



VETERANS VOICE

Winnebago County Department of Veterans Services Newsletter

April 2024

VA Updates Disability Rating Schedule for Digestive System

VA announced an update to the VA Schedule for Rating Disabilities (VASRD) specifically pertaining to digestive conditions. The changes add or modify rating criteria for 55 medical conditions in the rating schedule that incorporate medical advancements for treating certain disabilities and modern medical knowledge to compensate Veterans more accurately.

The three biggest changes that will impact you, as Veterans, include new evaluations for celiac disease, irritable bowel syndrome and hemorrhoids.

Beginning May 19, celiac disease - an autoimmune disorder that impacts how the body processes gluten - will have its own rating criteria specifically designed to address its disabling effects. Veterans with this condition were previously granted service connection and evaluated by analogy using rating criteria that ranged from zero to 30 percent. Now under a specific diagnostic code, Veterans will be eligible for an evaluation ranging from zero to 80 percent.

VA will also adjust the rating criteria for evaluating irritable bowel syndrome, also known as IBS. Previously, VA offered zero, 10 and 30 percent evaluations for the condition. Under the new criteria, Veterans may be entitled to 10, 20 or 30 percent evaluations based on the frequency of symptoms; therefore, new rating criteria will always offer a compensable evaluation.

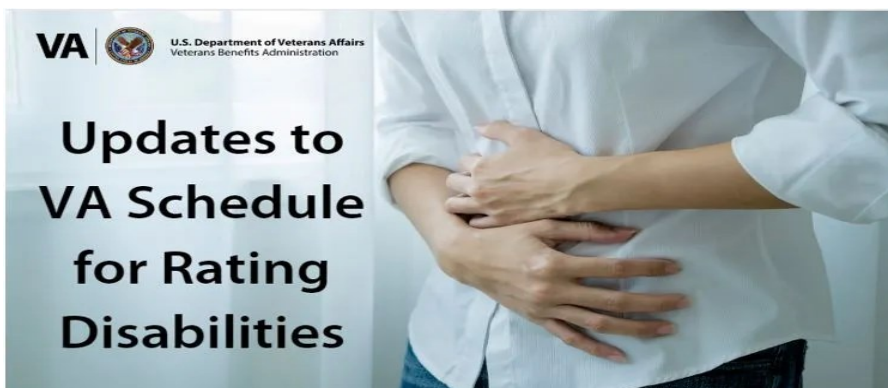
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“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

- Jane Goodall

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Finally, VA addressed the evaluations for both internal and external hemorrhoids. Previously, VA assigned zero percent evaluation if the condition was identified as mild or moderate. For more severe findings a 10 or 20 percent evaluation was warranted. With the new rating criteria set in the rating schedule, mild or moderate hemorrhoids will now qualify for the 10 percent evaluation.

“These are just a few of the changes being made to how conditions of the digestive system are rated based on updated medical information,” said Under Secretary for Benefits Josh Jacobs. “The updates will bring the rating criteria more closely in line with the stated purpose of the rating schedule, which is to provide evaluations based upon average impairment of earning capacity for each and every Veteran.”

There will be no change to any Veteran’s current rating based solely on these updates. If you currently receive compensation for a service-connected condition, you can apply for increased compensation. A reduction in evaluation will only occur if there is improvement in a disability sufficient to warrant a reduction under the former criteria. Claims related to these body systems that were pending on May 19 will be considered under both the old and new rating criteria, and whichever criteria is more favorable to the Veteran will be applied.

Visit the [Federal Register webpage](#) for a full list of the conditions impacted in this schedule change. If you have questions or would like to file a claim please contact our office to schedule an appointment with a Benefit Specialist.

Since September 2017, VA has updated the rating schedule for the following body systems:

- [Dental and oral conditions](#)
- [Endocrine systems](#)
- [Gynecological conditions and disorders of the breast](#)
- Organs of special sense (eye conditions)
- [Skin](#)
- [Hematologic and lymphatic systems](#)
- [Infectious diseases, immune disorders, nutritional deficiencies](#)
- [Musculoskeletal system and muscle injuries](#)
- [Genitourinary and cardiovascular systems](#)



National Earth Month

Earth month is a time to raise environmental awareness and create consciousness around the issues that affect mother nature during this time of crisis. It’s increasingly important to observe this month as Earth starts to unravel the harmful effect of climate change which not only poses a threat to our existence but is irreversibly damaging all forms of life.

Five facts about the environment:

- 1) Within the next two decades, experts predict a dramatic rise in the global temperature by 34.7 degrees Fahrenheit as a result of excessive carbon emissions.
- 2) On record, the hottest years in history were 2016 and 2020.
- 3) More than one million species, including half of most amphibians, are at risk of mass extinction due to climate change.
- 4) Despite being an effective way of storing carbon, natural carbon storage only receives 3% of all climate funding.
- 5) The main contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions is deforestation, which is a man-made activity.

How to observe Earth Month:

- 1) Plant a tree to help reduce the Earth’s carbon footprint.
- 2) Donate to a charity that is conducting public research for climate solutions.
- 3) Save household energy and reduce electricity use for a month.

Veteran Travel 101: Applying for Travel Reimbursement

VA wants to make it easy for you to receive care, and to help you travel to and from your appointments. VA offers many options for quality health care tailored for Veterans, from VA medical centers and community-based outpatient clinics to virtual care and telehealth appointments.

If you do need a face-to-face appointment, you may incur a cost to travel to see a provider. Did you know you may be eligible for reimbursement of some or all of those travel expenses? VA's travel reimbursement program can help.

Who is eligible?

Veterans who travel for care at a VA health facility or for VA-approved care at a non-VA health facility in their community and who also meet one of the following:

- You have a VA disability rating of 30% or higher.
- You're traveling for treatment of a service-connected condition even if your VA disability rating is less than 30%.
- You receive a VA pension.
- You have an income below the maximum annual VA pension rate.
- You can't afford to pay for your travel, as defined by VA [guidelines](#).
- You're traveling for a scheduled VA claim exam, also called a compensation and pension (C&P) exam), to get a service dog or for VA-approved transplant care.

Eligible Veterans can file claims for:

- Regular transportation, such as by car, plane, train, bus, taxi or light rail.
- [Approved meals and lodging expenses](#).

VA can also reimburse caregivers for transportation and related lodging and meals if they meet any one of the requirements below:

- They are a family caregiver under the National Caregiver Program traveling to receive caregiver training or support your care.
- They are a medically required attendant traveling with you to support your care.
- They are your transplant care donor or support person.

Before filing

- Keep your receipts for all transportation and approved meals or lodging. Be sure to track your mileage.
- [Set up direct deposit](#). VA will deposit reimbursements into your bank account.
- [File your claim on time](#). You must file within 30 days of the appointment or 30 days from when you become eligible for reimbursement. File a new claim for each appointment.

To file a claim:

Use the step-by-step [instructions](#) online to file a claim through the Beneficiary Travel Self Service System (BTSSS) and refer to the [Beneficiary Travel Frequently Asked Questions](#).

You can also file your claim by mail, fax, email or in-person at the VA facility where you received care. Complete the Veteran/Beneficiary Claim for Reimbursement or Travel Expense Form ([VA Form 10-3542](#)) and use the [VA facility locator](#) to find your facility's contact information.

For more information, visit [VA travel pay reimbursement](#).

Upcoming Event



MISSION: POSSIBLE A Veteran & Family Symposium

Educate, Connect, & Relate through Local, State, & Federal Organizations

FREE admission!
Open to the public &
children welcome.

May 10-11

MISSION: POSSIBLE



SCAN FOR DETAILS



Welcoming Jessica Lynch

Former POW

Keynote Speaker



Tom Farley

NY Times Best Selling Author

Guest Speaker



Live Music &
Testimony by

Green Bay native

J.P. Lane

Afghanistan Veteran (Army Combat Engineer)

Purple Heart
Recipient

Featured Musical Guest



VETERAN TRIBUTE, J.P. LANE, TOM
FARLEY, & SPICY TIE BAND

JONES PARK AMPITHEATER

FRIDAY, MAY 10TH, 2024 / 5PM TO 10PM

FAMILY & KIDS AREA, VET-OWNED
BUSINESSES, VA RESOURCES, MINI
SEMINARS, HIRING & CAREER EVENT,
LOCAL AGENCIES, ENTREPRENEUR
INSIGHTS, FOOD TRUCKS, & MORE!

FOX CITIES EXHIBITION CENTER

FRIDAY, MAY 10TH, 12PM TO 8PM

SATURDAY, MAY 11TH, 8AM TO 5PM

TOM FARLEY: SATURDAY @ 10AM

JESSICA LYNCH: SATURDAY @ 2PM

FOX CITIES EXHIBITION CENTER

CONTACT US

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[www.winnebagoountywi.gov/
veterans](http://www.winnebagoountywi.gov/veterans)



www.facebook.com/WinnebagoCVSO

For a list of more events,
check out our [calendar](#) !