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# **Agent Orange Exposure Caused Wide Range of Ailments**

**12:00 AM, Aug. 2, 2011 | TheLeafChronicle.com**

A common topic of conversation with veterans I deal with is Agent Orange exposure and associated disabilities. Under the "presumptive diseases" provision, the Department of Veterans Affairs assumes that certain diseases are related to qualifying military service without proof.

Agent Orange was the most widely used herbicide by the U.S. Armed Forces as part of their strategy to remove foliage providing cover for the enemy.

VA has recognized the following as presumptive diseases related to exposure to Agent Orange during military service:

- **Acute and subacute peripheral neuropathy:** Nervous system disorder causing numbness, tingling, and motor weakness; must be 10 percent disabling within one year of exposure and resolve within two years.
- **AL amyloidosis:** Rare disease caused when an abnormal protein, amyloid, enters tissues or organs.
- **Chloracne:** Skin condition that occurs soon after exposure and looks like common acne seen in teenagers; must be 10 percent disabling within one year of exposure.
- **Chronic B-cell leukemias:** Type of cancer affecting white blood cells.
- **Diabetes mellitus (Type 2)**
- **Hodgkin's disease:** Malignant cancer that enlarges the lymph nodes, liver and spleen.
- **Ischemic heart disease,**
- **Multiple myeloma:** Cancer of plasma cells in the bone marrow.
- **Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma:** Group of cancers affecting lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue.
- **Parkinson's disease.**
- **Porphyria cutanea tarda:** Disorder characterized by liver dysfunction and by thinning and blistering of the skin in sun-exposed areas; must be 10 percent disabling within one year of exposure.
- **Prostate cancer.**
- **Respiratory cancers.**

• **Soft tissue sarcoma (other than osteosarcoma, chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or mesothelioma):** Group of different types of cancers in body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues.

For the purposes of VA compensation benefits, veterans who served in Vietnam anytime between Jan. 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975, are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides and do not need to show proof of exposure to qualify for disability compensation.

Service in Vietnam means service on land or on the inland waterways of Vietnam only. This includes veterans who set foot in Vietnam or served onboard a ship while it operated on the inland waterways of Vietnam, commonly referred to as "brown water" service. Evidence of this service must be documented in the veteran's military personnel records.

Veterans who served on open sea ships off shore of Vietnam are considered "blue water" and do not fall under the presumptive provisions. They must prove their exposure to herbicides to qualify for compensation with one exception, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. VA recognizes this disease to be associated with service in Vietnam or the waters offshore during the Vietnam era.

Recent legislation also opened Agent Orange presumptive status to veterans who served in a unit in or near the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) anytime between April 1, 1968, and Aug. 31, 1971. VA and the Department of Defense must determine the veteran's unit operated in the DMZ area and the veteran was physically there.

For more information on Agent Orange and VA benefit eligibility, go to:  
[www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/index.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/index.asp)

<http://www.theleafchronicle.com/article/20110802/COLUMNISTS109/108020314/1158>