



VETERANS CLAIMS EDUCATION · FREE GUIDE

Gulf War Illness **Claim Kit**

Undiagnosed illness · Chronic fatigue, fibromyalgia, IBS · Infectious diseases · No deadline · How to prove it · Rating by analogy · Examples · 6 printable worksheets including a 6-month symptom tracker

Before you start: we are a free education resource. We are not VA, a VSO, an attorney or an accredited claims agent, and we don't assist with or file claims. Only VA decides. Examples are made up to show how the rules work. Describe your own experience truthfully; false statements to VA can have serious consequences.

The key idea: **unexplained symptoms can be enough**

If you served in the Southwest Asia theater, its waters, Afghanistan, Israel, Egypt, Turkey, Syria or Jordan and have symptoms lasting 6 months or more that doctors can't explain, VA can presume they came from service. No diagnosis, no medical opinion for the link, and no deadline.

WHAT'S INSIDE

1. Who qualifies
2. Conditions and symptoms covered
3. Things you may not know
4. How to prove it
5. How it's rated
6. Examples
7. When VA says no
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Worksheets: 1 Where I served · 2 Symptom inventory · 3 Six-month symptom tracker · 4 My statement · 5 Family or buddy statement · 6 Doctor visit prep · Also inside: Official sources

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SECTION 1

Who qualifies

Location	Dates	Notes
Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the neutral zone, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Oman	On or after Aug. 2, 1990	Airspace included
Waters of the Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Arabian Sea	On or after Aug. 2, 1990	Sailors and Marines afloat
Afghanistan, Israel, Egypt, Turkey, Syria, Jordan	During the Persian Gulf War period	Added by the PACT Act; airspace not included

No deadline and no minimum rating. The PACT Act changed the law (38 U.S.C. § 1117) so these illnesses can be presumed whenever they appear, to any degree. Some older versions of the regulation still show an end date and a 10% minimum; the law removed both.

EXAMPLE

A corpsman afloat

Rosa served on a ship in the Persian Gulf in 2004 and has had joint pain and fatigue ever since.

The Gulf waters count. Her service record, medical records and symptom log support the claim.

Official sources: [38 U.S.C. § 1117](#) · [38 CFR § 3.317](#) · [VA: Gulf War illness](#)

2 · CONDITIONS AND SYMPTOMS COVERED

Chronic multisymptom illnesses

Chronic fatigue syndrome · Fibromyalgia · Functional GI disorders like IBS, functional dyspepsia and functional abdominal pain. *GERD, ulcers and other structural digestive diseases don't count.*

Undiagnosed illness symptoms

Fatigue · skin problems · headaches · muscle pain · joint pain · numbness or tingling · memory and concentration problems · breathing problems · sleep problems · digestive symptoms · heart symptoms · weight loss · menstrual disorders, and others.

Infectious diseases	Time limit
Brucellosis, Campylobacter jejuni, Q fever, nontyphoid salmonella, shigella, West Nile virus	Within 1 year of separation
Malaria	Within 1 year, or longer if incubation began in service
Tuberculosis, visceral leishmaniasis	Any time

Official sources: [38 CFR § 3.317\(a\)\(2\)](#) · [§ 3.317\(b\)](#) · [§ 3.317\(c\)](#)

Things you may not know

- ☐ You don't need a diagnosis. "Doctors can't figure it out" is what this rule is for.
- ☐ Symptoms that come and go count if they improve and worsen over 6 months.
- ☐ Objective evidence isn't only lab tests. Missed work, changes family see, pharmacy records and statements can count.
- ☐ Post-9/11 service counts. The Persian Gulf War period hasn't ended, and Afghanistan was added.
- ☐ Breathing and sinus problems may also be on the burn pit list. Check the PACT Act guide.
- ☐ A later diagnosis of CFS, fibromyalgia or a functional GI disorder is still presumed. Another diagnosis can still be claimed directly.
- ☐ Long-term effects of infections (like arthritis after brucellosis) must also be considered.
- ☐ The Gulf War Registry exam is free and separate from a claim.

4 · HOW TO PROVE IT

1. Qualifying service

DD-214, orders, deployment or ship records.

2. Symptoms 6+ months

Medical records, Worksheet 3 tracker, statements.

3. No other explanation

Records showing symptoms are unexplained, or a CFS, fibromyalgia or functional GI diagnosis.

1. File an Intent to File ([VA Form 21-0966](#)).
2. Fill out Worksheets 1–3 and bring Worksheet 6 to your doctor.
3. Ask your doctor to note which symptoms remain unexplained.
4. Write your statement (Worksheet 4) and get family or buddy statements (Worksheet 5).
5. File [VA Form 21-526EZ](#). Name each symptom and the Gulf War illness rule.
6. At your C&P exam, describe every symptom, how long and your worst days.

Need help writing it? Use our free Statement Writer at veteransclaimsedu.com/statement-writer to draft your statement or a buddy statement, then copy it onto the VA form.

How to write it on your claim: *"Undiagnosed illness manifested by joint pain, fatigue and headaches, due to Persian Gulf War service (Kuwait, 1991)."*

Official sources: [38 CFR § 3.317\(a\)\(3\)](#) · [§ 3.317\(a\)\(4\)](#) · [VA Form 21-4138](#) · [VA Form 21-10210](#)

How it's rated

Most undiagnosed illnesses are rated by analogy: like the closest listed condition, based on the body functions affected, the part of the body (anatomy), or the symptoms. Unexplained joint pain may be rated like arthritis; unexplained headaches like migraines.

Condition	Code	What drives the rating
Fibromyalgia	DC 5025	How constant symptoms are, and whether medication controls them
Chronic fatigue syndrome	DC 6354	Days incapacitated, or how much symptoms restrict daily activities
Irritable bowel syndrome	DC 7319	How often you have abdominal pain and bowel changes
Undiagnosed illness	Closest condition	The body system and symptoms

Learn how VA picks the closest code in our CFR Explained: Understanding Your Rating guide at veteransclaimsedu.com/cfr-explained.

Official sources: [38 CFR § 3.317\(a\)\(5\)](#) · [§ 4.20](#)

6 · REAL-LIFE EXAMPLES

UNDIAGNOSED

Normal tests, real symptoms

Tony served in Kuwait in 1991 and has had joint pain and fatigue for years; every test is normal.

Records of normal tests, his tracker and his wife's statement prove an undiagnosed illness. No opinion needed.

FIBROMYALGIA

A diagnosis without a cause

Lisa deployed to Iraq in 2005 and was diagnosed with fibromyalgia in 2012.

Fibromyalgia is presumed; her deployment record and diagnosis are enough.

IBS

After Afghanistan

Mike served in Afghanistan in 2010 and now has IBS.

Afghanistan was added by the PACT Act, and IBS is a functional GI disorder.

GERD

Not covered here

Dan has GERD after Iraq.

GERD is structural, so he files directly or as secondary to medication instead.

SAILOR

Rashes and memory

Kim served in the Red Sea in 2003 and has unexplained rashes and memory problems.

The Red Sea counts. Ship records, dermatology notes and coworker statements support it.

RATED

Like migraines

Tom's unexplained headaches make him lie down twice a month.

VA rates them by analogy to migraines. His headache log decides the rating.

7 · WHEN VA SAYS NO

VA says	You can respond
"Explained by a diagnosis."	Ask your doctor which symptoms the diagnosis doesn't explain.
"Not chronic."	Show 6+ months of symptoms, including ones that come and go (Worksheet 3).
"No objective evidence."	Send missed-work records, pharmacy records and statements from others.
"Denied before the PACT Act."	File a Supplemental Claim (VA Form 20-0995); the law changed in your favor.

Official sources: [38 CFR § 3.317\(a\)\(7\)](#) · [§ 3.102](#)

8 · YOUR CHECKLIST

- ☐ Service location and dates qualify (Worksheet 1)
- ☐ Symptoms listed (Worksheet 2)
- ☐ 6 months of tracking (Worksheet 3)
- ☐ Doctor notes which symptoms are unexplained (Worksheet 6)
- ☐ My statement written (Worksheet 4 or the Statement Writer)
- ☐ Family or buddy statements (Worksheet 5)
- ☐ Checked the burn pit list too
- ☐ Filed an Intent to File and VA Form 21-526EZ
- ☐ Denied before? Filed a Supplemental Claim

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Where I served

List every deployment, ship and location.

Location or ship	Dates	Unit	Proof I have
Camp Arifjan, Kuwait	3/2004 – 2/2005	1st Bn, 10th Inf	DD-214, orders



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Symptom inventory

Tick every symptom you have, and when it started.

Symptom	Have it?	Started (year)	Diagnosed? (what, when)	Explained by a doctor?
Fatigue				
Joint pain				
Muscle pain				
Headaches				
Memory or concentration problems				
Numbness, tingling, tremors				
Sleep problems				
Breathing problems				
Skin problems or rashes				
Stomach or bowel problems				
Heart or circulation symptoms				
Weight loss				
Menstrual problems				
Other:				
Other:				



Six-month symptom tracker

Track each month. VA looks for symptoms lasting, or coming and going, over 6 months.

Month	Symptoms that month	Days with symptoms	Worst day: what I couldn't do	Missed work / doctor visits
March	Fatigue, joint pain, headaches	18	Couldn't get out of bed; called in sick	2 days missed; 1 visit



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My statement

Fill in your facts and copy onto VA Form 21-4138. Prefer to type it? Use our free Statement Writer at veteransclaimsedu.com/statement-writer.

I, _____, served in the _____ from _____ to _____.

I served in/aboard _____ from _____ to _____.

My symptoms began around _____. They include

They have lasted, or come and gone, for _____ months/years.

Doctors have told me _____

On my worst days I can't _____

It affects my work by _____

I request service connection under the Gulf War illness rules (38 U.S.C. § 1117; 38 CFR § 3.317).

I certify that these statements are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature _____ Date _____



Family or buddy statement

For someone who has seen your symptoms. They copy it onto VA Form 21-10210, or use the Statement Writer at veteransclaimsedu.com/statement-writer.

My name is _____. My phone or email is _____.

I am the veteran's _____ and have known them since _____.

Before the deployment, they _____

Since returning, I have seen _____

How often I see these problems: _____

I certify that these statements are true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Signature _____ Date _____

Example: "Before he deployed to Kuwait, my husband ran 3 miles a day. Since 1991 he's exhausted most days, his joints ache, and he forgets appointments. About twice a week he can't work a full day."



Doctor visit prep

Bring this, Worksheet 2 and Worksheet 3 to your appointment.

I served in [location] during the Persian Gulf War period. VA can presume service connection for chronic symptoms that last 6 months or more and can't be explained by a known diagnosis, and for chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia and functional GI disorders. Could you please:

- ☐ Write down all my symptoms and how long they've lasted
- ☐ Note in my record which symptoms remain unexplained after testing
- ☐ Note whether I meet the criteria for CFS, fibromyalgia or a functional GI disorder
- ☐ List the tests done and the results

Questions to ask:

What the doctor said:



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Official sources

- The law and regulations: [38 U.S.C. § 1117](#) · [§ 1118](#) · [38 CFR § 3.317](#) · [§ 3.102](#) · [§ 4.20](#) · [§ 3.1010](#)
- VA pages: [Gulf War illness](#) · [Burn pits](#) · [PACT Act](#) · [Military exposures and registries](#) · [DIC](#)
- Forms: [VA Form 21-0966](#) · [VA Form 21-526EZ](#) · [VA Form 21-4138](#) · [VA Form 21-10210](#) · [VA Form 20-0995](#)
- Free tools and guides: [Statement Writer](#) · [Gulf War & Undiagnosed Illness](#) · [The PACT Act](#) · [CFR Explained](#) · [Not on the Presumptive List?](#)

Stressed or struggling? You don't have to wait for a crisis. Dial 988, then press 1 · Text 838255 · Free, confidential, 24/7.

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