



Common Secondary Conditions Veterans Overlook

How Symptoms May Be Connected to Your Service-Related Condition

Many Veterans live with symptoms for years without realizing they may be connected to an existing service-related condition.

In VA claims, this is called a secondary condition; a condition that develops as a result of another service-connected issue, including mental health conditions like PTSD, depression, or anxiety – and these connections matter.

When properly documented, secondary conditions can:

- Strengthen your claim
- Provide a more accurate disability rating
- Ensure your full experience is recognized

The challenge is that many secondary symptoms are easy to overlook, misinterpret, or dismiss as “just part of life.”

This guide is designed to help you start identifying patterns in your own health so you can better understand what may be connected.

Common Secondary Symptoms Checklist

Check any symptoms you currently experience or have experienced consistently.

Neurological / Cognitive

- Frequent headaches or migraines
- Memory issues or brain fog
- Difficulty concentrating

Sleep-Related

- Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Diagnosed or suspected sleep apnea
- Chronic fatigue despite rest

Digestive

- Acid reflux or GERD
- Stomach pain or discomfort
- Nausea related to stress or medication

Physical / Pain

- Chronic back, joint, or muscle pain
- Tension in neck or shoulders
- Pain that worsens with stress

Emotional / Mental Health

- Ongoing depression or low mood
- Increased anxiety or irritability
- Emotional numbness or withdrawal

Medication-Related

- Side effects from prescribed medications
- New symptoms after starting medication



Simple Symptom Tracker

Track patterns over time. This information can be helpful when speaking with providers or preparing documentation.

Tracker Template:

Date: _____

Symptom(s):

Severity (1-10): 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What was happening that day:

Connection to existing condition (if any):

Notes:



You Are Not “Making It Up”

Many Veterans minimize their symptoms or assume they are unrelated, but your body keeps track of what you’ve experienced.

Physical symptoms, emotional patterns, and long-term stress responses are often connected in ways that deserve to be understood and documented.

You are allowed to ask questions.

You are allowed to seek clarity.

And you are allowed to pursue the full scope of your benefits.

If you’re exploring a VA mental health claim or believe you may have secondary conditions connected to your service, Essential Veteran Services provides professional mental health evaluations, including DBQs and Nexus Letters, within the scope of psychological care.

We’re here to help you better understand your symptoms and how they may connect.

Learn more or [schedule your evaluation](#) with Dr. Glover now!



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