

# Eligibility for VA Health Care

Find out if you can get VA health care as a Veteran.

## Am I eligible for VA health care benefits?

You may be eligible for VA health care benefits if you served in the active military, naval, or air service and didn't receive a dishonorable discharge.

- **If you enlisted after September 7, 1980, or entered active duty after October 16, 1981**, you must have served 24 continuous months or the full period for which you were called to active duty, unless any of the descriptions below are true for you.

**This minimum duty requirement may not apply if any of these are true. You:**

- Were discharged for a disability that was caused—or made worse—by your active-duty service, **or**
  - Were discharged for a hardship or “early out,” **or**
  - Served prior to September 7, 1980
- **If you're a current or former member of the Reserves or National Guard**, you must have been called to active duty by a federal order and completed the full period for which you were called or ordered to active duty. If you had or have active-duty status for training purposes only, you don't qualify for VA health care.

## What should I do if I received an Other Than Honorable, Bad Conduct, or Dishonorable discharge?

If you've received one of these discharge statuses, you may not be eligible for VA benefits.

**There are 2 ways you can try to qualify:**

[Find out how to apply for a discharge upgrade](#)

[Learn about the VA Character of Discharge review process](#)

## Is there anything that will make me more likely to get these benefits?

Yes. You may qualify for enhanced eligibility status (meaning you'll be placed in a higher priority group, which makes you more likely to get benefits) if you meet at least one of the requirements listed below.

**At least one of these must be true. You:**

- Receive financial compensation (payments) from VA for a service-connected disability
- Were discharged for a disability resulting from something that happened to you in the line of duty
- Were discharged for a disability that got worse in the line of duty
- [Are a recently discharged combat Veteran](#)
- Get a VA pension
- Are a former prisoner of war (POW)
- Have received a Purple Heart
- Have received a Medal of Honor
- Get (or qualify for) Medicaid benefits
- Served in Vietnam between January 9, 1962, and May 7, 1975
- Served in Southwest Asia during the Gulf War between August 2, 1990, and November 11, 1998
- Served at least 30 days at Camp Lejeune between August 1, 1953, and December 31, 1987

**If none of the above apply to you**, you may still qualify for care based on your income. Learn more about how the amount of money your family makes can affect whether you qualify for VA benefits.

[Learn more about income limits](#)

## How do I apply?

You can apply online right now.

[Apply for health care benefits](#)

[Learn more about how to apply](#)

Obtenga instrucciones para esta solicitud en Español.

## What if I need help filling out my application?

You can get help in any of these ways:

- Call our toll-free hotline at [877-222-8387](tel:877-222-8387), Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET.
- Get help from an accredited representative (a trained professional trusted to help with VA-related claims).

[Request a representative](#)

- [Find your state's Veterans agency](#)

## More about VA health care eligibility

### What are priority groups and how do they affect me?

- When you apply for VA health care, you'll be assigned 1 of 8 priority groups. This system helps to make sure that Veterans who need immediate care can get signed up quickly.
- Your priority group may affect how soon we sign you up for health care benefits. It may also affect how much (if anything) you'll have to pay toward the cost of your care.

### I have other health insurance (like Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurance). Does that affect whether I can get VA health care benefits?

- No. Whether or not you have other health insurance coverage doesn't affect the VA health care benefits you can get.

### When I leave active-duty service, how do I know if I'm eligible for TRICARE, VA health care, or both?

- **If you're retiring**, you're eligible for TRICARE. You may also qualify for certain VA health care benefits.
- **If you're separating from service due to a service-connected illness or injury**, you may be eligible for VA health care benefits and certain TRICARE benefits.
- **If you're an OEF/OIF/OND combat Veteran who has just returned from service**, you can receive free medical care for any condition related to your service in Iraq or Afghanistan for 5 years after discharge.

### If I can't get VA health care benefits, how else can I get health insurance?

- Visit [healthcare.gov](https://www.healthcare.gov) to find out if you qualify for health insurance.

### If I don't qualify for VA health care benefits, can I still get care for certain needs (like PTSD or military sexual trauma)?

Yes.

## Find out how you may still be able to get care for:

- [Posttraumatic stress disorder \(PTSD\)](#)
- [Other mental health problems \(like depression or substance abuse\)](#)
- [Mental and physical health problems linked to military sexual trauma \(MST\)](#)

Or, call our general VA hotline at [800-827-1000](tel:800-827-1000), Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. ET to find out what your care options may be.

### I need vision care. Can I get it through VA?

- We cover routine eye exams and preventive tests under VA health care benefits. In some cases, you may get coverage for eyeglasses or services for blind or low vision rehabilitation.

### I need dental care. Can I get it through VA?

- In certain cases, you may receive dental care as part of your VA health benefits. [Find out if you can get dental care through VA](#)

### I think I may have a service-connected disability. Can I get disability compensation (monthly payments)?

- If you have an illness or injury that was caused—or made worse—by your active-duty service, you may be able to get disability compensation. [Find out if you qualify for disability benefits](#)

## More eligibility information you may need

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### Priority groups

Find out what VA priority groups are, how they work, and how they may affect you.

### Active-duty service members and VA health care

Learn about your health care options after separation or retirement and how to apply for VA health care when you receive your separation or retirement orders.

**If you're a combat Veteran, apply right away to take advantage of 5 years of enhanced eligibility.**

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