

## Resources

Don't do it alone. A number of resources are available to help Gulf War-era veterans and their families.

- ◆ **The American Legion:**
  - To file a VA claim, call:  
Helpline: 1 - (800) 433 - 3318
  - Latest info on web-page:  
<<[www.legion.org/gulftoc.htm](http://www.legion.org/gulftoc.htm)>>
  
- ◆ **Department of Veterans Affairs (VA):**
  - Helpline: 1 - (800) PGW - VETS
  - Local VA office: 1 - (800) 827 - 1000
  - Gulf Illnesses homepage:  
<<[www.va.gov/health/envIRON/persgulf.htm](http://www.va.gov/health/envIRON/persgulf.htm)>>
  
- ◆ **Department of Defense (DoD):**
  - To schedule clinical evaluation:  
1 - (800) 796 - 9699
  - To report suspicious incidents:  
1 - (800) 472 - 6719
  - Gulf Illnesses homepage:  
<<[www.gulflink.osd.mil](http://www.gulflink.osd.mil)>>



## The Legion

One out of every five disabled Gulf War veterans received help from the American Legion to prepare their disability claims. Help with claims is a free service.

Hundreds of thousands of dollars have been given by the Legion as grants to needy vets under the Temporary Financial Assistance (TFA) program.

The Legion also publishes the free "Gulf War Veterans' Guide to Benefits." To order, call 1 - (800) 433 - 3318.

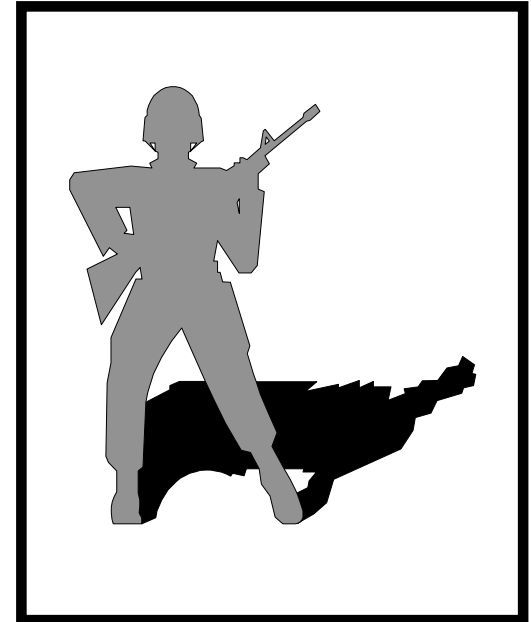


*For more information contact:*

*Persian Gulf Task Force  
The American Legion  
1608 "K" Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20006  
(202) 861-2700*

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# Gulf War Illnesses: Fact & Fiction



*A Guide For  
Veterans and Families*



# Programs for Gulf War Veterans: *Summary and Track-Record*

Before the Gulf War ended, veterans were complaining of illnesses that doctors couldn't explain.

In time, "Gulf War Syndrome" was the label put on a wide variety of medical problems. Some were symptoms that doctors couldn't diagnose. Others were common illnesses that vets believed were caused by something in the Middle East.

The government response wasn't everything that veterans would have wished it to be. But a number of programs have been created to help veterans, and to shed some light on what happened to them during Operation Desert Storm.

## Is It Real?

If you don't feel well, you're sick. That's the way we operate in this country. Doctors don't argue whether you should be ill. And doctors don't always need to know what made you sick in order to treat you.

Studies of Gulf War vets have consistently shown that they are two to three times more likely to say they don't feel well than non-vets.

Some vets suspect they are ill from nerve gas, vaccines, medications, depleted uranium, oil well fires, or other culprits.

Some of these suspected causes may have made some vets ill. But scientific studies have consistently failed to find a single cause for all the medical problems affecting Gulf War veterans. They have



many different symptoms because they're likely suffering from different problems.

## What's Been Done?

More than 120 scientific studies are underway, at a cost in the millions of dollars.



But veterans don't have to wait for the doctors to have all the answers before seeking help.

Any Gulf War veteran can get a physical examination from VA doctors. If the exams find a problem, the vet can receive an increased priority for medical care and, perhaps, VA disability compensation.

The VA program is called "the VA Registry." It also keeps track of vets.

Gulf vets still on active duty should seek a similar exam under the Pentagon's Comprehensive Clinical Evaluation Program (CCEP).

## By the Numbers

- Amount spent on research into Gulf illnesses: \$133.5 million
- In-theater for the war: 697,000
- VA outpatient visits by Gulf vets: 230,000
- Getting VA disability pay: 83,000
- Given VA registry exams: 77,000
- Gulf War Legionnaires: 60,000
- Given free DoD exam: 54,000
- VA hospital stays: 24,000
- Receiving VA disability pay for undiagnosed illness: 2,500

## The Basic Law

In 1993, Congress rewrote the laws governing VA disability compensation to make it possible for veterans to receive disability pay without having a traditional medical diagnosis.

To qualify, a veteran's symptoms must (1) begin before Jan. 1, 2002, (2) be chronic, and (3) last for at least six months.

The symptoms can include:

- n fatigue
- n skin disorders
- n headache
- n muscle pain
- n joint pain
- n neurological symptoms
- n neuro-psychological symptoms
- n respiratory problems
- n sleep disorders
- n gastrointestinal troubles
- n cardiovascular problems
- n abnormal weight loss
- n menstrual disorders.

## What's *Not* Happening

Research done in the United States and other countries lets us rule out some of the worst initial fears of Gulf War veterans.

Hospitalization: Whatever is making Gulf vets ill, it's usually not bad enough to send them to the hospital. They're hospitalized at the same rate as non-deployed vets from the Gulf War.

Deaths: Studies show that Gulf War vets are not dying from illness faster than people who were in uniform during the war, but who weren't deployed. Exception: Gulf vets die more often in car wrecks.

Birth Defects: There is no evidence of more birth defects in the children of Gulf vets.

