

The Disability Support Pension and Chronic Pain

You may be eligible for the Disability Support Pension (DSP), but you can't get the DSP just on a chronic pain diagnosis alone.

The current 2011 Impairment Tables have made getting the DSP very difficult and new rules that came into effect 1 July 2015 have made it still more difficult. It may take up to a year to get a decision from the Department of Human Services (DHS). The document being referred to here is: [Social Security \(Tables for the Assessment of Work-related Impairment for Disability Support Pension\) Determination 2011](#).

Important Information

- **The diagnosed condition you have will not get you the DSP.** It is the Impairment you have as a result of the condition that affects your Function at work that is rated for points.
- The **Impairment Tables** are the most critical information for understanding how the DHS assesses your claim. These 15 tables are the guidelines for government assessors to assign points. Get help if necessary to understand the Tables. Get it right first time rather than be denied and have to appeal. **Read all Parts of the Tables.**
- **None of the tables deals specifically with pain. Chronic pain is a condition** and if it has been diagnosed then any impairment related to chronic pain will be assessed using the relevant Table for the area of function affected—physical, intellectual or psychiatric.
- **To be granted the DSP you need to get a minimum of 20 points from only 1 Table (Function).** 20 points is a Severe Impairment rating. Impairment means a loss of functional capacity affecting a person's ability to work that results from the person's condition. The Impairment Tables are based on Functions rather than Diagnosis. Functions can be activities, abilities, symptoms and limitations.
- **A combination of Impairment Tables** to make up the 20 points **is not possible.**

Eligibility

- You must have had the condition at least two years; and
- the condition causing impairment has to be permanent (interpreted as continuous or unrelenting); and
- the impairment is likely to continue more than two years; and
- you must be assessed as having a physical, intellectual or psychiatric impairment (or blindness); and
- the condition must be fully diagnosed, fully treated and fully stabilised (get clarification if necessary).

Advice

- Speak to the DHS first so you know what is involved. A face-to-face conversation is best. Ask questions if anything is unclear and/or take someone with you.
- When you prepare your claim provide as much medical information as possible. If you have a number of chronic pain conditions with functional impairments focus on the condition/s that have the highest level of impairment.
- If you are on Newstart, unable to work and intend to claim the DSP, your GP can give you a three-month Medical Certificate, which exempts you from work/job seeking. If appropriate you can continue to get the three-monthly certificates. (You will lose Program of Support credits—refer DHS).

DSP Process

If your claim is accepted you will be contacted for a Job Capacity Assessment (JCA). Clarify that it will be a face-to-face interview, as a video conference is difficult. A Disability Medical Assessment by a government doctor will be required if the JCA gives you 20 points or more.

Don't Do it Alone

This is a hard and emotional process. There are **Social Workers** at most Centrelink offices for support, information and short-term counselling if needed but you will need to **ask for one**.