

Vietnam War and Agent Orange

War Related Illness & Injury Study Center

Objectives

- The purpose of the WRIISC group post-deployment exposure education visits is to:
 - Inform Veterans of potential health hazards that may be related to certain conflicts and military activities
 - Increase Veterans' awareness of VA's post-deployment health resources and activities

Presentation Outline

Introduction

Vietnam War: Potential Exposures

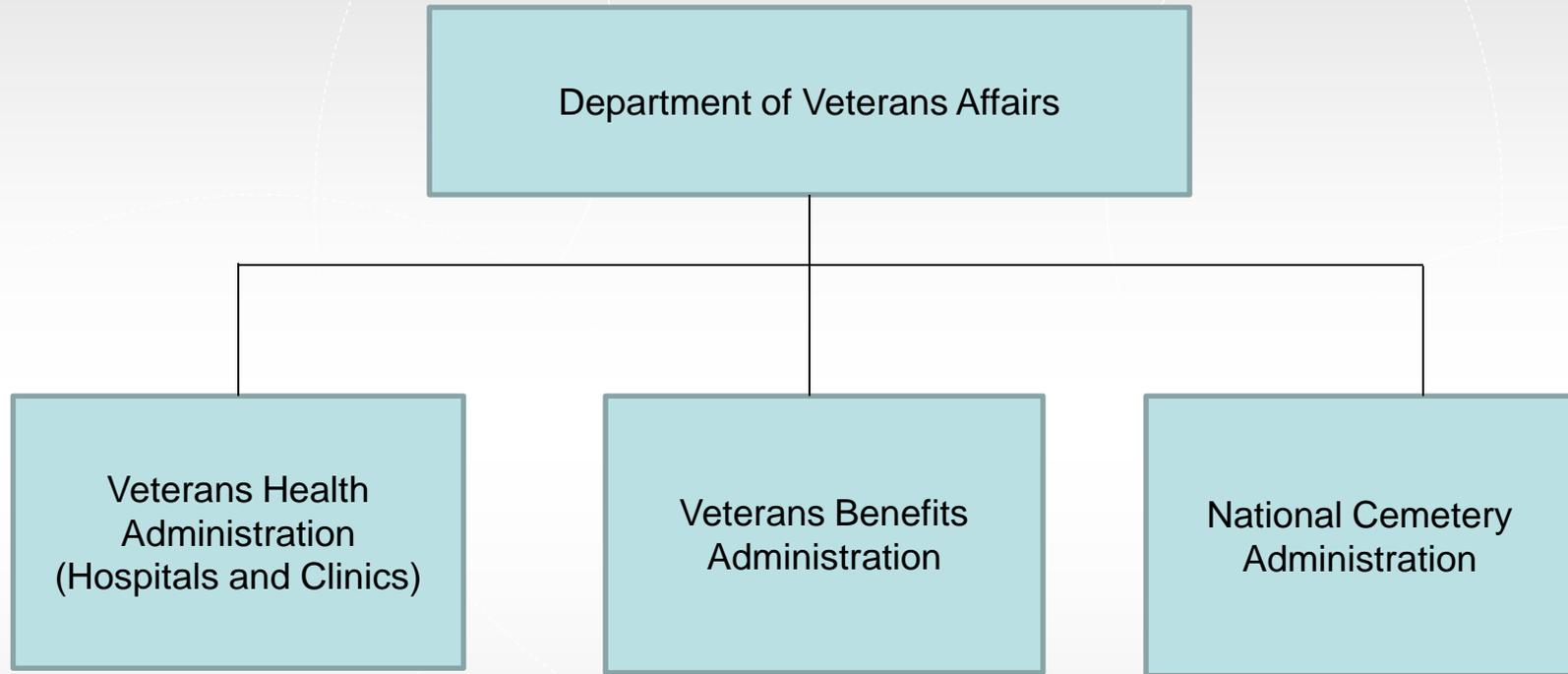
Agent Orange

VA Health Care

Evaluation

Other VA Resources

Department of Veterans Affairs



Who Are We at WRIISC?



We are a 2nd opinion referral center for combat Veterans with difficult to diagnose illnesses.



We provide education to Veterans and health care providers on post-deployment health concerns.



We conduct clinical research on issues related to post-deployment and Veterans' health.

Vietnam-Potential Exposures

- Airborne pollutants
- Harsh living conditions
- Herbicides (including Agent Orange)
- Incoming fire, explosive events
- Infections
- Injuries, musculoskeletal wear and tear
- Loud noises
- Napalm
- Petrochemical fuels and fumes, solvents and chemicals
- Physical and Mental Stressors

REF: www.iom.edu, www.publichealth.va.gov, WRIISC clinical reports

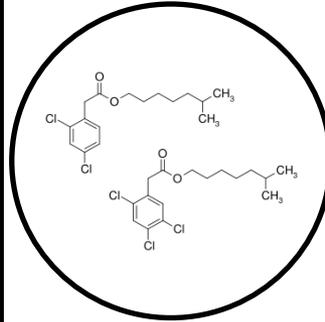
What is Agent Orange?



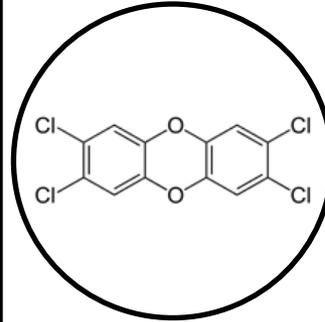
A blend of tactical herbicides sprayed during Vietnam War to remove trees and dense tropical foliage



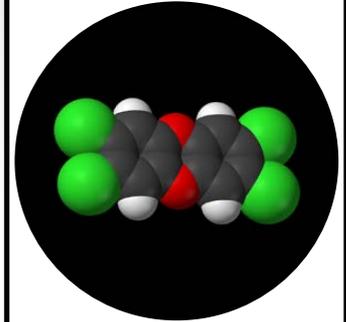
“Agent Orange” came from orange strip on drums



Active ingredients were equal amounts of 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D) and 2,4,5-trichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4,5-T)



Contained traces of 2,3,7,8-tetrachlorodibenzo-p-dioxin (TCDD)



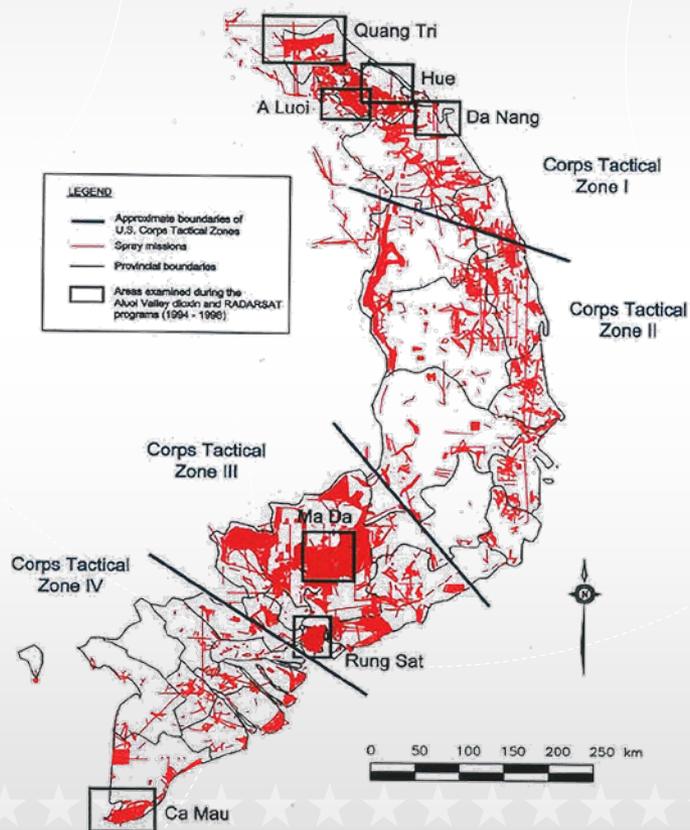
The dioxin TCDD was an unwanted byproduct of herbicide production

Where was Agent Orange used?

- Vietnam
 - **Heavy sprayed areas included** forests near the demarcation zone, forests at the junction of the borders of Cambodia, Laos, and South Vietnam, and mangroves on the southernmost peninsula of Vietnam and along shipping channels southeast of Saigon.
- Korea along Demilitarized Zone
- Thailand military bases
- Testing/Storage sites

Where was Agent Orange used?

Aerial herbicide spray missions in southern Viet Nam, 1965 to 1971
(Source: U.S. Dept. of the Army).

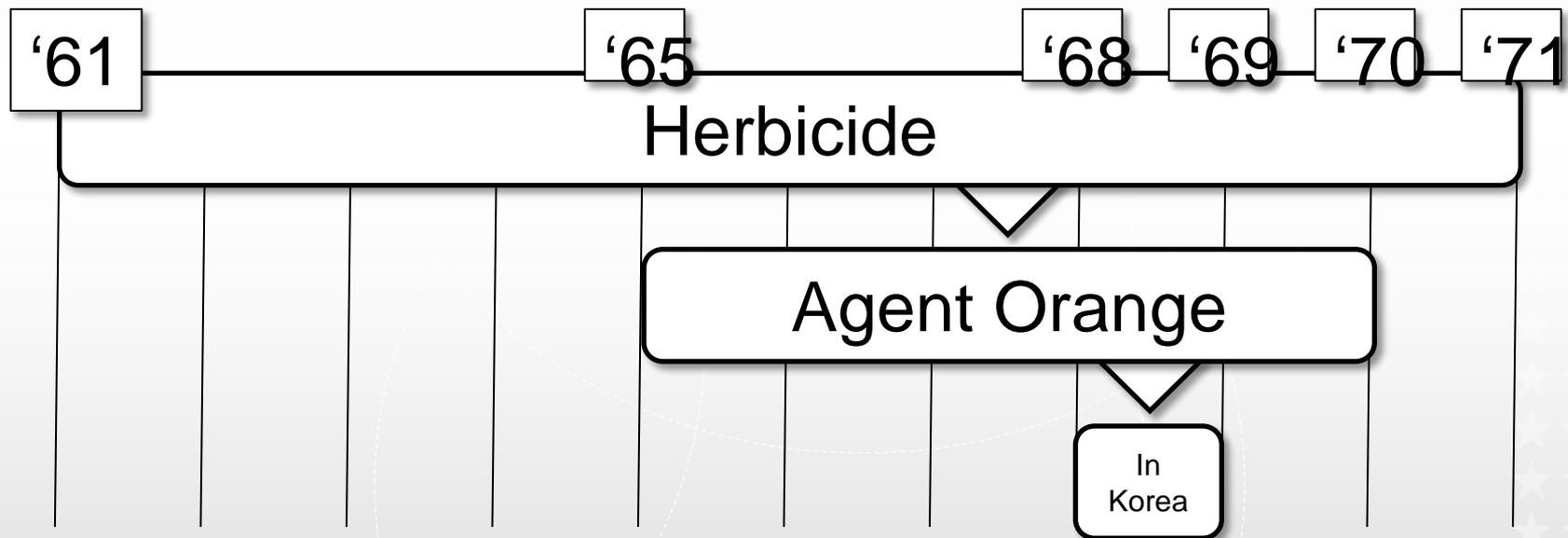


REF: U.S. Department of the Army

Presented by the **VA War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC)**

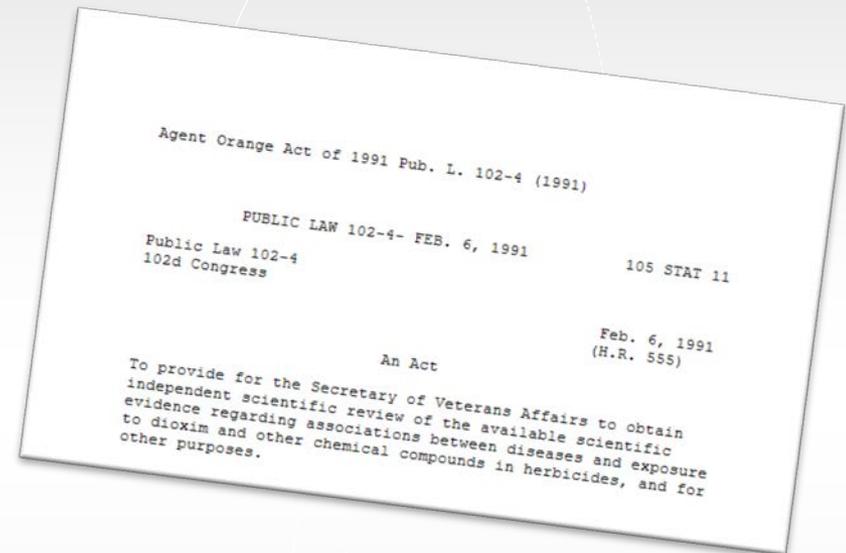
When was Agent Orange used?

- Herbicides sprayed from 1961 to 1971
- Agent Orange used between 1965 and 1970
 - Used in Korea along DMZ from 1968 to 1969



What is the Agent Orange Act of 1991?

- Public Law 102-4
(Agent Orange Act of 1991)
 - Established presumption of **exposure & service connection** for diseases associated with herbicide exposure
 - Institute of Medicine reviews Agent Orange research and makes scientific recommendations to VA



REF: www.nationalacademies.org

What are presumptions and why do we have them?

- Lack of reliable exposure data and specific causal evidence
- Two-step presumption:

If you were there

- You were exposed



If you were exposed and develop one of the conditions

- It is related to the exposure

Agent Orange Associated Conditions - Cancers

- **Chronic B-cell Leukemias**

A type of cancer which affects white blood cells. VA's regulation recognizing all chronic B-cell leukemias as related to exposure to herbicides took effect on October 30, 2010.

- **Hodgkin's Disease**

A malignant lymphoma (cancer) characterized by progressive enlargement of the lymph nodes, liver, and spleen, and by progressive anemia.

- **Multiple Myeloma**

A cancer of plasma cells, a type of white blood cell in bone marrow.

Agent Orange Associated Conditions - Cancers

- **Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma** *Includes Blue Water Veterans also
A group of cancers that affect the lymph glands and other lymphatic tissue.
- **Prostate Cancer**
Cancer of the prostate; one of the most common cancers among men.
- **Respiratory Cancers**
Cancers of the lung, larynx, trachea, and bronchus.
- **Soft Tissue Sarcoma (other than Osteosarcoma, Chondrosarcoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, or Mesothelioma)**
A group of different types of cancers in body tissues such as muscle, fat, blood and lymph vessels, and connective tissues.

Agent Orange Associated Conditions

- **Diabetes Mellitus (Type 2)**

A disease characterized by high blood sugar levels resulting from the body's inability to respond properly to the hormone insulin.

- **Ischemic Heart Disease**

A disease characterized by a reduced supply of blood to the heart, that leads to chest pain. VA's regulation recognizing ischemic heart disease as related to exposure to herbicides took effect on October 30, 2010.

- **Parkinson's Disease**

A progressive disorder of the nervous system that affects muscle movement. VA's regulation recognizing Parkinson's disease as related to exposure to herbicides took effect on October 30, 2010.

Agent Orange Associated Conditions

- [AL Amyloidosis](#)

A rare disease caused when an abnormal protein, amyloid, enters tissues or organs.

- [Spina Bifida in children of Veterans](#)

Children who have spina bifida (except spina bifida occulta) and meet the following requirements may be eligible for VA compensation, health care, and vocational training:

Are biological children of Veterans who served:

- In Vietnam during the period from January 9, 1962 through May 7, 1975, **or**
- In or near the Korean demilitarized zone between September 1, 1967 and August 31, 1971 and were exposed to herbicides. Veterans who served in a unit in or near the Korean demilitarized zone (DMZ) anytime between April 1, 1968 and August 31, 1971 are presumed to have been exposed to herbicides.

Were conceived after the date on which the Veteran first entered Vietnam or the Korean demilitarized zone during the qualifying service period

Agent Orange Associated Conditions – Time Limited

- **Early onset Peripheral Neuropathy**

A nervous system condition that causes numbness, tingling, and motor weakness. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of exposure to herbicides.

- **Chloracne (or Similar Acneform Disease)**

A skin condition that occurs soon after exposure to chemicals and looks like common forms of acne seen in teenagers. Under VA's rating regulations, chloracne (or other acneform disease similar to chloracne) must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of exposure to herbicides.

- **Porphyria Cutanea Tarda**

A disorder characterized by liver dysfunction and by thinning and blistering of the skin in sun-exposed areas. Under VA's rating regulations, it must be at least 10% disabling within 1 year of exposure to herbicides.

Agent Orange Associated Conditions - Birth Defects in Children of Women Vietnam Veterans

- VA presumes that certain birth defects in biological children of women Vietnam Veterans were caused by military service when the birth mother served in Vietnam during the period beginning February 28, 1961 and ending on May 7, 1975.
- Birth defects are abnormalities present at birth that result in mental or physical disabilities.
- VA recognizes a wide range of birth defects as associated with women Veterans' service in Vietnam. These diseases are not tied to herbicides, including Agent Orange, or dioxin exposure, but rather to the birth mother's service in Vietnam.

Health Effects

- People respond to environmental exposures differently.
- The risk of developing health effects related to an environmental exposure depends on many factors including:
 - Chemicals to which you were exposed
 - When you were exposed (as a fetus, child, adult)
 - How much exposure you received
 - How long you were exposed
 - Your genes
 - Any other exposures to environmental or occupational hazards you may have encountered during your lifetime
 - Lifestyle choices (diet, tobacco or alcohol use, physical activity level)
 - Illnesses you may have from other causes
 - Medications taken during your lifetime

REF: www.atsdr.cdc.gov

VA Post-Deployment Health Resources

- There are a number of resources to assist Veterans who have post-deployment health concerns including:
 - Post-deployment Integrated Care Initiative (PDICI): Health care providers integrated with primary care who have post-deployment health expertise
 - Environmental Health Clinicians
 - War Related Illness and Injury Study Center

Evaluation

- Talk to your primary care provider to see if these screening tests might be indicated:
 - History and Physical Examination
 - Complete Blood Cell Count
 - Comprehensive Metabolic Panel or blood chemistries
 - Hemoglobin A1C or Fasting Glucose
 - Chest X-ray, EKG, Prostate Cancer screening, SPEP/UPEP, or other tests if clinically indicated



Agent Orange Registry

Why does VA have registries?

How and where do Veterans get on the registries?

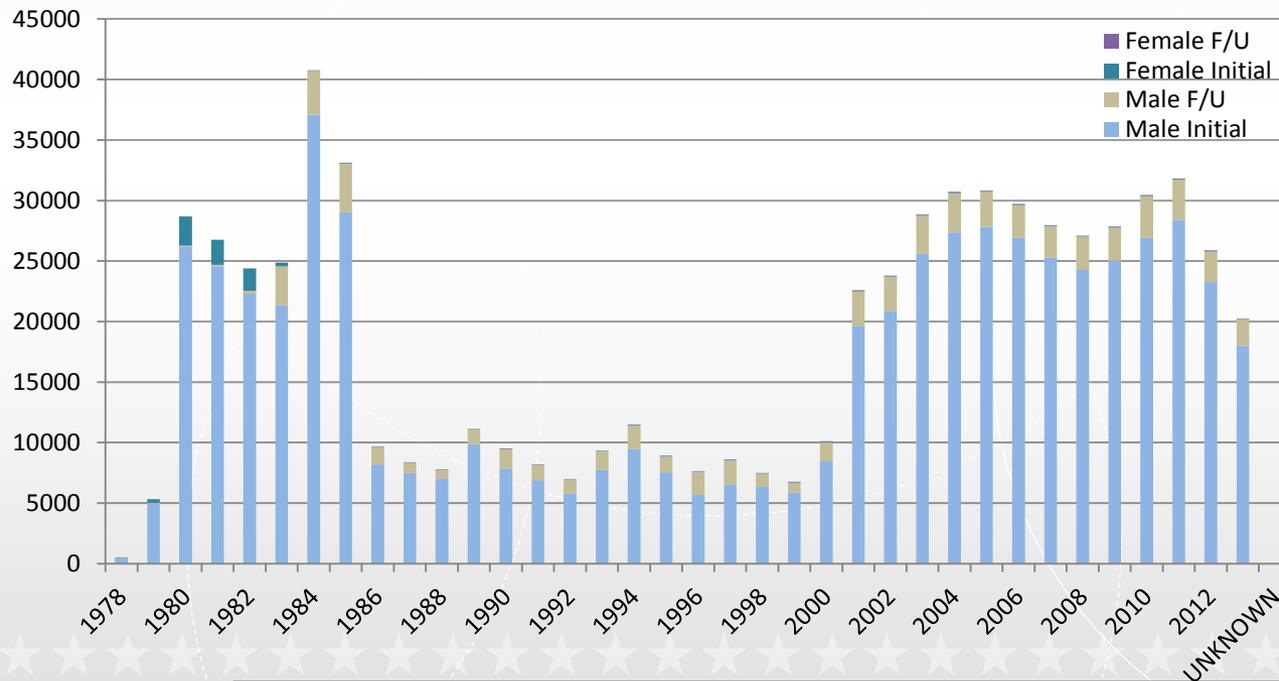
What does a Veteran get from a health registry exam?

Can a Veteran repeat the registry examination?

Can Veteran family members receive health registry exams?

Agent Orange Registry (674,226 Veterans as of 1/21/14)

- Free, no-enrollment required
- **Not a compensation examination**
- Does not confirm AO exposure
- Provides an opportunity to discuss health concerns with a VA provider with knowledge of military specific exposures
- An outreach tool to connect Veterans with available resources



VA Health Care Resources

- Agent Orange Review Newsletter
 - Sign up for free at:
<http://www.easmailcall.aac.va.gov/>
 - Agent Orange Review Newsletter PDF available at
<http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/publications/index.asp>
- Agent Orange Information
 - <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/agentorange/index.asp>
- VA Environmental Health Coordinators
 - <http://www.publichealth.va.gov/exposures/coordinators.asp>

VA Health Care Resources

- My HealtheVet
 - <https://www.myhealth.va.gov/index.html>
 - Access Secure Messaging through Premium account
 - Access to many parts of your VA medical record
- Family support at Vet Centers
 - http://www.va.gov/directory/guide/vetcenter_flash.asp
- Caregiver support services:
 - <http://www.caregiver.va.gov/>
 - 1-855-260-3274
- Crisis Care Hotline
 - 1-800-273-8255 press 1

VA Benefits Administration

- Compensation and Pension Program
- VA Benefits Process:

Complete:

- VA Form 21-526 or
- VA Form 21-4138

Compensation
and Pension
Examination

Follow up with
all VBA
requests

Appeal
Process

Compensation Disability Benefits - FAQs

- Monthly payment rates are based on the Veteran's combined rating for his or her service-connected disabilities. These ratings are based on the severity of the disabilities.
- VA requires:
 - a medical diagnosis of a disease which VA recognizes as being associated with Agent Orange,
 - competent evidence of service in Vietnam, and
 - competent medical evidence that the disease began within the deadline (if any).

Compensation Disability Benefits – FAQs

- For the purposes of VA disability compensation, Veterans are eligible for VA benefits if they
 - Served in Vietnam between 1962 and 1975 (including those who visited Vietnam even briefly)
 - Served in or near the Korean demilitarized zone between April 1, 1968 and August 31, 1971 and have a disease that VA recognizes as being associated with Agent Orange
 - Veterans who do not meet the above criteria may be eligible for VA benefits. These claims are decided on a case-by-case basis.
 - Survivor benefits may be available.

REF: www.publichealth.va.gov

Compensation Disability Benefits

Available Resources to Assist with Applications

- VA Web site (www.benefits.va.gov)
- File electronically at www.ebenefits.va.gov
- Veterans Benefits Administration Counselors
- Veteran Service Organization Counselors
- Vet Centers
- Information on how to apply for Agent Orange related conditions:
 - http://www.benefits.va.gov/compensation/claims-postservice-agent_orange.asp
 - https://www.ebenefits.va.gov/ebenefits-portal/ebenefits.portal?_nfpb=true&_nfxr=false&_pageLabel=VsoSearch

Important Contact Information

Veterans Benefits Administration:

800-827-1000 ext. 110

www.benefits.va.gov

VA Agent Orange help line:

1-800-749-8387

DC Agent Orange Registry

Ms. Ruby Rauf:

(202) 745-8419

Washington, D.C. VAMC Appointment Line:

(202) 745-8577

Washington D.C. WRIISC:

1-888-722-8340

- Call us to arrange a one-on-one exposure consultation.

What Now?

- We cannot change exposures that occurred in the past.
- However, there are strategies you can take to help optimize your overall health:
 - Talk to your doctor if you have health concerns
 - Try to prevent future potential exposures
 - Engage in healthy lifestyle choices
 - Regular check-ups
 - Health screenings
 - If you smoke, quit
 - If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation
 - Regular exercise
 - Well-balanced diet
 - Manage stress
 - Good sleep
 - Social supports



Our Contact Information:

War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC)

Email: wriisc.dc@va.gov

Phone: 1-800-722-8340

Website: www.warrelatedillness.va.gov

Questions?



Presented by the **VA War Related Illness and Injury Study Center (WRIISC)**