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**VA expands breast cancer screenings and mammograms for Veterans with potential toxic exposures**

**WASHINGTON** – Today, the Department of Veterans Affairs announced that Veterans under 40 who may have been exposed to burn pits and other toxins during their service are now eligible for breast cancer risk assessments and mammograms (as clinically appropriate) at VA.

Veterans are eligible for these screenings regardless of age, symptoms, family history, and whether they are enrolled in VA health care. Generally, VA follows American Cancer Society guidelines for breast cancer screenings, meaning that – aside from those covered by this new policy – most Veterans become eligible for screenings and mammograms at age 40. This potentially life-saving expansion advances President Biden’s Unity Agenda and drives progress toward the goals of the Biden [Cancer Moonshot](#).

VA is expanding eligibility for breast cancer risk assessments and clinically appropriate mammograms as a part of implementing the [Dr. Kate Hendricks Thomas SERVICE Act](#). Dr. Hendricks Thomas was a Marine Corps Veteran who deployed to Iraq in 2005, where she was exposed to burn pits. In 2018, she was diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer. She tragically passed away on April 5, 2022, at the age of 42.

“We at VA are expanding breast cancer screenings for toxic-exposed Veterans because early detection saves lives,” said **VA Secretary Denis McDonough**. “This is an important step toward making sure that breast cancer is diagnosed early, treated early, and — hopefully — sent into remission early.”

These services are available to Veterans who served in the following places and timeframes:

- Iraq between Aug. 2, 1990, and Feb. 28, 1991, and from March 19, 2003, until VA determines burn pits are no longer used in Iraq.
- The Southwest Asia theater of operations, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Qatar (but not including Iraq), from Aug. 2, 1990, until VA determines burn pits are no longer used in such locations.
- Afghanistan, Djibouti, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, and Yemen from Sept. 11, 2001, until VA determines burn pits are no longer used in such locations.

- Other locations and time periods as determined by the Airborne Hazards and Open Burn Pit Registry.

The risk assessment is a series of questions about a patient's toxic exposure(s), family medical history, and other risk factors to determine whether they should have a mammogram. Getting screened for breast cancer is an important part of maintaining overall health, and mammograms are the best way to find and treat breast cancer early, when there is a 99% survival rate. That's why early detection is a central pillar of the [Biden Cancer Moonshot](#), which is mobilizing efforts toward achieving two clear goals: to prevent more than 4 million cancer deaths by 2047, and to transform the experience of people who are touched by cancer.

Breast cancer is also a presumptive condition under the [PACT Act](#), the largest expansion of Veterans care and benefits in generations. Since President Biden signed the PACT Act into law August 10, 2022, VA has delivered more than \$1.6 billion in PACT Act-related benefits to Veterans and their survivors, and more than 4 million Veterans have received VA's new [toxic exposure screening](#). VA encourages all toxic-exposed Veterans and their survivors to apply for their PACT Act-related benefits today at [VA.gov/PACT](#).

Veterans who are interested in the breast cancer risk assessment screenings can contact their VA primary care provider or reach out to their [local VA medical center](#). Veterans can enroll in VA health care [here](#).

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