

Disabilities caused by a service-connected disability may be eligible for compensation

Sometimes the disability a veteran is experiencing is not a direct result of their military service, but a complication resulting from their service-connected disability. These secondary conditions may also be eligible for compensation.

Disability compensation is a tax free cash benefit paid by the Veterans Administration to veterans with disabilities that are the result of a disease or injury incurred or aggravated during active military service. Compensation may also be paid for post-service disabilities considered related or secondary to disabilities occurring in service and for disabilities presumed to be related to circumstances of military service, even though they may arise after service.

Generally, the degrees of disability are specified by the VA to compensate for considerable loss of working time from exacerbations or illnesses. Secondary claims are for disabilities that developed as a result of or were worsened by another service-connected condition. In other words, it is recognized that a service-connected disability may cause a second disability. This second disability may not otherwise be considered service-connected.

An example of these secondary disabilities could be a veteran who has a service-connected knee injury that causes him or her to walk with a limp or altered gait. The veteran subsequently develops arthritis in the hip. Although the arthritic condition did not incur during or aggravated by their time in the service, a service-connection may still be established if the arthritis is a result of the knee condition.

Another example could be a veteran who was in the Army for 20 years. During her military service, she was diagnosed with hypertension. After her discharge, a service-connection disability was established for hypertension. She was subsequently diagnosed with a heart condition. A service-connection for her heart condition may be established as secondary to the hypertension.

One of the most common systemic secondary conditions is peripheral neuropathy and renal failure related to a service-connected diabetes condition. Erectile dysfunction, while not a ratable disability, does result in payment of special compensation (presently \$100 a month) and is usually a side effect or secondary to diabetes or hypertension.

Another new development from the Veterans Administration is they now consider depression as a secondary condition to Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Depression is also a common secondary condition when pain generated by the service-connected condition causes depression, insomnia or anxiety. If a veteran has a condition that causes him or her to be depressed, the depression can be pursued as a secondary service-connected condition.

Medication taken for a service connected condition may cause the veteran to have side effects that are disabling. Certain psychotropic medications create situations where the veteran cannot concentrate, work or even drive. These medications, if continued for the initial disability, may create a situation where the veteran can file for the disabling condition caused by the medication. It may seem that common sense would suggest the veteran stop taking the medication. However, in some cases this is not possible

and the resulting side effect could become a secondary service-connected disability. If you feel you have a secondary condition we recommend that you come into our office and have us advise you in this matter.

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