

# 10 ways to get the care and support you need from VA during COVID-19



**VA** | U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

## A coronavirus disease (COVID-19) resource for OEF/OIF/OND Veterans

People with existing health conditions may be at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19. These include conditions like cancer, chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), certain heart problems, sickle cell disease, type 2 diabetes, a compromised immune system, and obesity. We know that Veterans who were exposed to airborne hazards and open burn pits during deployment in Southwest Asia may have some of these conditions. We're here to connect you with the information and resources you need to stay healthy during this time.



### Here are 10 ways to get care and support from VA:

- 1. If you're not enrolled in VA health care, find out if you're eligible and how to apply.** If you've recently separated from service, we encourage you to apply right away. You can receive free VA health care for up to 5 years after discharge or release for any condition related to your service in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation New Dawn (OND) in Iraq. If you weren't eligible for VA health care in the past but you've had a decrease in income, you may be eligible now. Find out at [www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility/](http://www.va.gov/health-care/eligibility/).
- 2. Stay informed about how COVID-19 may impact your VA health care and other benefits.** Get the latest updates at [www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/](http://www.va.gov/coronavirus-veteran-frequently-asked-questions/).
- 3. Get care when you need it.** Please don't delay routine health appointments. And if you have a health concern, contact us. We're here and can provide you with safe care by phone, video, or in person. Call your provider, send a secure message, or schedule an appointment online. Be sure to also learn about health concerns that may be related to your service. You can learn more about these concerns, and what to do to take care of your health, at [www.va.gov/health-care/health-needs-conditions/health-issues-related-to-service-era/](http://www.va.gov/health-care/health-needs-conditions/health-issues-related-to-service-era/).
- 4. Make sure you have enough of your prescription medicines.** Order your new prescription as soon as you can. Always order at least 10 days before you need more. Learn more about refilling VA prescriptions online at [www.va.gov/health-care/refill-track-prescriptions/](http://www.va.gov/health-care/refill-track-prescriptions/).
- 5. Get your flu shot.** Both the flu and COVID-19 can lead to serious illness and even death. They may be even more dangerous if you get them at the same time. Getting a flu vaccine is an essential part of protecting your and your family's health this season. It's the best protection against flu available.

If you're enrolled in VA health care, you can get a no-cost flu shot safely at your nearest VA health care facility or many community locations. Learn more at

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[www.publichealth.va.gov/flu/index.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/flu/index.asp) and [www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/flushot.asp](http://www.va.gov/COMMUNITYCARE/flushot.asp). If you're not enrolled in VA health care, go to [www.cdc.gov/flu](http://www.cdc.gov/flu).

- 6. Know what to do if you get sick.** Sign up for our Annie coronavirus precautions messages at [www.mobile.va.gov/app/annie-app-veterans](http://www.mobile.va.gov/app/annie-app-veterans). You'll get text messages to help you monitor your COVID-19 symptoms and know when to contact your provider. You'll also get tips to help you stay healthy and prevent COVID-19.
- 7. If you think you may have been exposed to the coronavirus, request a COVID-19 test.** We offer no-cost diagnostic testing for Veterans who are enrolled in VA health care and meet the CDC testing criteria. To get a test, you must have an appointment. You can request an appointment in any of these 3 ways:
  - Send a secure message your VA health care provider: [www.va.gov/health-care/secure-messaging/](http://www.va.gov/health-care/secure-messaging/)
  - Call your provider: [www.va.gov/find-locations](http://www.va.gov/find-locations)
  - Or schedule an appointment online: [www.va.gov/health-care/schedule-view-va-appointments/](http://www.va.gov/health-care/schedule-view-va-appointments/)

**For your safety, please don't go in person to a VA health care facility without an appointment.**

Everyone who enters our facilities must wear a mask that covers their mouth and nose. They must also complete our COVID-19 screening.

- 8. Get support for stress and mental health.** It's normal to feel more stressed, anxious, or lonely during this time. We're here to help. Learn how to get started with VA mental health care services at [www.va.gov/health-care/health-needs-conditions/mental-health](http://www.va.gov/health-care/health-needs-conditions/mental-health). You can use some services even if you're not enrolled in VA health care. You can also get helpful tools at [www.mentalhealth.va.gov/coronavirus](http://www.mentalhealth.va.gov/coronavirus). These include our COVID-19 Coach app: [www.mobile.va.gov/app/covid-coach](http://www.mobile.va.gov/app/covid-coach).

**If you need to talk to someone now,** call our Veterans Crisis Line. You can call for confidential (private) help anytime, day or night. Many of our caring, qualified responders are Veterans themselves. Call **800-273-8255** and **select 1**, or text **838255**. If you have hearing loss, call TTY: **800-799-4889**.

- 9. Get help traveling to VA appointments.** Ask your provider to connect you with your VA health facility's Veterans transportation service office. They can help you find free transportation. You can also find out if you're eligible and how to file a claim for VA travel pay reimbursement at [www.va.gov/health-care/get-reimbursed-for-travel-pay](http://www.va.gov/health-care/get-reimbursed-for-travel-pay).

## 10. Consider joining our efforts to better understand COVID-19 and airborne hazards.

- **COVID-19 research volunteer list:** Help us find ways to prevent and treat COVID-19—for your family, your community, and others across the country. Learn more and sign up at [www.va.gov/coronavirus-research/](http://www.va.gov/coronavirus-research/).
- **Airborne Hazards & Open Burn Pit Registry:** Document your exposures and add to our research efforts on airborne hazards. Once the online registry is complete, you'll be eligible for an in-person or telehealth exam to discuss your exposures and health with a provider. Learn more at [www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp](http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/burnpits/registry.asp). Or sign up today at [veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPitRegistry/](http://veteran.mobilehealth.va.gov/AHBurnPitRegistry/).

Get the latest guidance for preventing COVID-19 at [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov).