



# Disability for Osteoarthritis

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## Applying for Disability With Osteoarthritis

Few people qualify for disability benefits for their osteoarthritis, despite how painful it can be. However, if your OA symptoms get progressively worse to the point where you lose the ability to use your hands for daily living activities, or it limits your mobility, there is a chance of getting disability payments.

There are several criteria considered when you are evaluated for Social Security Disability, primarily back and joint problems caused by OA. You need to meet one of these criteria to be approved for benefits. If you are not eligible this way, you can still be approved for disability if you can show that your arthritis limits your ability to do day-to-day activities like walking, standing, pulling, lifting, etc.

## Qualifying for Your OA Back Problems

If you have osteoarthritis in the vertebrae of the spine, you are not alone. This is a very common area of the body to have OA. Under certain specific condition, a person with OA of the spine can be approved for disability. Having one of the following conditions will qualify you for disability for osteoarthritis:

- Limited motion of the spine from the compression of the spinal nerve.
- Difficulty in walking because of narrowing of the spinal canal in the lower back region.
- The need to frequently change positions or posture more than once every two hours due to inflammation of the arachnoid membrane.

## Qualifying for Your OA Joint Dysfunction

If you don't qualify based on issues with your spine, you may qualify based on major dysfunction in a joint. There needs to be an obvious deformity that shows in the joint and a medical imaging film like an MRI needs to show joint space narrowing, fusion of the joints, or destruction of bone. Your medical records should show that you have had joint pain, stiffness, and loss of motion in the affected joint. The dysfunction has to be present in:

- Either one of the hips, one of the knees, or one of the ankle joints, resulting in difficulty with walking without an assistive device (walker, two crutches, or two canes). Examples include having trouble climbing a few stairs or needing help to go to the grocery store.
- One shoulder, elbow, wrist, or hand of each arm that is affected, making it difficult for you to use your hands for daily activities. Examples include needing help with preparing meals, personal hygiene, or feeding yourself.

## Applying for Benefits

To apply for a benefit you can:

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- Go to [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)
  - Call the SSA at 888-772-1213
  - Apply in person at a Social Security office

Make sure you have gathered the following information before starting the application process:

- Contact information
- Dates of medical and lab tests
- Dates of treatment from all of your doctors
- Contact information of previous employers and the dates you were employed at each

Once the application is completed and sent in, it will go into the system. They will request and review all of your medical records. They may call you for an interview or send more paperwork for you to fill out. Once they have what they need to make a decision, you will usually be notified by mail within 3 to 4 months, though it may take longer. If your claim is not approved, you can appeal it.