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If Veterans don't help Veterans, who will?

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POST-9/11 VET

INFORMATION FOR VETERANS WHO SERVED IN OPERATIONS ENDURING FREEDOM, IRAQI FREEDOM, AND NEW DAWN

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BURN PIT REGISTRY LAUNCHES

At military sites in Iraq and Afghanistan, trash and human waste were often burned in open air pits known as “burn pits.” Some Veterans have health problems they believe to be

linked to exposure to burn pit smoke and other airborne hazards such as sand and dust storms, oil well fires, and air pollution.

According to VA’s 2010 National Survey of Veterans, about one-third of previously deployed Servicemembers report “definite or probable exposure to environmental hazards” during military service.

“Post-9/11 Vet” recently caught up with Indiana Army National Guard Staff Sgt. Chris Centers who participated in the Registry and shares his reasons.



What conflict did you serve in and what were your duties?

Chris: From 2006 to 2008, I served in Operation Iraqi Freedom as a combat engineer doing route clearance, route sanitation, and blast hole repairs.

What was your exposure to burn pits and airborne hazards?

Chris: We had a burn pit on LSA Anaconda where I lived. Also, as part of route sanitation, we pushed local dumps back from the road and sometimes the trash was on fire. In addition, there was smoke given off from explosions and other items that were burning when we did route clearance, such as oil spilled from tankers and local hospital debris. So, there were a lot more things burning than just burn pits.

VA continues to study the health effects of exposure, and in June 2014 launched the “Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry.” The registry allows Veterans to document their exposures and report health concerns using a web-based questionnaire. Eligible Veterans include those who served in:

- Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom) and Iraq (Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation New Dawn),
- Djibouti, Africa, after September 11, 2001,
- Operations Desert Shield or Desert Storm, and
- The Southwest Asia theater of operations after August 2, 1990 to include: Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, waters of the Persian Gulf, Arabian Sea, and Red Sea.

To participate in the registry, go to <https://veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPitRegistry>. All eligible Veterans, including those with no current symptoms, are encouraged to register. Participants will receive updates about on-going VA studies and treatments, and can get an optional, no-cost VA medical evaluation.

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Do you have any concerns about your exposure?

Chris: Yes, now I snuffle and have some problems breathing, particularly when I'm running. The snuffle is pretty much continuous, like a snuffle or cough, and sometimes I hack stuff up. I don't notice it much but the people around me notice it.

What do you hope to get out of participating in the Registry?

Chris: Hopefully we can get a lot more awareness. I know that a lot of other guys who served in different places had more exposure to burn pits and other scenarios than I did. So hopefully the registry can make people aware of the issues that exposure causes.

Are you recommending the Burn Pit Registry to fellow Vets?

Chris: Actually, I've already shared the registry website with a lot of the guys I know who have been over there, so I've been putting out the word.

HAVE YOU REGISTERED?



HOW TO Join the Burn Pit Registry
Sign up in 3 easy steps.
Visit <https://veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPitRegistry/>

01	VIEW QUESTIONNAIRE ONLINE Use your Premium DS Logon Level 2 account to access the questionnaire. You must have a Premium DS Logon Level 2 account to participate.	
02	FILL OUT QUESTIONNAIRE Complete entire questionnaire and submit.	
03	PRINT OR SAVE Print or save completed questionnaire for your records.	

FEELING OVERWHELMED AND DON'T KNOW WHERE TO TURN?

The Veterans Crisis Line Can Help

Whether Veterans recently returned home or completed their service years ago, their experiences remain a part of their lives and can have unexpected impacts. Close friends and family who know a Veteran best may be the first to recognize emotional distress. Warning signs include:

- Hopelessness, feeling like there is no way out
- Anxiety, agitation, sleeplessness, or mood swings
- Feeling like there is no reason to live
- Rage or anger
- Engaging in risky activities without thinking
- Increasing alcohol or drug abuse
- Withdrawing from family and friends



It can be difficult for Veterans to reach out for help, but the Veterans Crisis Line can be the first step toward getting help and support during difficult times.

The Veterans Crisis Line is a confidential, 24/7 toll-free hotline, online chat, and text service that connects Veterans in crisis with qualified, caring Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) responders. Friends and family members can also use the Veterans Crisis Line to get crisis care for their loved ones, even if they are not enrolled in VA or VA health care. And because the service offers anonymity, Veterans and their loved ones can contact the Veterans Crisis Line without

★ VETERANS CRISIS LINE

The Veterans Crisis Line connects Veterans in crisis and their families and friends with qualified, caring VA responders through a toll-free hotline, online chat, or text. Veterans and their loved ones can anonymously call 1-800-273-8255 and Press 1, chat online at <http://www.veteranscrisisline.net>, or send a text message to 838255 to receive confidential support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Support for deaf and hard of hearing individuals is available.

sharing their name or personal information.

Some of the responders are Veterans themselves and understand the challenges of military service, and they are trained and experienced in helping Veterans of all ages and circumstances. Responders provide support when issues such as chronic pain, anxiety, depression, sleeplessness, anger, and even homelessness reach a crisis point.

Since 2007, the Veterans Crisis Line has handled more than 1 million calls, 143,000 text messages, and numerous online chats, and is credited with saving more than 39,000 lives. Responders can refer callers to Suicide Prevention Coordinators, who follow-up with Veterans and coordinate care. The suicide rate among those Veterans who seek mental health care through VA is lower than Veterans who do not seek such care.

Online resources are available to support the VA staff's work with Veterans, including a self-check quiz, resource locator, and warning signs. Help raise awareness about these resources by visiting <http://VeteransCrisisLine.net>, and learn how you and your community can stand by Veterans and their loved ones and help prevent suicide.

VA HEALTH CARE: AN EXCELLENT OPTION

The Affordable Care Act, also known as the health care law or Obamacare, was created to expand access to coverage, control health care costs, and improve health care quality.

While March 31, 2014, was the deadline to sign up for health insurance under the Affordable Care Act, eligible Veterans can enroll in VA health care at any time. Enroll in VA health care to enjoy:

- Medical care rated among the best in the U.S.,
- Immediate benefits of health care coverage,



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- No enrollment fee, monthly premiums, or deductible,
- Small copayments for health care or prescription drugs for some Veterans, though most Veterans have no out-of-pocket costs, and
- More than 1,700 places available to get your care so coverage can go with you if you travel or move.

Combat Veteran Authority

Many Veterans are not aware that they may already be eligible for VA health care under the "Combat Veteran Authority." Under this provision established in 2008, Veterans who served in a theater of combat operations any time after November 11, 1998, and were discharged or released from Active Duty on or after January 28, 2003, may waive the income eligibility requirements to receive VA health care anytime up to five years after the date of discharge or release.

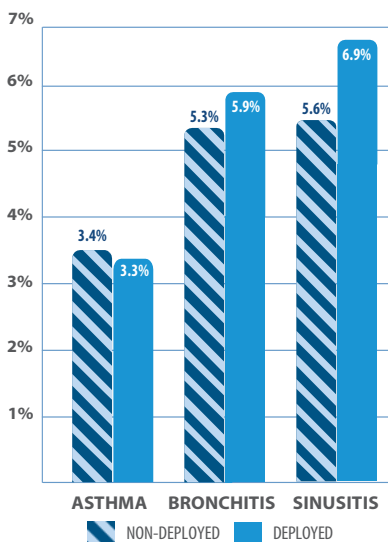
Apply Now

Apply for VA health benefits by visiting <https://www.1010ez.med.va.gov/>. There is no cost to apply and comprehensive health care services will be available when and where you need them, even if you choose not to use VA for some or all of your health care needs. If you are not eligible to enroll at this time, VA will save your application and contact you if eligibility criteria changes.

RESPIRATORY DISEASES

DEPLOYED VETERANS VS. NON-DEPLOYED VETERANS

A 2009 - 2011 population-based health survey of 60,000 Veterans asked about the history of doctor-diagnosed respiratory disease. Analyses included smoking history, deployment status, and year of diagnosis. If you have health concerns, contact your health care provider.



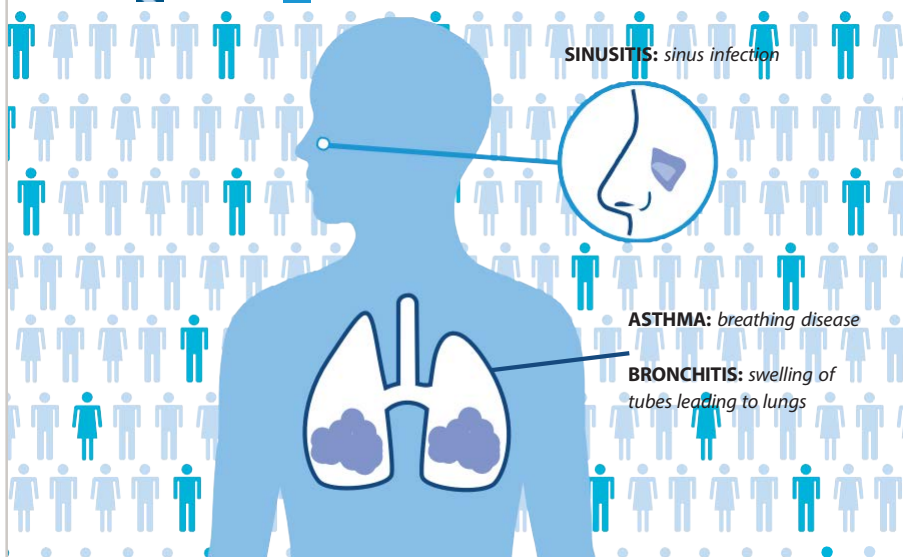
FINDINGS

SINUSITIS

Deployed Veterans were 29% more likely to have been diagnosed with sinusitis during and after 2001 compared to non-deployed Veterans.

ASTHMA & BRONCHITIS

The study found no significant difference in asthma or bronchitis risk between deployed and non-deployed Veterans.



Barth, SK, Dursa, EK, Peterson, MR, Schneiderman A. Prevalence of Respiratory Diseases Among Veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom: Results From the National Health Study for a New Generation of U.S. Veterans. Mil Med 2014; 179: 241-245.

VA



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