

— FWD ASSIST HQ —

FIELD GUIDE

Filing an Eczema or Dermatitis Claim

File an eczema or dermatitis claim built on
body-surface area and the type of therapy
your skin needs.



J. Erickson

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 an Eczema or Dermatitis Claim

File an eczema or dermatitis claim built on body-surface area and the type of therapy your skin needs.

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 an eczema or dermatitis claim on VA Form 21-526EZ that documents how much of your skin is affected, the treatment you've needed over the past year, and dated photos of your flares.

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 diagnosis of eczema, atopic dermatitis, or contact dermatitis.
- ☐ An estimate of how much of your whole body, and of your exposed skin, is affected during a flare.
- ☐ A record of your treatment over the past 12 months: creams and ointments, and any pills, shots, or light therapy, with dates.
- ☐ Dated photos of your skin during a flare.
- ☐ 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

VA rates eczema and dermatitis under Diagnostic Code 7806, using the General Rating Formula for the Skin. It looks at two things, and the higher one sets the level:

- **How much skin is affected:** the share of your whole body, or of your exposed skin (such as face, neck, and hands), that the condition covers.
- **What treatment you needed over the past 12 months:** topical only (creams and ointments on the skin), or systemic therapy. Systemic means anything that works through the body instead of on the skin, like pills, shots, biologics, or light therapy. VA looks at how long you needed it: under 6 weeks total, 6 weeks or more, or constant or near-constant.

Skin conditions flare and clear, so one clinic visit on a clear day can miss what the condition looks like the rest of the year. Photos and treatment records help fill in that picture. If eczema mainly leaves scars or disfigurement, VA can rate it that way instead. Two skin conditions on the same patch of skin get only the higher rating. This guide prints no percentages. See how VA rates conditions at [va.gov](https://www.va.gov).

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 4.118(a) and (b), General Rating Formula for the Skin, DC 7806.

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

Document how much skin is affected during a flare.

How. When the condition flares, see your provider and ask them to estimate the share of your whole body and of your exposed skin that's affected. Ask them to note how often you flare and how long flares last.

Do not let your whole record come from clear-skin visits. If every note was written on a good day, the file won't show what a flare looks like.

Done when you have an estimate of whole-body and exposed-skin coverage during a flare.

STEP 3

Record the type and length of your treatment.

How. Make sure your records say whether you use topical treatment only or need systemic therapy, which medicine or treatment it was, and the dates you were on it over the past 12 months. Your pharmacy history can help show the dates.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 4.118(a); General Rating Formula for the Skin.

Done when you've documented your treatment type and how long you needed it in the past 12 months.

STEP 4

Photograph your flares.

How. Take clear, dated photos when the condition is active, showing each affected area, and keep them with your records.

Done when you have dated photos of your skin during a flare.

STEP 5

Pick your path to service connection.

How. Eczema and dermatitis can be direct, from an onset or exposure in service, or secondary to a service-connected condition or a medicine you take for one. They aren't on VA's presumptive lists for burn pits or Agent Orange, so an exposure-based claim needs a medical opinion.

If it started in service or traces to something in service, **then** claim direct service connection. **If** a service-connected condition or its medicine caused or worsened it, **then** claim it as secondary and name that condition. **If** you aren't sure, ask a free accredited representative.

Where this is written down: 38 CFR § 3.303; 38 CFR § 3.310; 38 CFR §§ 3.309(e), 3.320.

Done when you've picked your path.

STEP 6

Get a medical opinion if needed, file, and confirm it arrived.

How. Where the link isn't already in your records, ask a provider whether the condition is at least as likely as not related to service or to the service-connected condition. VA may also get an opinion at your C&P exam. File the 21-526EZ naming the condition and your path, with coverage estimates, treatment records, and photos attached. 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 the condition and path with evidence attached, and you've confirmed VA has everything.

STEP 7

Get ready for the exam VA schedules.

How. Bring your dated flare photos and treatment list. If your skin is clear on exam day, tell the examiner how often you flare, how long flares last, and how much skin they cover, and point to the photos.

Done when you've gone to the exam with your photos and treatment history.

Recap Checklist

- ☐ Filed an Intent to File and saved the confirmation.
- ☐ Documented whole-body and exposed-skin coverage during a flare.
- ☐ Recorded treatment type and how long I needed it in the past 12 months.
- ☐ Took dated photos of a flare.
- ☐ Picked my path: direct or secondary.
- ☐ Filed the 21-526EZ with coverage, treatment, and photos, and confirmed VA has everything.
- ☐ Went to the exam with my photos and treatment history.

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 one of the short, do-this-now guides in the FWD Assist HQ line. 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.

He writes the For the Rest of Us series at fwdassisthq.com. This guide is published by FWD Assist HQ as a veteran education resource. It is not affiliated with or endorsed by the Department of Veterans Affairs.