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If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?

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Vietnam Veterans Benefit From Agent Orange Rules

Vietnam veterans may be eligible for compensation and health care for certain diseases associated with Agent Orange, the defoliant sprayed to unmask enemy hiding places in the jungles throughout Vietnam.

Special health care and compensation benefits are available to the 2.6 million men and women who served in Vietnam between 1962 and 1975, only 3,300 of whom remain in uniform today. Those discharged during that period are the largest group of veterans receiving VA health care and monthly compensation.

A small percentage of their disability claims are for illnesses that scientists have listed as being associated with Agent Orange. VA presumes that all military personnel who served in Vietnam were exposed to Agent Orange, and federal law presumes that certain illnesses are a result of that exposure. This "presumptive policy" simplifies the process of receiving compensation for these diseases since VA foregoes the normal requirements of proving that an illness began or was worsened during military service.

Based on clinical research, the following diseases are on VA's Agent Orange list of presumptive disabilities:

- acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy
- porphyria cutanea tarda
- chloracne
- prostate cancer
- chronic lymphocytic leukemia
- respiratory cancers
- Hodgkin's disease
- (lung, bronchus, larynx and trachea)
- multiple myeloma
- soft-tissue sarcoma,
- acute non-Hodgkin's lymphoma
- Type II diabetes mellitus

In addition, monetary benefits, health care and vocational rehabilitation services are provided to Vietnam veterans' offspring with spina bifida, a congenital birth defect of the spine. Children of female veterans who served in Vietnam are authorized health care and monetary benefits for certain additional birth defects.

Veterans who served in Vietnam during the war also are eligible for a complete physical examination. If a VA physician suspects a disease might be related to Agent Orange, VA will provide free medical care. Those who participate in the examination program become part of an Agent Orange Registry and receive periodic mailings from VA about the latest Agent Orange studies and new diseases being covered under VA policies.

Vietnam veterans and their families can contact VA for more information about these benefits. For the Agent Orange Registry physical examination, call a local VA hospital or clinic listed in the government pages of your phone book. To file a compensation claim for a current disability related to Agent Orange, veterans can call 1-800-827-1000 for an application form or visit VA's Web site at: <http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov>.