

Did You Know?

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That when a veteran files a claim for service-connected disability (also known as compensation) they usually list the most apparent injuries and/or illnesses on their application. These would include the obvious like the loss of a foot from an IED (improvised explosive device), shrapnel from an incoming grenade, severe ear problems from too many dives in a submarine and bad knees from far too many parachute jumps. In listing the obvious on their claim, they sometimes overlook many secondary conditions which also could be listed. Or they are unaware that secondary conditions could develop many years later. Here are some concrete examples.

1. A veteran has GERD, first diagnosed in the Air Force. His current medication is no longer helping so the doctor prescribes a new one. One of the side effects is dizziness. After taking this new medication for a week, the veteran has a dizzy spell on the way to the bathroom. He falls and breaks his hip. Complications arise and the hip must be replaced. That new hip condition would be considered service-connected disabled, 2nd to his GERD because of the medication.
2. A veteran has her appendix removed while in the Navy and the surgery went fine, the only aftereffect was a six inch scar on her belly. Five years after discharge the scar becomes infected. New surgery is needed to mend the scar and that goes well, except when that scar is now touched or rubbed against, it's painful. That painful scar would now be considered service-connected disabled, 2nd to her appendix removal.
3. The sailor with so many dives in a submarine has a bad hearing problem. They get service-connection for Bilateral Hearing Loss but fail to mention they also suffer from tinnitus (ringing, buzzing noise) which is a separate condition of the ear. That's a valid claim.
4. An airborne Marine with over 100 jumps develops knee problems which are granted as service-connected. Later she gets shooting nerve pains down the legs from the knees. That's a separate claim for radiculopathy, 2nd to her knees.
5. A veteran is already getting benefits for their bum left leg. They lose their balance on the stairs and fall, causing a broken shoulder. That shoulder would be a new claim.
6. A veteran has service-connected diabetes from Agent Orange in Vietnam. They develop diabetic cataracts in both eyes and several toes must be amputated due to the diabetes. Both the cataracts and loss of toes would be considered service-connected disabled, 2nd to their diabetes. Besides those conditions, diabetes can sometimes lead to kidney damage, hypertension, feet sores, peripheral neuropathy (numbness or tingling in the arms or legs) and even amputations of an arm or leg.

Above are some common examples but there are many more. And let's not forget side-effects due to medication taken for service-connected conditions. Many drugs, if used over time or in strong doses can cause stomach ulcers, strokes, rashes and many other illnesses. One very common example is ED (erectile dysfunction). Medication for diabetes and hypertension can cause this problem.

So if you feel you might have a secondary condition related to your primary service-connected disability, or you feel your medication you are taking for your service-connected condition has caused a permanent side effect, please contact our office for assistance. Our telephone number is 312-980-4266 and we have 24/7 voicemail. You can also write us at The American Legion Rm. 106, 2122 W. Taylor St. Chicago, IL. 60612 or use my e-mail address shown above. Our office motto regarding claims is:

When in doubt, fill it out!