

Peace Corps Medical Information for Applicants

In order to help protect the health and safety of its Volunteers overseas, Peace Corps requires that an applicant have the physical and mental capacity, with or without a medical accommodation, to perform the essential functions of a Volunteer for a full tour of duty without unreasonable disruption due to health problems.

Because of the nature of the countries in which Peace Corps services, the scope of medical care available in those countries, and the conditions under which Volunteers live and work, the Peace Corps may not be able to accommodate certain medical or psychiatric conditions.

Stable conditions, in addition to medication regimes (both medical and psychiatric), can be appropriate for Peace Corps service and are considered during the pre-service evaluation. Recent changes in these conditions or medication regimes (both medical and psychiatric) are evaluated on an individual basis and may require a period of proven stability prior to Peace Corps service.

Peace Corps assesses each applicant individually. The medical assessment process will likely require more time for applicants with extensive health histories. This assessment usually requires more communication between the applicant and the Office of Medical Services and often involves the need for additional information and medical tests. While the Peace Corps reimburses applicants a set amount for certain dental and medical examinations, costs incurred above that are not covered by the Peace Corps and must be covered by the applicant. Resources in terms of an applicant's time and finances may not be insignificant.

Receipt of a medical and dental qualification is based on your medical and dental status at that time. If, after your qualification, you become ill, undergo surgery, add to or change medications, undergo therapy or treatment, or develop any condition for which you seek medical assistance, please notify your assigned nurse or assistant immediately. Any significant change in your health status may impact your medical/dental qualification. Failure to disclose such information may seriously affect your health overseas, as well as your status as a Peace Corps trainee/Volunteer.

Those disqualified or deferred due to medical or dental issues may request a review of this decision. This option is explained in the disqualification or deferral letter.

Note that you cannot be invited to a Peace Corps program until you have completed the medical evaluation process. Please complete medical forms given to you following your application submission as quickly as possible.

Please look over the following 2 nonexhaustive lists for conditions that may impact your medical review and/or qualification decision.

If an applicant is currently dealing with any of the following conditions, his/her invitation to the Peace Corps will be deferred. The length of the deferral period varies according to each individual case.

- Abnormal Pap Smear requiring current treatment
- Alcoholism, Substance Addiction – minimum of 3 years for alcoholism, minimum of 5 years for substance abuse
- Allergies requiring desensitization injections
- Anemia (cause must be identified)
- Cancer –no deferral for most skin cancers and carcinoma-in-situ
- Cataracts requiring surgery
- Celiac Sprue
- Coronary artery bypass surgery or angioplasty – 6 months symptom free, no medications, normal stress test
- Cystic Acne-Accutane treatment – 2 months after completion of therapy
- Endometriosis
- Gastritis, Esophagitis, Peptic, or Duodenal Ulcer – minimum of 6 months well controlled, non-smoker
- Glaucoma – 3 months well controlled medications
- Herniated Disc
- Herpes Keratitis (eye) – 2 years inactive
- High Blood Pressure – 3 months well controlled under treatment; weight within medically recommended range
- Inguinal Hernia
- Internal Hemorrhoids
- Joint Replacement (hip, knee, shoulder) or Arthroscopy – 1 year
- Kidney or Bladder Infections
- Ligament Reconstruction (knee, ankle, shoulder) or Arthroscopy – 1 year
- Mental Health Conditions (except stable, treated conditions)
- Myocardial Infarction (heart attack) – 12 months symptom free, not on medication, normal stress test
- Orthodontic Braces (excluding bite-plate)
- Ovarian Cyst
- Uterine Fibroids - symptomatic
- Seizure Disorder – minimum of 1 year seizure free
- Stroke – 2 years symptom free, not on medication

After individually assessing each applicant, Peace Corps is typically unable to reasonably accommodate applicants with the following conditions.

- Addison's Disease
- Allergic Reaction-life threatening
- Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (Lou Gehrig's Disease)
- Aneurysm- inoperable
- Asthma-severe
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Cancer (recent treatment for cancer or cancer with metastasis)
- Cardiac Arrhythmias – symptomatic
- Celiac Sprue - symptomatic within the last 6 months
- Cystic Fibrosis
- Complex medical health conditions with multiple diagnoses
- Complex mental health conditions with multiple diagnoses
- Conditions-requiring blood thinner medication
- Conditions-requiring oral or injectable steroids
- Connective Tissue Disorders
- Coronary Artery Disease
- Crohn's Disease
- Diabetes - with any complications
- Diverticulitis
- Endocarditis
- Esophageal Varices
- Glomerulonephritis- chronic
- Heart Conditions-chronic
- Heart Failure
- Hematological Disorder – chronic
- Hemophilia
- Hepatitis – chronic
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)/AIDS -- immunosuppressed
- Inflammatory Bowel Disease
- Irreversible Lung Disease (emphysema)
- Iritis – chronic
- Kidney Stones – recurrent
- Major Depression – recurrent
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Multiple Sclerosis – no exacerbation or no new symptoms for a minimum of 3 years this has been modified – check with Dr. Simon
- Myasthenia Gravis
- Narcolepsy – poorly controlled
- Obstructive Sleep Apnea - with or without C-PAP machine
- Optic Neuritis – recurrent
- Osteoporosis with history or high risk for stress fracture
- Pancreatitis – chronic
- Parkinson's Disease
- Psychosis
- Psychiatric Hospitalization within 1 year
- Pyelonephritis – chronic
- Reiter's Syndrome – chronic
- Rheumatoid Arthritis
- Sarcoidosis
- Schizophrenia
- Thrombophlebitis – recurrent
- Ulcerative Colitis
- Uveitis – chronic
- Ventricular Shunt for hydrocephalus

If you have questions about your particular circumstance, or for more information, you may call the Office of Medical Services, at 800.424.8580, option 1, ext. 4049 from 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. Monday – Friday (Eastern Time).

Revised 8/21/2008