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VA Leads the Way in Exposure-Informed Care

For years, Veterans have returned home with invisible scars—illnesses and conditions caused by exposure to toxic substances. The passage of the PACT Act (Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics) marked a transformative step in addressing care gaps Veterans were facing after returning home from combat. The PACT Act ensures that Veterans receive the comprehensive, tailored care they have earned. Since August 2022, 5.6 million Veterans have been screened for toxic exposures, and more than 740,000 Veterans have enrolled in VA health care.

Navy Veteran receives benefits through PACT Act

Navy Veteran Ron Haskell is one of them. He started receiving his care at VA through the PACT Act in December 2023. Haskell previously received care through a non-VA provider, but when his provider started charging a monthly concierge subscription fee for care, he began exploring his options with VA. “For the first time, I had the chance to ‘choose VA’ for my health care,” he said. “I am one of the 3.5 million Veterans eligible for VA care through the PACT Act. VA helped me enroll in a military environmental exposure registry and started my screening.”

Haskell emphasized that VA providers are uniquely positioned to help Veterans receive care related to military exposures and can uncover links to conditions that may be missed by care providers outside of VA. Haskell is pictured above with his wife.

VA clinicians understand military exposure

Some health care systems may not be equipped to recognize the toxic exposures Veterans faced during service, leading to misdiagnosis or inadequate treatment. Providers at VA are trained in exposure-informed care and have the field knowledge to link your service to certain conditions, while also recognizing symptoms that may indicate a larger issue. Additionally, VA providers have state-of-the-art tools to help them spot and diagnose conditions related to toxic exposure. One such tool is an

app that allows your provider to receive information about your military-related exposures. If you may have been exposed to a range of chemical, physical and environmental hazards during service, providers can use this tool to have an informed discussion with you about your individual exposure-related concerns and potential impacts on your health. VA providers can also access information on exposure-related programs like research registries.

PACT Act accelerates research

Veterans who participate in the PACT Act and enroll in its exposure registries help contribute to research into the long-term health effects of environmental exposures. Over time, the knowledge gained through this research will be used to fuel advancements in treatments, inform policies related to establishing presumptive conditions, ensure more precise predictive medicine, and deliver targeted proactive and preventative care.

If you believe you are at risk of toxic exposure, consider participating in one of the Environmental Health Registries listed below. The data these registries collect helps VA to understand how environmental exposures can impact your health and the wellbeing of fellow Veterans. You may be eligible to participate in one or more of the following six Environmental Health Registries, which can give VA the data tools it needs to improve nationwide health care and benefits options into the future.

[Agent Orange Registry](#)

- [Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry](#)
- [Gulf War Registry](#) (includes Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn)
- [Ionizing Radiation Registry](#)
- [Depleted Uranium Follow-Up Program](#)
- [Toxic Embedded Fragment Surveillance Center](#)

Contact your local [VA Environmental Health Coordinator](#) about getting a registry evaluation. Please note that adding your information to these registries does not create a disability compensation claim; please see the enrollment information below to see if you are eligible for benefits.

View VIDEO on the PACT Act: <https://youtu.be/y3dV-sTs-dU>

Get enrolled today

“Don’t be afraid to ask for help,” Haskell advised. “Lean on your community and be an ambassador for yourself—it’s about getting the care you’ve earned. No one knows what we’ve been through like other Veterans, and together, we can make sure you get what you deserve.”

If you are a Veteran (or a survivor of a Veteran) who has exposure-related health concerns from your time in service, the PACT Act provides avenues for you to access the care and benefits options you deserve. Visit www.va.gov/PACT or schedule an appointment with your VA provider to see if you are eligible for PACT Act benefits and services.

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