

How to File a VA Disability Claim?

<https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/>

Before you start – Is the American Legion your Representative? If not and you seek our support, please complete a VA Form 21-22. You can access this form and others related to your VA disability claim at: <https://www.va.gov/representative>. Filing a VA disability claim involves four primary steps: reserving your start date, gathering medical evidence, officially submitting your application (VA Form 21-526EZ), and attending medical exam(s).

1. Declare an "Intent to File"

Before submitting your full application, start your claim online at: <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/>. This automatically establishes an "intent to file" which preserves your potential start date for retroactive back pay, giving you a full year to gather necessary documents.

2. Gather Supporting Evidence

A successful disability claim requires proof that your condition is linked to your military service <https://www.va.gov/disability/how-to-file-claim/evidence-needed/>

- **Service Treatment Records:** Gather your available service medical records and DD214 <https://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/>
- **Medical Evidence:** Collect private or VA medical records that show a formal diagnosis and the severity of your current illness or injury.
- **Personal/Buddy Statements:** Use a VA Form 21-4138 to write a personal statement detailing how the condition affects your daily life, and use VA Form 21-10210 for statements from friends or family. <https://www.va.gov/supporting-forms-for-claims/>

3. Submit Your Application

A Service officer can assist you with completing Application for Disability Compensation and Related Compensation Benefits – VA Form 256EZ. You may also submit your application online by accessing it at <https://www.va.gov/disability/file-disability-claim-form-21-526ez/start>. You will need an identity-verified account to log in (like [Login.gov](https://login.gov) or [ID.me](https://id.me)). If you prefer to apply by mail or fax, you can fill out **VA Form 21-526EZ** and send it to the Department of Veterans Affairs Claims Intake Center, PO Box 4444, Janesville, WI 53547-4444

4. Attend Your Compensation & Pension (C&P) Exam

After submitting the claim, the VA will review your claim and may ask you to attend a VA-funded medical exam to assess your condition. You must attend scheduled appointment(s).