

What Does the VA Health Care System Cover?

For Veterans

The VA operates the nation's largest integrated health care system with more than 1,400 sites of care, including hospitals, community clinics, nursing homes, readjustment counseling centers, and various other facilities.

For information on VA health care, visit <http://www.va.gov/health>.

STEP 1 – Determine VA Eligibility

The number of veterans who can be enrolled in the health care program is determined by the amount of money Congress gives the VA each year. Since funds are limited, the VA set up priority groups to make sure that certain groups of veterans are able to be enrolled before others. Once you apply for enrollment, your eligibility will be verified. Based on your specific eligibility status, you will be assigned a priority group.

The priority groups range from 1-8 with 1 being the highest priority for enrollment. Some veterans may have to agree to pay a co-pay to be placed in certain priority groups.

The VA priority groups are described on the following Web site: <http://www.va.gov/HEALTHELIGIBILITY/eligibility/DetermineEligibility.asp>.

- **Basic Eligibility** - If your service member served in the active military, naval, or air service and is separated under any condition other than dishonorable, he or she may qualify for VA health care benefits. If your service member is a member of the Reserves or National Guard who was called to active duty (other than for training only) by a federal order and completed the full period for which he or she was called or ordered to active duty, your service member may be eligible for VA health care.
- **Minimum Duty Requirements** - If your service member/veteran enlisted after September 7, 1980, or entered active duty after October 16, 1981, he or she must have served 24 continuous months or the full period for which he or she was called to active duty in order to be eligible. This minimum duty requirement may not apply to your service member/veteran if he or she was discharged for a disability incurred or aggravated in the line of duty.
- **Service Disabled Veterans** - If your service member/veteran is 50 percent or more disabled from service-connected conditions, unemployable due to service-connected conditions, or receiving care for a service-connected disability, he or she will receive priority in scheduling of hospital or outpatient medical appointments.

STEP 2 – Enroll for VA health care

- To apply for VA health care, your service member/veteran must complete VA Form 10-10EZ, Application for Health Benefits. The form can be obtained from any VA health care facility or regional benefits office, online at <http://www.va.gov/1010ez.htm>, or by calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387).
- Many military treatment facilities have VA representatives on staff that can also help your service member/veteran with this request.

STEP 3 – Learn about VA Services and Benefits

VA provides health care and other benefits to OEF/OIF veterans returning from the armed services.

Here are some of the benefits VA provides:

- **Five Years of Enhanced Health Care.** Your service member/veteran is eligible to receive enhanced VA health care benefits for five years following his or her military separation date. Whether or not your family member chooses to use VA health care after separation, he or she must enroll with VA within five years to get health care benefits later on.
- **Dental Benefits.** He or she may be eligible for one-time dental care but must apply for a dental exam within 180 days of his or her separation date.
- **OEF/OIF Program.** Every VA Medical Center has a team standing ready to welcome OIF/OEF service members and help coordinate their care. Check the home page of your local VA Medical Center.
- **Primary Health Care for Veterans.** VA provides general and specialized health care services to meet the unique needs of veterans returning from combat deployments.
- **Non-Health Benefits.** Other benefits available from the Veterans Benefits Administration may include: financial benefits, home loans, vocational rehabilitation, education, and more. Access <http://www.vba.va.gov/VBA> for information on these benefits.
- **Benefits for Family Members.** VA offers limited medical benefits for family members of eligible veterans. These include the following programs: Civilian Health and Medical Program of VA (CHAMPVA), caregiver support groups, counseling, and bereavement counseling.

Access this Web site for more information on specific VA benefits available: <http://www.oefoif.va.gov>.

Potential Co-Payments

Some veterans must make small co-payments for medical supplies and VA health care. Combat veterans are exempt from co-payments for the care of any condition potentially related to their service in a theater of combat operations. However, they may be charged co-payments for treatment clearly unrelated to their military experience, as identified by their VA provider.

Conditions not to be considered potentially related to the veteran's combat service include, but are not limited to:

- care for common colds
- injuries from accidents that happened after discharge from active duty
- disorders that existed before joining the military.

For more information regarding services available to returning active duty, National Guard, and Reserve service members of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, visit the Returning Service Members Web site at <http://www.oefoif.va.gov>.