

**VIETNAM VETERANS EXPOSED TO HERBICIDES DO NOT HAVE TO PROVE A CONNECTION BETWEEN THEIR ISCHEMIC HEART DISEASE AND MILITARY SERVICE TO BE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE VA BENEFITS.**

## **WHAT IS ISCHEMIC HEART DISEASE?**



Ischemic heart disease involves a reduction of blood flow and oxygen to the heart; this results in the heart muscle

not getting enough blood and oxygen. Usually there is a buildup of cholesterol and other substances, called plaque, in the arteries that bring oxygenated blood to the heart muscle. Over time ischemic heart disease damages and weakens the heart muscle, making it difficult for the heart to fill and pump blood to the rest of the body.

Ischemic heart disease is a common cause of congestive heart failure. People with this condition may, at one time, have had a heart attack, angina (chest pain), or unstable angina (sudden and increasingly worsening chest pain). Some people may not have noticed any previous symptoms.

FEBRUARY 2011



Vietnam Veterans of America  
8719 Colesville Road, Suite 100  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910  
301-585-4000  
vva.org

**DID YOU EARN THIS  
BY SERVING IN THE  
REPUBLIC  
OF VIETNAM?**



**Have You Been  
Diagnosed With  
Ischemic Heart  
Disease?**



**IF YES, SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH  
AND THE DEPARTMENT OF  
VETERANS AFFAIRS HAVE  
DETERMINED YOUR ISCHEMIC  
HEART DISEASE IS ASSOCIATED  
WITH EXPOSURE TO AGENT ORANGE  
OR OTHER HERBICIDES DURING YOUR  
MILITARY SERVICE.**

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- ✓ Chest pain behind the breastbone or slightly to the left of it. It may feel like heavy pressure, squeezing, or crushing pain. The pain may spread to the neck, jaw, back, shoulder, or arm
- ✓ Dizziness or light headedness
- ✓ Feeling of indigestion or heartburn
- ✓ Nausea, vomiting, and cold sweats
- ✓ Sensation of feeling the heart beat
- ✓ Shortness of breath
- ✓ Unexplained tiredness after activity (more common in women)
- ✓ Coughing that results in severe chest pain

## DIAGNOSTIC TESTING

- ✓ Physical exam
- ✓ Blood chemistry panel
- ✓ CBC, sedimentation rate
- ✓ VDRL test
- ✓ Chest x-ray
- ✓ EKG
- ✓ Creatine kinase
- ✓ Cardiac catheterization
- ✓ MRA

## TREATMENT

### MEDICATIONS

- ♥ **ACE inhibitors:** a group of drugs that are used primarily to treat high blood pressure and congestive heart failure
- ♥ **Angiotensin receptor blockers (ARBs):** a group of drugs used to control high blood pressure, treat heart failure, and prevent kidney failure
- ♥ **Diuretics:** any drug that increases/elevates the rate of urination
- ♥ **Digitalis glycosides:** a heart stimulant used to treat congestive heart failure that cannot be controlled by other medications
- ♥ **Beta-blockers:** a class of drugs used for various heart conditions, including protection after a heart attack by reducing the effects of adrenaline and other stress hormones
- ♥ **Vasodilators:** medications that open (dilate) blood vessels
- ♥ **Anticoagulants:** drugs that help prevent the clotting (coagulation) of blood; these drugs tend to prevent new clots from forming or an existing clot from enlarging, but they don't dissolve a blood clot.

### LIFE-STYLE CHANGES

- ♥ **Quit smoking**
- ♥ **Eat healthy** (low fat, salt-free foods; and reduce alcohol intake)
- ♥ **Begin exercise** (when stable) to improve blood flow

### OTHER OPTIONS

- ♥ **Angioplasty:** a medical procedure used to open blocked or narrowed coronary (heart) arteries
- ♥ **Stent:** a wire metal mesh tube used to prop open an artery during angioplasty. When the balloon is inflated, the stent expands, locks in place and forms a scaffold. This holds the artery open. The stent stays in the artery permanently, holds it open, improves blood flow to the heart muscle and relieves symptoms (usually chest pain).
- ♥ **By-pass Surgery**

## HELP FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

*The VA is responsible for providing health care for this service-connected disease. Should you choose to receive your health care elsewhere, VA will provide your medications, but the prescription will be re-written by a VA health-care provider. If your non-VA health provider completes the appropriate VA forms, you are not required to have a VA compensation examination.*

*Contact your Veterans Service Officer to file a claim for service connection or use the Agent Orange Fast Track Processing System at <https://www.fasttrack.va.gov/AOfasttrack/home.do> For more information, call the Department of Veterans Affairs at 1-877-222-8387.*

*Monthly compensation will be provided to you, once the VA has rated your disability.*