

VA Health Services

- **To apply**, go to va.gov/healthbenefits/apply/. The form is relatively easy and you probably won't need any help. You will need a PDF of your DD214 (you can fax, but it could end in a black hole and will definitely delay the process).
- **Requirements:** Served in a war zone or be retired from the military. No other requirements. However, just because you served in one of the branches doesn't mean that you qualify. You don't need to be disabled to qualify for this benefit, but if you have a VA Disability rating, you automatically qualify.
- **Don't wait until you are in desperate need.** Even though this is a yes/no decision, it usually takes several months. Once approved, you will get an appointment for a physical (normally a week or two after approval) and the meds you are on will be converted to the VA pharmacy. Once accepted, you can just walk in to see your Primary Doctor (emergency) or send them an e-mail for an appointment, usually the next day (Primary Doctors are required to respond within 72 hours to e-mails). Your Primary will automatically see you yearly for a physical. Specialists, in my experience, are 7 to 10 days, unless an emergency.
- **Cost?** If you are not retired military or disabled by at least 30%, you will have a co-pay of \$15 for your Primary (physical is usually about 45 minutes), \$50 for specialists and \$8 for a month's supply of any medication (or the time required for your prescription). Surgery, x-rays, blood draws and virtually anything else, including hospital stays are FREE. **This is a really good deal.**
- **Care?** I have been in the system for over 10 years and it's been amazing. Great Doctors, nurses, facilities...basically everything. Meds are mailed to my home. ER services, too, up in Denver.

- **Where?** Our clinic is at 3141 Centennial Boulevard, Colorado Springs, CO 80907. The VA Hospital/Medical Center is at 1700 N Wheeling ST, Aurora CO 80045 (**yes, the new VA Medical Center is finally open**). If you need directions, a Google search works. They are both reasonably close. If you need transportation, the VA will typically supply that at no cost.

Congress passed a law specifying that if you can't receive service within 30 days of request (after acceptance), then you are automatically sent to **Choice**. My experience is that this program falls far short of their promise. Wait times up to 6 months. Sometimes there is no alternative... but just be aware. Given an option, I always choose VA Health Services – even if I need to wait.



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