



## Veterans Affairs

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Director

Fact Sheet #1  
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# HERBICIDE EXPOSURE

## AGENT ORANGE AND RELATED DEFOLIANTS

### What is Agent Orange?

During the Vietnam Conflict, the United States sprayed more than 10 million gallons of herbicide to remove dense jungle ground cover between 1962 and 1971. The project, code-named Operation Ranch Hand, successfully removed vegetation from an area of land roughly the size of the state of Massachusetts. Agent Orange was so named because it was shipped in orange-striped 55 gallon drums. These herbicides contained toxic ingredients known as Dioxins that have been linked to numerous chronic health conditions.

### Who was exposed according to VA law?

Service members who set foot in Vietnam between the period of Jan 9, 1962 and May 7, 1975 are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides. Veterans who served in the Me Kong Delta and inland waterways (brown waters) are also presumed to have been exposed. For those who served onboard ships in the area, the VA has published a list of vessels whose crews are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides.



### What Conditions are Associated with Herbicide Exposure?

Several studies have been undertaken to determine the health consequences of Dioxins. They determined that there are thirteen conditions that can be associated to veteran's herbicide exposure. There are also conditions that affect the children of exposed veterans. (See Below)

### Veterans' Diseases Associated with Agent Orange Exposure

Veterans may be eligible for disability compensation and health care benefits for the following diseases associated with exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides:

#### Acute and Subacute Peripheral Neuropathy

A nervous system condition that causes numbness, tingling, and motor weakness. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of exposure to Agent Orange.

#### Amyloidosis or AL

A rare disease caused when an abnormal protein, amyloid, enters tissues or organs.

#### Chloracne (or Similar Acneform Disease)

A skin condition that occurs soon after exposure to chemicals and looks like common forms of acne seen in teenagers. Under VA's rating regulations, chloracne (or other acneform disease similar to chloracne) must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of exposure to Agent Orange.

### **Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia and B Cell Leukemia**

Cancers that affect white blood cells.

### **Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)**

Adult onset disease that develops when the pancreas can't make enough insulin or when the body's tissues become resistant to insulin. Not Type I or juvenile Diabetes.

### **Hodgkin's Disease**

A malignant cancer characterized by progressive enlargement of the lymph nodes, liver, and spleen, and by progressive anemia.

### **Ischemic Heart Disease (IHD)**

IHD includes acute, sub-acute and old myocardial infarction, atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease including coronary artery disease (including coronary spasm), coronary bypass surgery, and stable, unstable and Prinzmetal's angina. IHD encompasses any atherosclerotic heart disease resulting in clinically significant ischemia or requiring coronary revascularization. IHD does not include hypertension or peripheral manifestations of arteriosclerosis such as peripheral vascular disease or stroke, or any other condition that does not qualify within the generally accepted medical definition of ischemic heart disease.

### **Multiple Myeloma**

A disorder which causes an overproduction of certain proteins from white blood cells.

### **Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma**

A group of cancers that affect the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue.

### **Parkinson's Disease.**

A progressive nervous disorder marked by symptoms of trembling hands, lifeless face, monotone voice, and a slow shuffling walk.

### **Porphyria Cutanea Tarda**

A disorder characterized by liver dysfunction and by thinning and blistering of the skin in sun-exposed areas. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of exposure to Agent Orange.

### **Prostate Cancer**

### **Respiratory Cancers**

Cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea, and bronchus.

### **Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or Mesothelioma)**

A group of rare cancers in muscles, organ linings, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues.

### **Birth Defects in the Children of Exposed Veterans**

The VA pays compensation to the children of herbicide exposed veterans who have certain birth defects. Exposure to herbicides can cause Spina Bifida in the offspring of male veterans and several possible birth defects in children born to female service members who were exposed. (See 38 CFR 3.815)

### **Veterans Affairs Office Locations:**

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