

Social Security Disability Benefits For Patients with Scoliosis and other Spinal Deformities

If you've been diagnosed with scoliosis we hope the information provided on this website helps you to think of it **NOT** as a disability, but as a condition that you can certainly live with whether treated or untreated. Recommendations for treatment depend on the severity of the scoliosis.

Patients with mild scoliosis that never require treatment and the majority of those with moderate to severe scoliosis that do undergo surgery with modern techniques are able to make a full recovery and lead a perfectly normal and healthy life without major changes or problems from this condition.

That being said, there may be patients that had surgery in the early days of spinal instrumentation when rods were put in straight instead of curved as they are now, that end up with a condition called flat back syndrome or those that for whatever reason have severe scoliosis and cannot have surgery. There are also patients that have scoliosis along with other conditions that have a more profound effect on their lives. These patients may fall under the category of their condition being disabling preventing them from maintaining gainful employment and may qualify for benefits under this program.

We present this information about Social Security benefits for those patients that really meet the criteria to get this assistance, NOT to make you feel that your scoliosis means that you are disabled!!

NOTE: It will be to your benefit to see a disability doctor for a 'rating' to start this process. They have special training in evaluating disabilities. Most times, your surgeon or spine specialist will not be the one to complete this paperwork for you.

Applying for Social Security Disability Benefits with Scoliosis

If you have been diagnosed with scoliosis, you may be eligible for disability benefits from the Social Security Administration (SSA), depending on the severity of your condition. Scoliosis is not officially recognized as a disability by the SSA, but people with advanced cases of scoliosis can experience residual effects such as limited mobility and respiratory or cardiac problems. Other potential problems include:

- Pain when sitting or standing for long periods of time
- Debilitating fatigue
- Flat-back syndrome caused by surgical insertion of back-straightening rods
- Complications from surgical treatment for your spine problem

Over time, any of these problems can become so severe that you can't work long enough to maintain gainful employment. If this is the case for you or someone you love, Social Security disability benefits may be a financial resource available to help make ends meet.

What Disability Benefits Are Available?

The SSA has two disability benefit programs intended to help disabled individuals meet their living and medical expenses. Although the medical eligibility criteria are the same for both programs, each was created for a different audience.

- Social Security Disability Insurance ([SSDI](#)): This program pays monthly cash benefits to disabled workers and their eligible dependents. To qualify for SSDI, you must have paid into Social Security while employed. Once approved, you will be eligible for Medicare after two years.
- Supplemental Security Income ([SSI](#)): SSI is a means-tested program that pays benefits to children, the elderly, and disabled individuals with limited income and few assets.

How to Qualify for SSA Benefits with Scoliosis

When evaluating disability applications, the SSA uses a medical reference catalog called the Blue Book, which lists all recognized physically and mentally disabling conditions and the criteria for meeting each one. While there is not a specific listing for scoliosis, the condition could conceivably fall under [Section 1.04--Disorders of the Spine](#). To meet this listing, your scoliosis would have to cause one of the following complications:

- Nerve root compression as evidenced by limited spinal motion, loss of both motor function and sensory reflexes, and widespread distribution of pain across the nervous system.
- Lumbar spinal stenosis (narrowing of the spinal canal in the lower back), causing inflammation of the spinal cord nerves. This particular system causes a radiating pain and weakness that limits your ability to walk properly.
- Swelling of the spinal membrane, which causes a severe burning pain if you don't move at least once every two hours.

If your condition does not meet a Blue Book listing, you could still potentially qualify for benefits as part of a [medical vocational allowance](#). This allowance is intended for applicants who are genuinely disabled but did not meet a listed condition. The SSA will consider the medical records received from your treating doctor to determine whether or not you are able to sustain gainful employment.

To qualify for a medical vocational allowance, your doctor will fill out a residual functional capacity form (RFC) that the SSA will use to determine whether or not having scoliosis has hindered your ability to work. This detailed questionnaire will explain exactly how scoliosis limits you from working. You can actually [download an RFC](#) for your doctor online.

Applying for SSDI and SSI

When you apply for Social Security disability benefits for yourself or on behalf of a loved one with scoliosis, you will have to complete a detailed application form and submit medical documentation that confirms your disabling condition. Examples could include:

- X-rays
- Records of surgical treatments
- The medications and treatments you've received as well as your response to them
- Receipts for back braces and other assistive devices
- An RFC if you choose to fill one out

For more information about SSA disability benefits and how to apply when you are living with scoliosis, go to the SSA's website, visit your local SSA office, or call the SSA toll free at 1-800-772-1213. When severe scoliosis prevents you from meeting your financial and medical needs, the monthly Social Security disability payments can restore your peace of mind.