

Deadly Role of Asbestos in the U.S. Military

By Walter Pacheco, The Mesothelioma Center at Asbestos.com

Asbestos and [mesothelioma cancer](#) are silent killers that walk among many of our nation's veterans.

While most veterans may have heard about the dangers of asbestos, many may be surprised to learn how closely they worked, ate and slept near the deadly mineral during their years of service.

"Every branch of the U.S. armed forces used asbestos," said Aaron Munz, former U.S. Army Captain and director of the Veterans Department at The Mesothelioma Center. "While this initially was meant to protect the brave men and women defending our country, it ultimately exposed them to a toxic substance that has killed far too many veterans."

Asbestos is the leading cause of mesothelioma, an aggressive cancer that disproportionately affects Navy, Army, Air Force, Marines and Coast Guard veterans. A Wall Street Journal article shows veterans represent more than 30 percent of all mesothelioma lawsuits filed in the nation.

Not only must veterans endure the injustice against them for the sacrifices they made for our country, but they must also face hardships away from the battlefield when trying to get treatment for mesothelioma.

The VA identifies mesothelioma as a service-connected disability only if the majority of the exposure occurred during active duty. If a veteran with pleural or peritoneal mesothelioma meets that requirement, the VA will cover 100 percent of the treatment.

Unfortunately, it's not easy to get help from the VA.

There are more than 22 million veterans in the U.S. today and only 1,700 VA medical facilities. The vast majority of them don't offer the services or specialists needed to properly treat [veterans diagnosed with mesothelioma](#).

That doesn't take into account the tens of thousands of benefits claims currently backlogged at the VA. This is especially troublesome for veterans because mesothelioma life expectancy is less than two years after diagnosis.

Time is running out.

Despite those challenges, Munz says there is light at the end of the tunnel.

The Boston VA Healthcare and VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare systems are praised for their treatment of mesothelioma.

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If you know that you were exposed to asbestos, and even if you don't know, you should tell your doctor about your exposure history and discuss your next steps such as imaging scans and biopsies.

Don't let this disease take control of you. Learn about it. Be strong. Be brave. And know help is here for you.