

## The re-deployment health assessment process— reviewing your DD Form 2796

We have to remember, this is the military...and the military loves policies. The official policy requires that each person returning from a deployment receive a face-to-face health assessment with a trained health care provider. This process requires a provider to have a discussion with you about your answers to questions on the DD Form 2796—the Post-Deployment Health Assessment—and to talk with you personally about four specific areas of personal health:

### 1 Pre- and During-Deployment Health Issues and Treatment:

Any health issues you had before you were deployed as well as any illness, injuries, or treatment you had while you were deployed are all important in determining your current health care needs. Be sure to give your provider a thorough list and description of your health status.

### 2 Exposures:

It is important for your health care provider to be aware of any environmental and occupational exposures that may have occurred during your deployment. Some exposures will lead to follow-up testing and care.

### 3 Medications:

Examining the medications, including over-the-counter or herbal supplements, you may have taken during a deployment gives your health care provider a more complete picture of your health and provides insight into possible negative drug-interactions and related issues.

### 4 Mental health:

There are many mental health issues associated with deployments—stress, depression, worry, family problems—and it's important that your health care provider hear directly from you if any of them is a concern for you or for your family. These issues are much more common than you think. Take the time you are given to make sure all your concerns are addressed.

We know that the last thing on your mind when you return from a deployment is running through a long, drawn-out process or filling out more forms. But, please, take this seriously. Your health care team will do everything they can to get you home as quickly as possible, while also making sure that your health and the health of your family are safeguarded.

### Our Goal:

To join with veterans, their families, and their providers to find answers, improve health care, and enhance quality of life affected by military deployments.

### Our Mission:

- Provide caring assistance to military members, veterans and their families with deployment health concerns
- Provide specialized care for military members and veterans with persistent health concerns or military related exposures after deployment
- Consult with, learn from, and teach other clinicians providing deployment health care
- Develop and implement clinical practice guidelines pertaining to deployment-related care
- Research effective ways to deliver optimal post-deployment health care
- Assist unit commanders and leaders to mitigate deployment health risks and provide post-deployment health care
- And, most importantly, to improve the health of our service members and their families through the delivery of optimal deployment health care services

### Contact Us:

DoD Deployment Health Clinical Center  
Walter Reed Army Medical Center  
Building 2, 3rd Floor, Room 3G04  
6900 Georgia Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20307-5001

Phone: 202-782-6563

DoD Helpline for Veterans and Family Members (toll free)

U.S. 1-800-796-9699

Toll Free from Europe: 00800-8666-8666

DSN: 662-6563

E-mail: PDHealth@na.amedd.army.mil



[www.PDHealth.mil](http://www.PDHealth.mil)

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## Post-Deployment Health Evaluation and Management: Managing the post-deployment health of you and your family

Caring for the post-deployment health concerns of service members, veterans, and their families is a high priority for the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs (DoD/VA). Really, it's true! Also, we actually do try to learn from the past. In fact, lessons learned from the experiences of previous deployments and years of research led the DoD/VA to create the Post-Deployment Health Evaluation and Management Clinical Practice Guideline (PDH-CPG). This clinical tool will help guide your health care providers as they work in partnership with you and your family to deliver the highest quality health care possible.

Military clinicians must be able to effectively evaluate and treat

deployment-related health issues. It's not optional...it's what sets military medicine apart from routine civilian medicine.

That's why we created the PDH-CPG...to provide a roadmap and a structure to help your primary care provider quickly evaluate your health concerns, understand them better, and provide the best course

of treatment to you...the troops and families of the troops that may have experienced health risks while serving their Country.

### Rationale for the Post-Deployment Health Clinical Practice Guideline

Although the kinds of health problems you experience after a deployment may not always be that different from the kind of everyday problems typically seen in primary health or family practice clinics, deployments can present new and difficult challenges for military personnel, veterans, and their families. In fact, every phase in the deployment cycle can lead to health concerns.

During pre-deployment planning, you may have questions about vaccinations or concerns about how deployments may affect the health conditions you already have before you leave. And we realize that deployments are not a holiday outing. While you're deployed you may experience strenuous and potentially hazardous field conditions... completely different from anything you experienced back home. Add to that the potential for intense physical or psychological trauma of combat, environmental extremes and exposures, illness, disease, battle and non-battle injury, separation from friends and family, and who knows

what else. And the folks back home have a different kind of adjustment to make, which can aggravate existing family problems or cause new ones. The stress of maintaining a household during the deployed member's absence and fears for his or her safety may further affect family members. Once troops return, additional concerns may come up regarding potential illnesses that could affect the family, concerns about reunion and reintegration back into the family or workplace, or possibly new health problems or worsening of old health problems that weren't noticed right away.

The PDH-CPG was designed to help your primary care provider to meet the challenge of ensuring that all your deployment-related medical issues receive the same consideration given to battle injuries.

### Serving all those who have served America

It seems that with each new deployment of U.S. military forces, we have a renewed awareness of the ongoing need for effective post-deployment health care. And, those needs are not confined only to current service members or to current deployments. Family members as well as veterans of previous deployments may also have deployment-related health needs that require the same level of thoughtful attention, care, and follow-up services.



*We are aware of the ongoing need for effective post-deployment health care... The PDH-CPG is intended to make sure that we never forget that need.*

The PDH-CPG is intended to make sure that we never forget that need, regardless of time or the cycle of deployments... even during times of reduced deployment demands. This guideline is not a temporary solution to current contingencies. It is permanent feature of the military health system and will stay in place to serve you. It is a health management tool that will promote the long-term health of the military community. You deserve no less.

### "Is your problem today related to a deployment?"

The PDH-CPG helps your health care provider find out necessary information about you and your deployment. This information is obtained by way of a series of questions. The first question will be "Is your problem today related to a deployment?" You and your family members should expect to answer this question during each clinic visit. If your answer is "Yes," other questions will be asked to further evaluate and treat your deployment-related concern.

These questions are not an attempt to invade your privacy. And they are also not just more bureaucratic red tape. They represent a sincere, clinically sound way to determine if you have a deployment-related condition, and if so, to provide swift and effective treatment for it.

### PDH-CPG: Your answers lead to action

As you provide details about your experiences during a deployment or your deployment-related health concerns, your provider gains a context for understanding your overall health and any illnesses or conditions that could be related to deployment. This overall context can also provide important clues for pinpointing the causes of future health problems.

While you're there, you should also feel comfortable raising whatever concerns you may have, even if a question isn't asked. Don't be shy and don't assume your input doesn't matter. It does, so speak up. And remember, no concern is insignificant when it relates to your health or the health of your family. Not only will it benefit your health and the health of your family, but your provider and future service members may also benefit from the process of understanding and addressing your post-deployment concerns.

### Referral and follow-up

During the re-deployment health assessment or during any military medical clinic visit during which you answer "Yes" to the question "Is your problem today related to a deployment?" your answers may lead to additional tests or treatment. If a health problem is identified, your

primary care provider will recommend a course of action which may involve a decision to treat it, proceed with an on-going assessment, or make a referral for an additional consultation with a specialist. You will also be given details about where to find more information or additional resources to assist you in managing your health needs. Whatever the course of action, you can expect your primary care provider to discuss the health risks and medical plan with you and to ask for your thoughts and input.

### Ongoing post-deployment health concerns

Not all deployment-related health problems show up immediately at re-deployment. You may have concerns weeks, months, or even years after you return from a deployed location. If you or any member of your family develops a deployment health concern in the future, be sure to take your concerns to your primary care provider. If you have an on-going problem, regular visits can ensure that those concerns are properly managed.



*You, your provider, and future service members will benefit from the process of understanding and addressing your post-deployment concerns.*

*This clinical tool will help guide your health care providers as they work in partnership with you and your family.*

