

GULF WAR ILLNESS DECISION TREE

UNDIAGNOSED ILLNESS, MUCMI, AND THE DIAGNOSED-CONDITION ROUTE

38 CFR 3.317 FIELD MAP

Start with qualifying service. Then identify whether the disability fits the undiagnosed-illness door, the MUCMI door, or a different service-connection path.

STEP 1 Did you serve in a location covered by the current Gulf War illness rule?

Use official service records to verify the location and dates. The covered areas and effective dates are defined by current 38 CFR 3.317 and VA guidance.

YES Continue to the chronic-disability test.

NO Section 3.317 may not fit. Review direct, secondary, TERA, and other presumptive routes.

STEP 2 Is there a qualifying chronic disability?

OBJECTIVE INDICATIONS

Medical signs or independently verifiable non-medical indicators show the disability exists.

CHRONICITY

The disability has existed for six months or more, including symptoms that wax and wane.

MANIFESTATION

It appeared during qualifying service or reached the degree required by the current regulation.

YES Choose the door that matches the medical evidence.

NO Develop the missing duration, severity, or objective-indication evidence.

STEP 3 Which medical classification fits?

DOOR A

UNDIAGNOSED ILLNESS

Signs or symptoms cannot be attributed to a known clinical diagnosis after appropriate evaluation.

- Claim the symptom cluster clearly
- Document six-month chronicity
- Show severity under an analogous code

PRESUMPTIVE PATH MAY APPLY

DOOR B

DIAGNOSED MUCMI

A diagnosed chronic multisymptom illness with inconclusive cause or disease mechanism.

- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- Fibromyalgia
- Functional gastrointestinal disorders

PRESUMPTIVE PATH MAY APPLY

OTHER PATH

DIAGNOSED AND MEDICALLY EXPLAINED

A structural disease or condition with a known cause and mechanism generally does not use the unexplained-illness presumption.

- Review direct service connection
- Review secondary causation or aggravation
- Review TERA or another presumption

BUILD THE ALTERNATE THEORY

A diagnosis does not automatically defeat a Gulf War claim. The listed MUCMIs are diagnosed illnesses. The question is whether the evidence fits the rule's unexplained-illness framework.

STEP 4 Build the evidence around the correct door

1

Qualifying service records

2

Medical evaluation and rule-out work

3

Symptom timeline and six-month history

4

Personal, family, buddy, or coworker statements

5

Evidence showing the analogous rating level

FILE THE THEORY PRECISELY

Name the symptoms or MUCMI, identify qualifying service, cite 38 CFR 3.317, and keep direct or secondary theories available when the condition has a known medical explanation.

