam interview to determine where and when a veteran served in country;
- compilation of the veteran's medical history;
- a physical exam;
- a series of basic laboratory tests, such as chest X-rays (if appropriate),

urinalysis and blood tests;

- consultations with other health specialists, if needed;
- a post-exam interview to discuss results;
- a letter explaining the findings;
- a follow-up exam or additional lab tests, if needed; and
- notation of exam and test results in the veteran's permanent medical file and Agent Orange Registry.

12 Diseases Linked to Agent Orange Exposure

VA offers compensation to Vietnam veterans suffering from any of the following conditions, as well as their children stricken with spina bifida.

Chronic lymphatic leukemia: An uncontrolled growth of white blood cells in the blood, bone marrow and lymphatic tissues.

Chloracne: A skin condition that appears similar to common acne found among teenagers.

Diabetes: Disorders in which the body has trouble regulating its blood sugar levels.

Hodgkin's disease: Cancerous growth of cells in the lymph system.

Multiple myeloma: Cancer of white blood cells in bone marrow.

Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma: Cancers of the lymph nodes, spleen

and other immune system organs.

Peripheral neuropathy: Damage to the nerves involved with sensation and feeling.

Porphyria cutanea tarda: A defective enzyme in the liver involved in producing the red pigment in blood cells.

Prostate cancer: Cancerous tumors on the male glands that surround the urethra at the bladder.

Respiratory Cancers: Cancerous tumors of the lung, larynx, trachea and bronchus.

Soft tissue sarcoma: Cancerous tumors in fat, muscles, nerves, tendons and blood and lymph vessels.

Spina bifida: Literally means "split or open spine" and is a birth defect that may affect children of Vietnam veterans.

treatment, then VA notifies the vet that he has 120 days to take a second exam. The whole process could take up to two years, during which time the vet could be collecting compensation."

McNeill adds that if a veteran's cancer is diagnosed as terminal, service officers often can obtain a VA disability rating within one day.

Ironically, McNeill—himself a Vietnam veteran—has not taken a VA Agent Orange exam.

"That's because I know I don't have any of the conditions that VA presumes to have been caused by Agent Orange exposure," he says. "But if I was not a service officer, I wouldn't know if I was eligible for compensation or not. That's why it's so important for Vietnam vets to consult a service officer. They can protect themselves—and their children—now and into the future." ❖

Contact Information

VFW encourages its members to consult a VFW service officer before taking a VA Agent Orange exam. For concerns or questions about VA health care, contact VFW's Tactical Assessment Center at 1-800-VFW-1899.

VA operates a toll-free helpline for veterans with Agent Orange-related concerns at 1-800-749-8387. VA's national toll-free number for information about VA benefits is 1-800-827-1000. Veterans can apply online for benefits at <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp>.

For more information about the Agent Orange Registry program, contact the registry physician at the nearest VA medical facility. VA facilities are listed online at www.va.gov, under "Facility Locator."

VA also publishes the newsletter *Agent Orange Review* for Vietnam vets, their families and others with questions or interests about the herbicide. It is available online at www.va.gov/AgentOrange under "Agent Orange Review." To get on the mailing list, send your name and address to:

Agent Orange Review
Austin Automation Center (200/397A)
1615 Woodward Street
Austin, TX 78772-0001

**Did YOU Get Your ?
CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**



United States Army Veteran
Certificate of Service
Michael David Lewis
Staff Sergeant
Award with Presidential Honor
During the Vietnam War
On Call Wire and Helicopter
Service from November 1972 to December 1972

United States Air Force Veteran
Certificate of Service
Colonel
Arthur J. Stone
Award with Presidential Honor
During the Vietnam War
Army of the Air, Crew and Pilot
Service from 1952 to 1974

United States Coast Guard Veteran
Certificate of Service
Perry Officer First Class
Vernon T. Netherman
Award with Presidential Honor
During the Vietnam War
Shipboard from 1964 to 1974

United States Navy Veteran
Certificate of Service
Chief Petty Officer
Kale B. Nelson
Award with Presidential Honor
During the Vietnam War
Shipboard from September 1972 to September 1973

United States Marine Corps
Certificate of Service
Staff Sergeant
Edward A. Markowski
Award with Presidential Honor
During the Vietnam War
Shipboard from 1964 to 1974

Your Personal Story Told

Certificate ONLY \$35
Medals & Ribbons \$5 ea.
Price Includes Shipping and Handling

ORDER ONLINE
WWW.CJMCERTIFICATES.COM
or Call Toll Free for Brochure
1(877) 853-1296

Memory Foam Mattress Prices Slashed! Save up to **50% OFF!** Compared to the Nationally Advertised Brand!

Get all the benefits of the heavily advertised, highly promoted memory foam mattress when you get a Dormia mattress and save up to 50% off their prices. It has everything you want except the big price tag!



DORMIA

Similar NASA space age material for optimum pressure relief.

High performance base foam provides long lasting support.

We Challenge You To Tell the Difference

Dormia offers the same great benefits of expensive memory material mattresses. It looks the same, it feels the same and it works the same way. Great pressure relief and less tossing and turning, for a better night's sleep. Because it is virtually the perfect mattress material, Dormia comes with a 25 Year Limited Warranty!

We've Cut Our Prices To the Bone

If you've always wanted to get rid of your old innerspring and try a memory material mattress, but couldn't get past the high prices, now is the time to get one. Prices may never be this low again. Why pay full price for that other mattress, when you get all the same space age technology and benefits from Dormia. It would be crazy to spend more for virtually the same mattress!

Imagine How Good It Will Feel

Imagine how it will feel with your whole body gently supported by a Dormia mattress. You'll sleep better and deeper than you ever thought possible. And your back will thank you every day!

For a Limited Time Only.

**No Interest,
No Payment Financing
for 6 Months**

To Qualified Buyers

Easy Payment Plans Available
as Low as \$29 a Month!

Prices may never be this low again!

**Call Today for Your
Low Price Guarantee!**

1-800-447-2406

10 Stage Door Rd., Fishkill, NY 12524

www.dormia.com/363

Dept. 363