



WE HONOR VETERANS  
*Hospice Professionals on a Mission to Serve*

# *Service Related Diseases, Illnesses, and Conditions*

Military History Toolkit

Produced by the  
Veterans Advisory Council  
A Taskforce of the National Hospice and  
Palliative Care Organization

National Hospice and Palliative Care  
Organization



PART II

## *Korean War*

Korean War pitted the United States, South Korea and their UN allies against North Korea and the Chinese Communists

On June 25, 1950 North Korea's invasion of South Korea brought about a United Nations' "police action" against the aggressors, which immediately produced heavy military and naval involvement by the United States. While there were no illusions that the task would be easy, nobody expected that this violent conflict would continue for more than three years.

On July 27, 1953 negotiations concluded and fighting ended. However, the Cold War, considerably warmed up by the Korean experience, would maintain its costly existence for nearly four more decades.

Reference: [www.history.navy.mil/photos/events/kowar/kowar.htm](http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/events/kowar/kowar.htm)

## *Korean War*

- June 25, 1950 – July 27, 1953
- Total who served in all Armed Forces: 5,720,000
- Battle Deaths: 33,741
- Wounded: 103,284
- Medals of Honor: 131
- Unique Health Risks
  - Cold Injury      -- Exposure to nuclear weapons
  - Lasting Effects   -- Chemical warfare experiments

Reference: [http://www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/korea\\_summary.asp](http://www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/korea_summary.asp)

## *Korean War*

- Cold injuries, including frostbite and immersion (trench) foot, constituted a major medical problem for US Service personnel
- Cold accounted for 16% of Army non-battle injuries requiring admission
- Over 5000 US casualties of cold injury required evacuation from Korea during the winter of 1950-1951

Cold injuries including frostbite and immersion (trench) foot constituted a major medical problem for U.S. service personnel during the Korean War.

Veterans of the Battle of the Chosin Reservoir are recognized as having suffered especially high rates of severe cold injuries.

Cold accounted for 16% of Army non-battle injuries requiring admission and over 5000 U.S. casualties of cold injury required evacuation from Korea during the winter of 1950-1951.

In many instances U.S. Service members did not seek or were unable to obtain medical care after cold injuries because of battlefield conditions.

Documentation of such injuries may never have been made in their service medical records or may no longer be available.

Reference: [www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/korea\\_summary.asp](http://www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/korea_summary.asp)

## *Korean War*



These cold-related problems may worsen as Veterans grow older and develop complicating conditions such as diabetes and peripheral vascular disease, which place them at higher risk for late amputations

### **Cold Injury:**

The Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards develops and reviews policies and procedures relating to examination and treatment of cold-injured Veterans.

VA is committed to providing thorough examinations and high quality medical care to Veterans with long-term and late sequelae of cold injuries.

### **Forms**

- VA Form 10-0376: Compensation and Pension Examination for Cold Injury Protocol Examination  
#1730 Worksheet, April 1998 (See Attachment A to IL 10-98-008)
- VA Form 10-0374: Protocol Examination History for Cold Injuries  
April 1998 (See Attachment B to IL 10-98-008)

Reference: <http://www.vethealth.cio.med.va.gov/ColdInjury.htm>

Image (left): <http://z.about.com/d/history1900s/1/7/f/B/1/korean67.gif>

Image (right): [http://www.mccoy.army.mil/vtriad\\_online/11242000/images/low\\_crawl\\_obstacle\\_winter\\_300\\_x.jpg](http://www.mccoy.army.mil/vtriad_online/11242000/images/low_crawl_obstacle_winter_300_x.jpg)

## *Korean War*

- Many Veterans who have experienced cold injuries will be living with long-term and delayed sequelae which include:
  - peripheral neuropathy
  - skin cancer in frostbite scars (heels, earlobes)
  - arthritis in involved areas
  - chronic tinea pedis
  - fallen arches and stiff toes
  - nocturnal pain
  - cold sensation

It is important for healthcare providers examining and caring for Veterans who have experienced cold injuries to be familiar with the recognized long-term and delayed sequelae. These include peripheral neuropathy, skin cancer in frostbite scars (including in such locations as the heels and earlobes), arthritis in involved areas, chronic tinea pedis, fallen arches and stiff toes, nocturnal pain, and cold sensitization. These cold-related problems may worsen as Veterans grow older and develop complicating conditions such as diabetes and peripheral vascular disease, which place them at higher risk for late amputations.

Healthcare providers are encouraged to utilize the following sources of additional information on examination and treatment of cold-injured Veterans:

Questions relating to examination and treatment of cold-injured Veterans may be referred to the Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards (13), VA Central Office, telephone 202-273-8452, fax 202-273-9080.

Veterans' questions regarding cold injury compensation claims should be addressed to the appropriate VA Regional Office, telephone 800-827-1000.

Reference: [www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/korea\\_summary.asp](http://www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/korea_summary.asp)



Wall of Honor: Their names are engraved on the black granite of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C. as well as on the hearts of those who love them. They are the 58,226 Americans who paid the supreme sacrifice in the service of their country in Southeast Asia.

Go to <http://www.vietnamwar.com/> and zoom in to interactively explore the “Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall” and see the names of those who gave their lives in defense of the United States of America.

Reference: <http://www.vietnamwar.com/>

Image: <http://moreramblings.files.wordpress.com/2007/11/vietnam-war-memorial-wall.jpg?w=515&h=386>

## *Vietnam War*

"No event in American history is more misunderstood than the Vietnam War. It was misreported then, and it is misremembered now."

- RICHARD M. NIXON, 1985

The Vietnam War was the longest and most unpopular war in which Americans ever fought. Direct American involvement began in 1957 with the arrival of the first advisors. The first combat troops arrived in 1965 and we fought the war until the cease-fire of January 1973.

For many of the more than two million American Veterans of the war, the wounds of Vietnam will never heal.

The financial cost to the United States comes to something over \$150 billion dollars.

Reference: <http://www.vietnamwar.com/>

## *Vietnam*

- Vietnam Veterans now 50 to 75 yrs old
- By 2014, 60% of Veterans over the age of 65 will be Vietnam Veterans
- Will we be ready to care for them?
  - Mental Health Issues: PTSD, Depression
  - Substance Abuse
  - Hepatitis C
  - Agent Orange
    - Growing list of service connected illnesses

## *Vietnam War*

### *August 4, 1964 – January 27, 1975*

- Statistics
  - Total who served in all Armed Forces: 8,744,000
  - Deployed to Southeast Asia: 3,403,000
  - Battle Deaths: 47,424
  - Other deaths (In Theatre): 10,785
  - Wounded: 153,303
  - Medals of Honor: 238
- Unique Health Risks:
  - Length and Time of Service
  - Exposure to Agent Orange
  - Infectious Diseases

America's involvement in Vietnam lasted from 1957 until 1975. (Official dates are 8/5/64 to 5/7/75 and 2/28/61 for Veterans who served "in country" (in Vietnam) before 8/5/64).

In 1954, the French were defeated and the former colony of French Indochina was divided into Communist North Vietnam and (non-Communist) South Vietnam.

In 1957, the Vietcong began a rebellion against the South Vietnam government of President Diem, whom the US supported with equipment and advisors. In 1963, the government was overthrown, Diem was killed, and a new government was formed.

In August of 1964, Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution giving the President the power to take "all necessary measures" to "prevent further (Communist) aggression."

Between 1965 and 1969, US troop strength rose from 60,000 to over 543,000 in country. Despite the US's superior firepower against the guerilla forces of the enemy, the two sides fought to a highly destructive draw.

Reference: [www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/vietnam\\_summary.asp](http://www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/vietnam_summary.asp)

*Those who have fought for freedom, and  
have lost it, know a sadness and sense a  
loss beyond bearing.*



Approximately 2,700,000 American men and women served in Vietnam. It was the first war in which the US failed to meet its objectives. It was also the first time America failed to welcome its Veterans back as heroes. Many Veterans were attacked personally by their fellow countrymen, who opposed the war. This situation magnified the stress associated with their combat experiences.

Reference: [www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/vietnam\\_summary.asp](http://www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/vietnam_summary.asp)

Image: <http://www.vietnamwar.com/memorywall.jpg>

## *Vietnam War*

- Lack of unit cohesiveness
  - Many Veterans were sent to Vietnam as individuals
  - Left when their year's tour was completed
- Often traveled alone to and from Vietnam by air
  - An active combatant one day
  - A Veteran returning to a hostile civilian environment the next

Also contributing to the stress many Veterans experienced was the lack of unit cohesiveness as many were sent to Vietnam as individuals and left when their year's tour was completed.

They often traveled alone to and from Vietnam by air, being an active combatant one day and a Veteran returning to a hostile civilian environment the next.

They reported being spat upon as they disembarked at the airport and being uncomfortable wearing their uniform in public.

Reference: [www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/vietnam\\_summary.asp](http://www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/vietnam_summary.asp)

## *Vietnam War Environmental Hazards*

- Pesticide herbicide spraying
- Tropical country
  - High temperatures
  - High humidity
  - Monsoon climate (unable to get dry for days)
  - Few opportunities for bathing
  - Poor skin hygiene
- Bacterial and fungal infections
- Skin disease



In addition to the risks inherent to combat, troops experience many environmental hazards. Pesticide and herbicide spraying was commonplace. In addition, Vietnam is a tropical country with high temperatures, high humidity and a monsoon climate.

Many troops were unable to get dry for days, opportunities for bathing were infrequent, and skin hygiene was poor. Bacterial and fungal infections of the feet were a major cause of temporary disability. Skin disease was a leading cause of outpatient visits and hospitalization.

Throughout the war, disease accounted for 70.6% of all admissions with the remaining approximately equally divided between battle casualties (15.6%) and nonbattle injury (13.8%). The good survival rates seen were attributed to rapid evacuation, the ready availability of whole blood and well-established semi-permanent hospitals.

Reference: [www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/vietnam\\_summary.asp](http://www.va.gov/oaa/pocketcard/vietnam_summary.asp)

Image (top): <http://www.bhopal.net/opinions/spray-orange.jpg>

Image (bottom):  
<http://teachnet.ie/stonge/images/marines%20in%20the%20jungle%20in%201968.jpg>

## Agent Orange



The name “Agent Orange” came from the orange stripe on the 55-gallon drums in which the herbicide was stored.

Approximately 20 million gallons of herbicides were used in Vietnam between 1962 and 1971 to remove unwanted plant life and leaves which otherwise provided cover for enemy forces during the Vietnam Conflict. Shortly following their military service in Vietnam, some Veterans reported a variety of health problems and concerns which some of them attributed to exposure to Agent Orange or other herbicides. The Department of Veterans Affairs has developed a comprehensive program to respond to these medical problems and concerns.

The principal elements of this program include quality health care services, disability compensation for Veterans with service-connected illnesses, scientific research and outreach and education.

Reference: <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/>

Image:

[http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://cdn8.wn.com/o25/ar/i/f7/04c15f2a83b44f.jpg&imgrefurl=http://archive.wn.com/2005/03/05/1400/p/03/973be548b083c0.html&h=480&w=640&sz=35&hl=en&start=92&um=1&tbnid=FXMaXclF43wvVM:&tbnh=103&tbnw=137&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dagent%2Borange,%2Bvietnam%26start%3D90%26ndsp%3D18%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26rls%3Dcom.microsoft:\\*:IE-SearchBox%26rlz%3D117GWYE%26sa%3DN](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://cdn8.wn.com/o25/ar/i/f7/04c15f2a83b44f.jpg&imgrefurl=http://archive.wn.com/2005/03/05/1400/p/03/973be548b083c0.html&h=480&w=640&sz=35&hl=en&start=92&um=1&tbnid=FXMaXclF43wvVM:&tbnh=103&tbnw=137&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dagent%2Borange,%2Bvietnam%26start%3D90%26ndsp%3D18%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26rls%3Dcom.microsoft:*:IE-SearchBox%26rlz%3D117GWYE%26sa%3DN)

<http://cdn3.wn.com/o25/ar/i/31/e9ab4978f6c185.jpg>

## Agent Orange

- Herbicide used to kill unwanted plants and to remove leaves from trees that otherwise provided cover for the enemy
- Used to protect US troops
- No special Agent Orange (AO) tests are available – no way to show that AO or other herbicides caused individual medical problems
- VA makes a presumption of AO exposure for Vietnam Veterans

### Agent Orange: Health Care Benefits

VA offers a variety of health care benefits to Veterans, including comprehensive [health care for women Veterans](#). A Veteran's children and survivors may also qualify for health care benefits.

Learn about Veterans' eligibility and VA's benefits at [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/treatment.asp#vet\\_benefits](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/treatment.asp#vet_benefits)

[Eligibility for Veterans' Health Care Benefits](#)

[Apply for Veterans' Health Care Benefits](#)

[Treatment at VA War-Related Illness and Injury Study Centers](#)

[Additional Benefits for Veterans](#)

[Children and Survivors' Health Care Benefits](#)

[Contact VA about Benefits](#)

### Eligibility for Veterans' Health Care Benefits

VA health care benefits are open to all Veterans. There are many ways that a Veteran may qualify for VA health care benefits.

If someone served in Vietnam or another area where Agent Orange was sprayed, they do not have to prove that they were exposed to Agent Orange in order to get VA health care benefits for [diseases associated with Agent Orange exposure](#).

## Agent Orange



Under Section 102, Public Law 104-262, the Veterans' Health Care Eligibility Reform Act of 1996, VA shall furnish hospital care, medical services and may furnish nursing home care to Veterans exposed to herbicides in Vietnam

Veterans do not have to prove that Agent Orange caused their medical problems to be eligible for compensation. Rather, VA must determine that the disability is "service connected."

The following articles can be downloaded from: [www1.va.gov/agentorange](http://www1.va.gov/agentorange)

Agent Orange Poster - May 2004

IOM Identifies Link with Chronic Lymphocytic Leukemia, Principi Extends Benefits

Agent Orange General Information Brochure - July 2003

Agent Orange Information Bulletin 10-49 - March 2004 (Espanol)

Veterans Benefits for those exposed to Agent Orange

Agent Orange Handbook 1302.1 – 2006

Veterans Health Initiative (VHI) Agent Orange

DoD Report on Herbicides Used Outside of Vietnam

(VA encourages any Veteran with in-country Vietnam service and diagnosed diabetes mellitus to contact his or her local VA office for information and assistance on applying for benefits. The Veteran also may apply on-line.)

<http://vabenefits.vba.va.gov/vonapp>

Image: [http://pzzzz.tripod.com/nam\\_P/1M\\_bunkers.gif](http://pzzzz.tripod.com/nam_P/1M_bunkers.gif)

[http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://pzzzz.tripod.com/nam\\_P/1M\\_bunkers.gif&imgrefurl=http://pzzzz.tripod.com/fortunateson.html&h=438&w=431&sz=147&hl=en&start=28&um=1&tbnid=zvRuF1Kh2VcqFM:&tbnh=127&tbnw=125&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dvietnam%2Bwar%2Bimages%26start%3D18%26ndsp%3D18%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26rls%3Dcom.microsoft.\\*:IE-SearchBox%26rlz%3D117GWYE%26sa%3DN](http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://pzzzz.tripod.com/nam_P/1M_bunkers.gif&imgrefurl=http://pzzzz.tripod.com/fortunateson.html&h=438&w=431&sz=147&hl=en&start=28&um=1&tbnid=zvRuF1Kh2VcqFM:&tbnh=127&tbnw=125&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dvietnam%2Bwar%2Bimages%26start%3D18%26ndsp%3D18%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26rls%3Dcom.microsoft.*:IE-SearchBox%26rlz%3D117GWYE%26sa%3DN)



## **Veterans' Diseases Associated with Agent Orange Exposure**

Veterans may be eligible for [disability compensation](#) and [health care benefits](#) for diseases that VA has recognized as associated with [exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides](#).

Surviving spouses, children and dependent parents of Veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange and died as the result of diseases associated with Agent Orange may be eligible for [survivors' benefits](#).

### **[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 and resolve within 2 years after the date it began.

### **[AL Amyloidosis](#)**

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 Other Chronic B Cell Leukemias](#)**

A type of cancer which affects white blood cells. Currently, only chronic lymphocytic leukemia is recognized as associated with Agent Orange exposure. On August 31, 2010, VA published its final regulation establishing all chronic B-cell leukemias as related to exposure to Agent Orange and other herbicides. After a 60-day congressional review period, eligible Veterans may receive health care and disability compensation for all chronic B-cell leukemias.

### **[Diabetes Mellitus \(Type 2\)](#)**

A disease characterized by high blood sugar levels resulting from the body's inability to respond properly to the hormone insulin.

### **[Hodgkin's Disease](#)**

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

### **[Ischemic Heart Disease](#)**

A disease characterized by a reduced supply of blood to the heart, that leads to chest pain. On August 31, 2010, VA published the final regulation establishing ischemic heart disease as associated with Agent Orange exposure. After a 60-day congressional review period, eligible Veterans may receive health care and disability compensation for ischemic heart disease.

### **[Multiple Myeloma](#)**

A cancer of plasma cells, a type of white blood cell in bone marrow.

### **[Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma](#)**

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

### **[Parkinson's Disease](#)**

A progressive disorder of the nervous system that affects muscle movement. On August 31, 2010, VA published the final regulation establishing Parkinson's disease as associated with Agent Orange exposure. After a 60-day congressional review period, eligible Veterans may receive health care and disability compensation for Parkinson's disease.

### **[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](#)**

Cancer of the prostate; one of the most common cancers among men.

### **[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 different types of cancers in body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues.

## *Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)*

- HCV is the most common infection carried by blood in the United States.
- 63% of enrolled Veterans testing positive for HCV are Vietnam Era Veterans
  - Average age: 49 years old
  - 96% male
  - 4% female

It is VHA policy that each VA Medical Center Director must designate a Hepatitis C Lead Clinician to be the principal point-of-contact for all clinical hepatitis C program information and reporting between the facility, the Clinical Public Health Program office, and other facility program offices.

Hepatitis C virus (HCV) infection is a major public health problem in the United States (U.S.) because of its potential to lead to cirrhosis, hepatocellular carcinoma, and other life-threatening conditions.

Chronic hepatitis C affects approximately 1.3 percent of the general U.S. population. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimate that over 3 million Americans are chronically infected with HCV.

The prevalence rate is 5.4 percent among a patient population of Veterans who use VHA for their health care. The seroprevalence rate in Veterans who used VHA for their health care was three times that of the general U.S. population; the majority of these Veterans have chronic infection.

One-fourth of Veterans with HCV infection are also infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), not only putting them at risk for the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), but also increasing their risk of developing life-threatening complications from HCV infection.

The VHA Hepatitis C Program has used a comprehensive approach emphasizing clinical care and prevention through testing, counseling, research, and education.

References: Veterans Health Administration Directive 2007-022 (July 23, 2007); Statement of Gary A. Roselle, M. D., Program Director for Infectious Diseases, Veterans Health Administration, Department of Veterans Affairs, Before the Subcommittee on Benefits Committee on Veterans' Affairs U.S. House of Representatives, April 13, 2000 ([www.va.gov/OCA/testimony/hvac/13ap00GR.asp](http://www.va.gov/OCA/testimony/hvac/13ap00GR.asp))