

# Special Environmental Health Registry Evaluation Programs for Veterans

## ► WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

VA maintains several health registry evaluation programs to track the health of Veterans exposed to environmental hazards during military service. These programs include the following:

IONIZING RADIATION REGISTRY

AGENT ORANGE REGISTRY

GULF WAR REGISTRY

DEPLETED URANIUM FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM

TOXIC EMBEDDED FRAGMENTS REGISTRY



## What environmental exposures do the evaluation programs cover?

### IONIZING RADIATION

Ionizing radiation exposure comes from a variety of sources, including nuclear weapons testing or other activities during military service.

### AGENT ORANGE

Agent Orange is a mixture of herbicides used in Vietnam from 1961 to 1971 to remove leaves from trees that provided cover for enemy forces during the Vietnam conflict. The name Agent Orange comes from the identifying stripe around the 55-gallon drum where it was stored.

### GULF WAR

Gulf War-related exposures include a variety of potentially harmful substances: pesticides; pyridostigmine bromide (anti-nerve agent); infectious diseases; chemical

and biological warfare agents; vaccinations (including anthrax and botulinum toxoid); oil well fires, smoke, and petroleum; depleted uranium.

### DEPLETED URANIUM (DU)

DU is a byproduct of the uranium enrichment process to make nuclear fuel that was first used by the United States military in projectiles and armor for tanks during the Gulf War. It is a possible chemical hazard primarily internalized through shrapnel, contaminated wounds, or inhalation.

### TOXIC EMBEDDED FRAGMENTS

An embedded fragment (also called 'shrapnel') is a piece of metal or other material, such as plastic, that stays in the body after exposure to a blast or other similar traumatic incident. The word "toxic" means that these fragments are made from potentially harmful materials.

# Questions and Answers



## WHAT IS A HEALTH REGISTRY EVALUATION?

- ▶ It is a voluntary medical evaluation tailored to the needs of Veterans with possible exposures to environmental hazards.
- ▶ The evaluation can include medical histories, laboratory tests and, in many cases, a physical exam.
- ▶ Information from the evaluation is maintained in VA databases to help track the health outcomes of Veterans.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF HAVING A HEALTH REGISTRY EVALUATION?

- ▶ Free specialized health evaluation
- ▶ Answers to questions about environmental exposures
- ▶ Information on health care and other VA medical benefits
- ▶ Results shared with you and maintained in your VA medical record

**Note: A health registry evaluation is not a claim for VA benefits. Also, it is not required to receive VA benefits.**

## IS THERE A FEE FOR THE REGISTRY EVALUATION?

- ▶ NO. The evaluations are available free of charge to all eligible Veterans.

## CAN A VETERAN HAVE MORE THAN ONE HEALTH REGISTRY EVALUATION?

- ▶ YES. Veterans can receive follow-up evaluations, particularly if new health problems develop. Also, some Veterans may qualify for more than one registry.

## CAN FAMILY MEMBERS OF VETERANS RECEIVE HEALTH REGISTRY EVALUATIONS?

- ▶ NO. By law, VA provides these registry evaluations only to Veterans.

## HOW DO I SCHEDULE A REGISTRY EVALUATION?

- ▶ Speak to an Environmental Health (EH) Coordinator at any VA medical facility.
- ▶ A listing of EH Coordinators is available online at [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp).
- ▶ Information is also available through VA's Special Issues Helpline at **1-800-749-8387**.
- ▶ For the Toxic Embedded Fragments registry, ask for the OEF/OIF Clinical Coordinator at your nearest VA medical facility.

## WHERE CAN I GET ADDITIONAL INFORMATION?

- ▶ Web: [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures)
- ▶ Phone: Special Health Issues Helpline, **1-800-749-8387**; VA Benefits office, **1-800-827-1000**.
- ▶ Newsletters: VA publishes newsletters related to several environmental hazards. Subscribe online at [www.easmailcall.aac.va.gov](http://www.easmailcall.aac.va.gov). Current and archived issues are online at [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/resources.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/resources.asp).

## WHO SHOULD GET A HEALTH REGISTRY EVALUATION?

- ▶ All Veterans who meet the criteria for a registry are encouraged to get the evaluation (see list on page 3). Veterans do not need to be enrolled in VA health care to take part.

# Specific criteria for each program are listed below.

## IONIZING RADIATION REGISTRY

- ▶ On-site participation in a test involving the atmospheric detonation of a nuclear device, whether or not the testing nation was the United States.
- ▶ Participation in the occupation of Hiroshima or Nagasaki from August 6, 1945, through July 1, 1946.
- ▶ Internment as a Prisoner of War (POW) in Japan during World War II.
- ▶ Receipt of nasopharyngeal (NP)—nose and throat—radium irradiation treatments while in the active military, naval, or air service.

In addition, VA regulations provide that Veterans involved in “radiation risk activity” refers to:

- ▶ Service at Department of Energy gaseous diffusion plants at Paducah, KY, Portsmouth, OH, or the K25 area at Oak Ridge, TN, for at least 250 days before February 1, 1992, under certain conditions.
- ▶ Proximity to “Longshot,” “Milrow,” or “Cannikin” underground nuclear tests at Amchitka Island, AK, before January 1, 1974.

For more information about the Ionizing Radiation registry exam, go to [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/radiation/registry.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/radiation/registry.asp).

## AGENT ORANGE REGISTRY

- ▶ Service in the Republic of Vietnam between 1962 and 1975.
- ▶ Service in Korea during 1968 or 1969.
- ▶ Exposure to dioxin, or other toxic substance in a herbicide or defoliant, during the conduct of, or as a result of, the testing, transporting, or spraying of herbicides for military purposes.

For more information about the Agent Orange registry exam, go to [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/registry.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/registry.asp).

## GULF WAR REGISTRY

- ▶ Service during:
  - 1990-1991 Gulf War
  - Operation Desert Shield
  - Operation Desert Storm
  - Operation Iraqi Freedom
  - Operation New Dawn

For more information about the Gulf War registry exam, go to [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/registry\\_exam.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/gulfwar/registry_exam.asp).

## DEPLETED URANIUM (DU) FOLLOW-UP PROGRAM

- ▶ Service in:
  - the 1990-1991 Gulf War
  - Bosnia
  - Operation Enduring Freedom
  - Operation Iraqi Freedom
  - Operation New Dawn
- ▶ Especially those Veterans who were:
  - On, in, or near vehicles hit with “friendly fire,”
  - Rescuers entering burning vehicles, and those near burning vehicles,
  - Salvaging damaged vehicles, or
  - Near fires involving DU munitions.

For more information about the DU Follow-up Program, go to [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/depleted\\_uranium/followup\\_program.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/depleted_uranium/followup_program.asp).

## TOXIC EMBEDDED FRAGMENTS REGISTRY

- ▶ Service in Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or Operation New Dawn.
- ▶ Veterans who have or likely have an embedded fragment as the result of injury received while serving in an area of conflict.

For additional information about the Toxic Embedded Fragment Surveillance Center and registry go to [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/toxic\\_fragments/index.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/toxic_fragments/index.asp).

**Special Health Issues Helpline:** 1-800-749-8387

**VA Benefits office:** 1-800-827-1000

**EH Coordinator at VA Medical Facility:**  
[www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp)



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