

Veterans Corner

Gulf War Veterans' Medically Unexplained Illnesses

A prominent condition affecting Gulf War Veterans is a cluster of medically unexplained chronic symptoms that can include fatigue, headaches, joint pain, indigestion, insomnia, dizziness, respiratory disorders, and memory problems. VA refers to these illnesses as "chronic multi-symptom illness" and "undiagnosed illnesses." The term "Gulf War Syndrome" is used when referring to medically unexplained symptoms reported by Gulf War Veterans.

Gulf War Veterans who meet the criteria below do not need to prove a connection between their military service and illnesses in order to receive VA disability compensation. VA presumes certain chronic, unexplained symptoms existing for 6 months or more are related to Gulf War service without regard to cause. These "presumptive" illnesses must have appeared during active duty in the Southwest Asia theater of military operations or by December 31, 2016, and be at least 10 percent disabling.

Illnesses include: Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, a condition of long-term and severe fatigue that is not relieved by rest and is not directly caused by other conditions. Fibromyalgia, a condition characterized by widespread muscle pain. Other symptoms may include insomnia, morning stiffness, headache, and memory problems. Functional gastrointestinal disorders, a group of conditions marked by chronic or recurrent symptoms related to any part of the gastrointestinal tract. Functional condition refers to an abnormal function of an organ, without a structural alteration in the tissues. Examples include irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), functional dyspepsia, and functional abdominal pain syndrome. Undiagnosed illnesses with symptoms that may include but are not limited to: abnormal weight loss, fatigue, cardiovascular disease, muscle and joint pain, headache, menstrual disorders, neurological and psychological problems, skin conditions, respiratory disorders, and sleep disturbances.

Gulf War Veterans may be eligible for a variety of VA benefits, including a Gulf War Registry health exam, health care, and disability compensation for diseases related to military service.

The Kings County Veterans Service Office issues Veteran I.D. cards to honorably discharged veterans. Contact Joe Wright if you would like to receive periodic veteran's information by email. There are many state and federal benefits and programs available to veterans and their dependents. To find out if you are eligible for any of these benefits, visit or call our office. We can and will assist you in completing all required application forms. You can get information on the Web from the Kings County Veterans Service Office webpage at www.countyofkings.com.

Joe Wright, retired Navy Master Chief Petty Officer, is the Veterans Service Officer for Kings County. Send your questions to the Veterans Service Office, 1400 W. Lacey Blvd, Hanford, CA 93230; call 852-2669; or e-mail joe.wright@co.kings.ca.us.