

Hepatitis C and Social Security Disability Benefits

While some people with hepatitis C are able to lead normal lives and maintain full-time work activity, others suffer from symptoms that are so severe that they are unable to maintain gainful employment. In such cases, a lack of employment can result in severe financial stress.

Fortunately, in some cases, Social Security Disability benefits can help alleviate some of the financial strain caused by the condition.

The Social Security Disability Programs

There are two disability programs that are operated by the Social Security Administration. These include the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program and the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. The SSDI program is based on work credits that you have earned through previous work history. The SSI program is a needs-based program that is based on household income and assets. For more information regarding these two programs, you can visit

www.ssa.gov/disability

Qualifying for Social Security Disability Benefits with Hepatitis C

Not everyone who is diagnosed with hepatitis C will qualify for Social Security Disability benefits. When you apply for disability benefit from the Social Security Administration, your condition will be compared to a listing of conditions known as the Social Security Blue Book. The Blue Book contains all of the conditions that may qualify an individual for Social Security Disability benefits, along with the criteria that must be met under each condition in order to qualify. In order to qualify for disability benefits with hepatitis C, you must meet the severity of the criteria that has been set forth in the Blue Book publication.

Those who suffer from chronic liver disease due to their hepatitis C may be able to qualify for benefits. This is addressed in Section 5.05 of the Blue Book. According to the Blue Book, in order to qualify for disability benefits with hepatitis C, you must meet the following criteria. You must suffer from chronic liver disease with:

- Hemorrhaging from the esophageal, gastric, or ectopic varices or from portal hypertensive gastropathy that results in hospitalization for the transfusion of at least two units of blood; or
- Ascites or hydrothorax that is not attributable to another cause, despite provided treatment, and present on at least two evaluation days that are held at least 60 days apart within a six-month period; or
- Spontaneous bacterial peritonitis with peritonea fluid containing a neutrophil count of at least 250 cells/mm³; or
- Hepatorneal syndrome with either a serum creatinine level of at least 2mg/dL or oliguria with 24-hour urine output of less than 500 mL or sodium retention with urine sodium of

less than 10 mEq per liter; or

- Hepatopulmonary syndrome with arterial oxygenation on room air of 60mm or less at test sites that are less than 3,000 feet above sea level or 55 mm Hg or less at test sites from 3,000 to 6,000 feet above sea level or 50 mm Hg or less at test sites above 6,000 feet above sea level; or
- Documentation of intrapulmonary arteriovenous shunting by contrast-enhanced echocardiography; or
- Hepatic encephalopathy with documentation of abnormal behavior, cognitive dysfunction, changes in mental status, or altered state of consciousness present during at least two evaluations held at least 60 days apart within a 6-month period; or
- End-stage liver disease with SSA CLD scores of 22 or higher.

For more information on medically qualifying with Hepatitis C, visit: <http://www.disability-benefits-help.org/disabling-conditions/hepatitis-and-social-security-disability>

Applying for Social Security Disability Benefits

When you are ready to apply for Social Security Disability benefits, you can do so online (<http://www.ssa.gov/pgm/disability.htm>) or in person at your local Social Security office. Make sure that you bring supporting medical documentation with you proving that you meet the above-mentioned disability criteria as well as financial documentation if you are applying for SSI benefits. You will also be asked to fill out a number of forms when applying. Make sure you fill out these forms in their entirety and that you answer each question with thorough and detailed answers. The more detail you can provide, the easier it will be for the SSA to understand how your condition prevents you from performing any type of work activity. You will receive a decision regarding your disability claim within two to six months of the date of your initial application.

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Social Security Disability Help