

# Veterans Affairs Healthcare Overview

## 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 did not receive a dishonorable discharge.

## If you enlisted after September 7, 1980, or entered active duty after October 16, 1981

You must have served twenty-four 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 may be eligible for VA health care benefits if you served in the active military, naval, or air service and did not receive a dishonorable discharge.

- You were discharged for a disability that was caused—or made worse—by your active-duty service, **or**
- You were discharged for a hardship or “early out,” **or**
- You served prior to September 7, 1980
- If you are 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 do not qualify for VA health care.
- If you served in certain locations and time periods during the Vietnam War era, you are eligible for VA health care.
- If you meet the basic service and discharge requirements and were exposed to toxins or other hazards while serving our country at home or abroad.
  - You are eligible for VA health care. This includes all Veterans who served in the Vietnam War, Gulf War, Iraq, Afghanistan, or any other combat zone after September 11, 2001.

## What does VA Healthcare cover?

Each Veteran’s medical benefits package is unique, yours will include care and services to help:

- Treat illnesses and injuries.
- Prevent future health problems.
- Improve your ability to function.
- Enhance your quality of life.

With VA health care, you are covered for regular checkups with your primary care provider and appointments with specialists (like cardiologists, gynecologists, and mental health providers). You can access Veterans health care services like home health and geriatric (elder) care, and you can get medical equipment, prosthetics, and prescriptions.

All Veterans receive coverage for most care and services, but only some will qualify for added benefits like dental care.

Your Veterans Health Benefits Handbook will list your healthcare benefits. This will be sent to you after you are approved for care. Read this carefully!

Once you have enrolled, you can begin enjoying your VA health care benefits. New enrollees will receive a telephone call from VA staff and a personalized Veterans Health Benefits Handbook. During that call, the VA can answer many of your initial questions, provide information regarding your health benefits and other services provided through VA and schedule your initial VA health care appointment.

The handbook will detail your VA health care benefits information, based on your specific eligibility factors, in an organized, easy-to-read format. It also includes information on your preferred facility, copayment responsibilities, how to schedule appointments, ways to communicate treatment needs and more.

For more information, visit [www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhbh](http://www.va.gov/healthbenefits/vhbh).

## Where do I get care?

As part of the enrollment process, Veterans are provided the opportunity to select the VA Health Care System or Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) where they prefer to be seen. To find a facility near you, visit VA's directory at [www.va.gov/directory](http://www.va.gov/directory).

For more information about Community Care for Veterans, visit [www.va.gov/communitycare/](http://www.va.gov/communitycare/).

## VA health care and other insurance

If you have other forms of health care coverage (like a private insurance plan, Medicare, Medicaid, or TRICARE), you can use VA health care benefits along with these plans.

## What if I am just separating from active duty and do not know where to start?

Call 877-222-8387 (TTY: 711) Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. ET.

VA Staff can help you learn about and apply for VA health care benefits. They can answer any questions you may have, process your application over the phone, and help you schedule your first VA medical appointment.

[Learn about transitioning from TRICARE to VA health care](#)

## Resources

About VA health benefits: <https://www.va.gov/health-care/about-va-health-benefits/>