

Apply for a Disability Rating



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Choose VA

This guide will help you submit a disability claim and possibly obtain a disability rating. A disability rating could be between 0%–100%. A disability rating may give you access to certain VA benefits, such as compensation and ongoing health care.

A checklist to help you file your disability claim and get your disability rating:

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PREPARATION

- Learn about different **types of claims** you can file (refer to next page)
- Collect the documents** necessary to file a claim:
 - **Discharge papers (DD214 member-4** or equivalent)
 - **Military medical records**
 - **VA medical records and hospital reports** related to your disability
 - **Private medical records and hospital reports** related to your disability
- Submit any medical evidence related to your illness or injury (doctor's reports, X-rays, and medical test results)

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APPLICATION

- Apply by submitting all documents in **one** of these ways:
 - Submit a claim **online** by visiting <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim>
 - Complete a claim form **in-person** at a VA Regional Office

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REVIEW AND DECISION

- Visit us **online** at <https://www.va.gov/claim-or-appeal-status> to **track the status** of your claim
- Provide more information and documentation** if requested by VA
- Attend VA medical examination(s) if requested by VA

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NEXT STEPS

If approved, take steps to access the benefits you are eligible for:

- Review your award letter** to understand your rating
- Review the VA benefits handbook** that is sent to you

GET HELP

You can receive free help with preparing your claim from a VA-accredited representative or an employee at a VA Regional Office. Refer to next page for more information.

WHERE CAN I FIND MY DISCHARGE PAPERS?

To find out more about how to get your military service records, **visit** <https://www.va.gov/records/get-military-service-records>

CAN VA HELP OBTAIN PRIVATE MEDICAL RECORDS?

Yes, you can obtain records from private doctors or hospitals yourself or you can sign a release authorizing VA to obtain these records for you.

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE?

The length of time it takes to process a claim depends on:

- The type of claim filed
- How many injuries and disabilities you claimed
- How long it takes for VA to gather supporting evidence
- How many claims were submitted when yours was filed

Information you'll need to know to file your claim and get your disability rating:

Am I eligible for benefits?

You may be eligible for VA disability benefits **if VA finds you have a disease, injury, or condition that resulted from service or was made worse during your military service.**

Common conditions include:

- Hearing loss and ringing in the ears
- Knee, ankle, or back pain or injury
- Post traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, depression
- Traumatic brain injury
- Respiratory disease
- Ulcers
- Loss of range of motion
- Cancer (due to hazardous exposures)

Note: If you believe you have an illness or injury that you believe was caused or made worse by your military service, you should file a claim with VA.

Who can file a disability claim?

- Veterans
- Service members preparing to separate from the military
- Surviving family members seeking benefits owed to Veterans on a pending claim
- Veteran Service Organizations (VSOs), attorneys, and claims agents representing claimants

Who can help me?

You can receive free help with preparing your claim from a VA-accredited representative or an employee at your VA Regional Office.

Accredited representatives are individuals or organizations who are familiar with the process of filing a claim. Many accredited representatives work for VSOs and may provide help free of charge.

Note: It is unlawful for any person or organization to charge a fee for assistance in preparing an application for VA benefits. VA-accredited agents and attorneys may charge fees for assisting with a claim for VA benefits only after VA has made its first decision on the claim.

- To find a representation, visit us **online** at <https://www.va.gov/ogc/apps/accreditation>
- To locate **your nearest VA Facility**, visit <https://www.va.gov/find-locations>

How do I file a claim?

- There are several ways to get your claim started. **Review the chart below** to determine what best fits your circumstances. For more information, **visit** <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/when-to-file>

OTHER QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE:

Why is receiving a disability rating important?

If you have a service-connected disability, you may be entitled to additional VA benefits and services, including:

- Disability compensation
- Veteran Readiness and Employment (VR&E)
- Level of VA health care coverage
- Increased preference in federal hiring
- VA Home Loan fee exemption
- Specially Adapted Housing Assistance
- To find out more, **visit**, https://benefits.va.gov/benefits/derivative_sc.asp

Note: You can apply for a disability rating anytime throughout your life.

How does my disability rating affect my family?

If you are eligible for disability compensation, you may be paid additional amounts if you have a spouse, dependent child(ren), or dependent parents, and they may be eligible for additional benefits.

- To learn more, **call** us at: 800-827-1000, or visit us **online** at <https://www.va.gov/disability>

WHEN YOU FILE	HOW TO FILE	WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?
Pre-discharge More information at https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/when-to-file/pre-discharge-claim	Benefit Delivery at Discharge (BDD)	Filed 180 - 90 days before separation; processed faster than post-discharge claims
Post-discharge More information at https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/fully-developed-claims	Standard	VA can help you gather documents
	Fully-developed	You gather your own documents; processed faster than a standard claim