

— FWD ASSIST HQ —

FIELD GUIDE

Filing a Plantar Fasciitis Claim

File a complete plantar fasciitis claim under its own diagnostic code.



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A FWD Assist HQ Field Guide

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This guide is education, not representation. It explains how part of the VA system works so you can handle your own business with confidence. It is not legal or claims advice, and reading it does not create any representative relationship between you and the author. The author is not affiliated with the Department of Veterans Affairs, and nothing here is endorsed by the VA.

This guide prints no live VA dollar figures and no rating percentages on purpose, because they change. Before you make a decision based on any number, check the current figure at va.gov. No book can promise you a rating; the evidence in your file decides the result. Help from an accredited Veterans Service Officer is always free.

In crisis? Call the **Veterans Crisis Line**: dial **988**, then press **1**. You can also text **838255** or chat online at veteranscrisisline.net. It is free, confidential, and available 24/7.

Filing a Plantar Fasciitis Claim

File a complete plantar fasciitis claim under its own diagnostic code.

Companion to *VA Back, Knee, and Joint Claims Guide*.

This is general education, not legal or claims advice, and not guidance for your specific claim. It cannot promise you a rating or an outcome, and no one can. For help with your own claim, see a free accredited representative (see [the back of this guide](#)). Nothing here creates a representative relationship.

Current as of October 2026. Rules, forms, and figures change. Check current details at va.gov.

THE BEST WAY TO USE THIS GUIDE

The strongest position is to be your own informed advocate and to work with a free accredited representative. An accredited Veterans Service Organization, such as the DAV, VFW, American Legion, or a county or state veterans office, helps at no charge. Accredited claims agents and attorneys can help too. They can't charge for work done before VA issues its initial decision on your claim, and after that they may charge a fee within the limits of 38 CFR 14.636. This guide is here so you understand your own situation and can work with them as a full partner instead of handing it over blind. If you'd rather handle this yourself, and you're comfortable doing that, the guide walks you through every step. Either way, you stay in control.

The Outcome and What You Need Before You Start

The outcome: By the end of this guide you'll file a plantar fasciitis claim on VA Form 21-526EZ under its own diagnostic code, documenting your symptoms, every treatment you've tried and whether it helped, and whether one or both feet are affected.

This guide prepares you for the task. It doesn't and can't promise a rating, a percentage, or an outcome. The evidence in your file decides the result.

WHAT YOU NEED BEFORE YOU START

- ☐ Internet access for VA.gov, or the VA phone line at 1-800-827-1000.
- ☐ A current plantar fasciitis diagnosis.
- ☐ A note of whether one foot or both are affected.
- ☐ Records of treatment: orthotics, injections, physical therapy, night splints, and any surgery or surgical referral.
- ☐ Records of the in-service marching, running, or standing that started it.
- ☐ Your VA file number, if you have one.

When to start: Today. Once VA has your Intent to File, you have one year to send the complete claim, and VA treats the claim as filed on the Intent to File date. If you file within a year of leaving service, the effective date can reach back to the day after discharge. Otherwise it's usually the date VA gets the claim (or the Intent to File date), or the date the condition arose if that's later.

Start Here: The Basics

Plantar fasciitis is inflammation of the thick band along the bottom of the foot. It shows up as sharp heel pain, usually worst on the first steps of the day. Since February 7, 2021, it has had its own code, Diagnostic Code 5269. Before that, VA rated it by analogy to other foot conditions.

The code turns on two things: whether treatment has worked, and whether one or both feet are affected. The higher levels need no relief from both non-surgical and surgical treatment. A veteran whose surgery was recommended but who isn't a surgical candidate is rated at those higher levels too. At those levels, both feet rate higher than one. At the lowest level, one foot and both feet rate the same. Actual loss of use of the foot has its own, higher level. This guide prints no percentages. See how VA rates conditions at [va.gov](https://www.va.gov).

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 4.71a, DC 5269 and Notes (1) and (2).

The Steps

STEP 1

File an Intent to File.

How. Submit it online at va.gov/resources/your-intent-to-file-a-va-claim, call 1-800-827-1000, or mail VA Form 21-0966. Save the confirmation.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 3.155(b).

Done when you have a confirmation saved.

STEP 2

Get the diagnosis, and note both feet if it applies.

How. Confirm the diagnosis with your provider and make sure the record says whether it's one foot or both. Both feet matter at the higher levels of DC 5269.

Done when you have a diagnosis that says one foot or both.

STEP 3

Document every treatment and whether it helped.

How. Gather records of orthotics, steroid injections, night splints, physical therapy, and any surgery. Make sure the records say whether each one gave relief. If a surgeon recommended surgery but said you aren't a candidate, get that in writing.

If your plantar fasciitis is already service connected and was rated under an older code, **then** you can file for an increase on VA Form 21-526EZ, and VA will rate it under the current criteria. **If** service connection was denied before, **then** a new rating code doesn't fix that. A Supplemental Claim on VA Form 20-0995 needs new and relevant evidence, such as a medical opinion on the link to service. VA's website says an Intent to File can hold your date for a Supplemental Claim, but the regulation says its Intent to File rule doesn't apply to Supplemental Claims. Don't count on it. Send VA Form 20-0995 itself as soon as you can. Talk it over with a free accredited representative.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 4.71a, DC 5269; 38 CFR § 3.2501; 38 CFR § 3.155.

Done when you have a record of each treatment and its effect, and you know which kind of claim fits.

STEP 4

Tie it to service.

How. Write down the years of marching, running, boots, and standing that started or worsened the heel pain. Get service treatment records if any exist.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 3.303.

Done when you've connected the plantar fasciitis to your service.

STEP 5

Get a medical opinion if the link isn't already clear.

How. Ask a provider to state whether your plantar fasciitis is at least as likely as not related to the in-service activity, or caused or made worse by a service-connected condition that changed how you walk. VA may also get an opinion at your C&P exam.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 3.310.

Done when you have a written opinion connecting the condition to service, or you know VA will get one.

STEP 6

File the 21-526EZ and confirm it arrived.

How. Name plantar fasciitis and say whether one or both feet are affected. Attach the diagnosis, treatment records, and any opinion. File online at [VA.gov](https://va.gov), or mail it to Department of Veterans Affairs, Claims Intake Center, PO Box 4444, Janesville, WI 53547-4444. About 10 days later, check VA.gov or call 1-800-827-1000 to confirm every document is in your file.

Done when the claim names plantar fasciitis and one or both feet, and you've confirmed VA has everything.

STEP 7

Get ready for the exam VA schedules.

How. Describe the first-step pain, how long you can stand or walk, what footwear or inserts you need, and which treatments did or didn't help. Be accurate about both.

Done when you've gone to the exam ready to describe your symptoms and treatment history plainly.

Recap Checklist

- ☐ Filed an Intent to File and saved the confirmation.
- ☐ Diagnosis says whether one or both feet are affected.
- ☐ Documented every treatment and whether it helped, and picked the right kind of claim.
- ☐ Connected the plantar fasciitis to in-service activity.
- ☐ Got a medical opinion where the link wasn't already clear, or know VA will get one.
- ☐ Filed the 21-526EZ and confirmed VA has everything.
- ☐ Went to the exam ready to describe my symptoms and treatment.

Reminder: rules and rates change. Check any current figure at va.gov. Help from an accredited Veterans Service Organization is free. Accredited claims agents and attorneys can't charge for work done before VA issues its initial decision on your claim. After that, they may charge a fee within the limits of 38 CFR 14.636. This guide prepared you for the task. The evidence in your file decides the result.

Get Free, Accredited Help

For anything about your own claim, talk to an accredited representative. Help from an accredited Veterans Service Organization is free. Accredited claims agents and attorneys can't charge for work done before VA issues its initial decision on your claim. After that, they may charge a fee within the limits of 38 CFR 14.636. Free help is available through Veterans Service Organizations such as the DAV, VFW, and American Legion, and through county and state veterans offices.

To find one near you, visit va.gov/get-help-from-accredited-representative. Representation begins only when you sign VA Form 21-22 (for a Veterans Service Organization) or 21-22a (for an individual agent or attorney). With one rare exception for a single unpaid case, only accredited people can represent you before the VA, and only an accredited agent or attorney can charge you a fee. Nothing in this guide creates that relationship.

A warning about claim sharks. Anyone who offers to file your initial claim for a fee, or who guarantees you a rating or a percentage, is selling something you shouldn't buy. Accredited Veterans Service Organizations help at no charge, and accredited claims agents and attorneys may charge only after VA issues its initial decision, within the limits of 38 CFR 14.636. Report predatory companies to the VA Office of Inspector General at 1-800-488-8244.

Keep Going: The Full Guide

This field guide is the short, do-this-now companion to the book *VA Back, Knee, and Joint Claims Guide*. See every FWD Assist HQ title that is out now at fwdassisthq.com/books.

Current as of October 2026. Rules, forms, and figures change. Check current details at va.gov.

About the Author

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J. Erickson is a service-disabled Air Force veteran. He served as a military firefighter and as a veteran service officer, where he spent years walking veterans through the same claims process he writes about now. He holds an MBA and writes plain-language guides for veterans who want to understand the system without a translator.

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