

So, Now What?

Now that you know some of the toxic substances you may have been exposed to, what's next?

It's time to start having conversations with your doctor(s), family, other service members, and veterans.

Share this information. If you didn't know about these exposures, chances are, neither do your brothers and sisters who served alongside you.

Speak with a local Veterans Service Officer representative about filing a claim for service connection for the toxic exposure. While you may not have symptoms now, you may have them later in life. Vietnam Veterans of America helps veterans of all eras file toxic exposures claims.

What Else Should I Know?

You are **NOT** alone.

You can sign up for the voluntary environmental health registry evaluation through the VA. These include Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry, Gulf War Registry (includes Operations Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn), Depleted Uranium Follow-Up Program, and Toxic Embedded Fragment Surveillance Center.

Find your local environmental health coordinator to schedule a registry evaluation at:

https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures_coordinators.asp

RESOURCES

VA Exposure Registries

<https://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/benefits/registry-evaluation.asp>

Wounded Warrior Project

<https://www.woundedwarriorproject.org>

The Veterans Health Council

<http://www.veteranshealth.net>

Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors

<https://www.taps.org>

The Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors offers compassionate care to all those grieving the loss of a military loved one.

Vietnam Veterans of America

<http://www.vva.org>

No longer can we accept
"delay, deny, until they die."
Rather, we must work collaboratively
to address the effects of toxic
exposures during our military service.

CONTACT US



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U.S. Army Courtesy Photo

Even the Air that You Breathe...

TOXIC EXPOSURES AMONG IRAQ AND AFGHANISTAN VETERANS

Toxic exposure symptoms are easily overlooked or may not show for years. This brochure is designed to make you aware of **symptoms caused by exposures** related to your military service so you may have an informed discussion with your doctor and family.



Open-Air Burn Pits

Symptoms of exposure to burn pits include:

- allergy-like symptoms
- breathing restrictions
- chronic coughs
- diarrhea
- lung cancer
- skin infection
- pulmonary injuries
- unexpected weight loss
- serious heart conditions
- cancers (including but not limited to lung, brain, bone & skin)
- cramps and severe abdominal pain
- restrictive airways disease (bronchiolitis)
- weeping lesions on extremities*
- asthma
- chronic bronchitis
- constant infections
- leukemia
- nose bleeds
- sleep apnea
- severe headache
- vomiting
- ulcers
- throat infections

Depleted Uranium

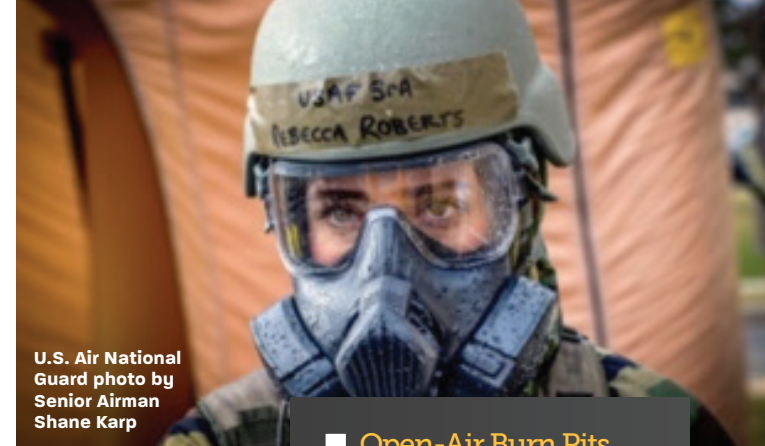
There are two types of exposures in depleted uranium, chemical and radiation. Exposure to DU can also increase your risk of lung cancer and leukemia. Other symptoms of exposure include chronic fatigue, neurological signs or symptoms, signs or symptoms involving upper or lower respiratory system, menstrual disorders, and kidney problems.*

Infectious Diseases

According to the Military Infectious Diseases Research program, infectious diseases have historically caused more casualties than enemy fire. These are often caused by the bites of insects or other organisms. Some of these diseases include malaria, Brucellosis, Campylobacter jejuni, Coxiella burnetii (Q Fever), Mycobacterium tuberculosis, nontyphoid Salmonella, Shigella, visceral leishmaniasis, and West Nile virus.*

Radiation Exposures

The severity of radiation exposure signs and symptoms are determined by the amount of radiation absorbed by the body. Some signs of radiation exposure include nausea and vomiting, hair loss, diarrhea, headache, fever, bloody vomit and stools, dizziness and disorientation, weakness, fatigue, infections, low blood pressure, and poor wound healing.*



U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Airman Shane Karp

OIF/OEF TOXIC EXPOSURES

Toxic Chemicals

By the nature of their work, service members are exposed to various toxic chemicals. Chemical warfare agents, fuel oils (such as JP-8 or S-8), various perfluoro acids and phthalates are just some of the toxic chemicals you may have been exposed to through your service.*

Local Mineral Dust

Studies vary widely on this topic. Some claim it is not the dust itself that caused symptoms but merely the overload of particles, while other studies find the heavy metals in the particulate matter may have been the cause. Particulate matter is a toxic exposure that is recognized by the VA.*

Inhaled Irritant Gasses

Exposure to inhaled irritant gasses may cause toxic inhalation injuries. Symptoms of injury include: edema epithelial sloughing, and inflammation, if untreated, may result in scar formation and pulmonary and airway remodeling.*

*Note: these lists are not inclusive of all potential symptoms or illnesses

- Open-Air Burn Pits
- Depleted Uranium
- Infectious Diseases
- Radiation Exposure
- Toxic Chemicals
- Local Mineral Dust
- Inhaled Irritant Gasses
- Noise/Vibrations
- Occupational Materials

Noise/Vibrations

Noise and/or vibrations may not be something you think of as a toxic exposure; however, studies are finding that excessive noise and/or vibration may have harmful effects. In fact, noise-induced hearing loss is the second most prevalent service-connected disability.

Occupational Materials

If you served in Iraq or Afghanistan or performed any of these duties as part of your military occupational specialties, you might have been exposed to asbestos: mining, milling, shipyard work, insulation work, demolition of old buildings, carpentry, construction, and manufacturing and installing products such as flooring and roofing.