



VETERANS AND PAIN

STATS AND FACTS

U.S. veterans are about **40%** more likely to experience severe pain than nonveterans — particularly young, middle-aged, and female veterans.

65.5% of veterans report having pain compared to 56.4% of nonveterans, while 9.1% of veterans experience severe pain compared to 6.4% of nonveterans.

Veterans experience **HIGHER LEVELS** of severe back, joint, neck, and jaw pain, as well as migraine.

VETERANS' PAIN

can result from spinal cord injuries, blast injuries, burns, amputations, traumatic brain injuries, cancer, musculoskeletal conditions, and more.

Chronic and unrelieved pain can contribute to depression, anxiety, poor sleep, decreased quality of life, substance abuse disorder, and **INCREASED RISK FOR SUICIDE.**



VETERANS AFFAIRS (VA) AND CHRONIC PAIN WHEN APPLYING FOR BENEFITS

Veterans Affairs offers several levels of benefits based on the type and extent of disability a veteran has and the extent of the disability's connection to military service.

- Direct service connection: Chronic pain (with or without a specific medical diagnosis) directly tied to a military event, injury, or illness.
- Secondary service connection: Chronic pain linked to or caused by a separate condition directly tied to a military event, injury, or illness.
- The chronic pain must cause impairment or loss of function.

VA'S 6 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS OF GOOD PAIN CARE

- Educate veterans and families and provide access to resources
- Educate and train team members
- Integrate non-pharmacological modalities into care plans
- Institute evidence-based medication prescribing, use of pain procedures, and safe opioid use
- Bring the veteran's whole team together and facilitate ongoing communication
- Establish metrics to monitor pain care and outcomes at both the individual level and the population level

VA TIPS FOR DECREASING PAIN

- Pace yourself
- Practice relaxation and stress reduction
- Exercise and physical activity
- Find activities you enjoy
- Work with physical therapy
- Practice communication skills
- Make healthy lifestyle choices (limit caffeine and alcohol, improve sleep habits, make healthy food choices)

TREATMENT OPTIONS TO MANAGE PAIN

Traditional medical treatments

- Physical medicine or rehabilitation
- Medication
- Intervention (injections, surgery, implantable devices)

Complementary treatments

- Acupressure and acupuncture
- Trigger point injections
- Chiropractic care
- Meditation
- Yoga, Pilates, or tai chi
- Relaxation treatments

Restorative therapies

- Therapeutic exercise (cold or heat treatment, gentle stretching, muscle strengthening, body mechanics, vibration therapy, traction)
- Aqua therapy
- Massage therapy
- Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation
- Therapeutic ultrasound

Behavioral health treatments and therapies to supplement pain management

- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- Mindfulness-based stress reduction
- Emotional awareness and expression therapy
- Self-regulatory or psychophysiological approaches
- Acceptance and commitment therapy
- Biofeedback
- Clinical hypnosis
- Guided imagery



WHERE TO FIND SUPPORT

- Find a Veterans Affairs location near you: [va.gov/find-locations](https://www.va.gov/find-locations)
- Explore the VA's mental health services: [mentalhealth.va.gov](https://www.mentalhealth.va.gov)
- The Defense and Veterans Center for Integrative Pain Management
- Veterans in Pain — nonprofit connecting veterans to physicians and assisting with research and funding: [veteransinpain.org](https://www.veteransinpain.org)
- Stop Soldier Suicide — offers a call line (844-317-1136) as well as resources, personalized care and case management: [stopsoldiersuicide.org](https://www.stopsoldiersuicide.org)
- Veteran Crisis Line: Call 1-800-273-8255 and press 1; text 838255; or visit [veteranscrisisline.net](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net)

The U.S. Pain Foundation offers a monthly support group for veterans, Basic Training for Veterans with Pain.

Learn more: [painconnection.org/support-groups](https://www.painconnection.org/support-groups)