



# How to Qualify for Social Security Benefits with a Gastrointestinal Disorder

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International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders ([www.iffgd.org](http://www.iffgd.org))

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Gastrointestinal (GI) disorders are more common than people think. Even though almost everyone has occasional bouts of GI issues, thousands of people have chronic and severe GI disorders that can make it impossible for them to work. If you have worked in the past but can't work now because of a GI disorder that you expect to last a year or more, you can file a claim for Social Security disability benefits.

## Medically Qualifying for Social Security Benefits

The Social Security Administration (SSA) keeps a list of all the conditions that qualify someone to be awarded Social Security disability benefits called the Blue Book. Every condition that's listed in the Blue Book also has a set of requirements that you must prove that you meet in order to have your claim approved. In order to be approved for benefits because of a GI disorder you will have to provide medical proof that you have one of the digestive diseases that qualify for disability benefits which are:

- gastrointestinal hemorrhaging from any cause that is severe enough to require blood transfusion
- chronic liver disease (which can be caused by alcoholic cirrhosis, hepatitis B, or hepatitis C)
- inflammatory bowel disease or Crohn's disease
- short bowel syndrome
- weight loss as the result of any digestive disorder
- liver transplant

Talk to your doctor about what medical records and tests you can use to prove that you meet the SSA's requirements for disability benefits. If you're unable to work but you don't meet any of the SSA's requirements you can ask for a Medical Vocational Allowance.

## Medical Vocational Allowance

A Medical Vocational Allowance is a functional exception that will make it possible to qualify for disability benefits even if you don't meet the Blue Book requirements. To get this exception your doctor must fill out a Residual Functional Capacity (RFC) sheet, which you or your doctor can download from the SSA's website. The doctor must write in detail about all of your symptoms and describe how they limit your ability to work. Then you can submit your claim, your medical records, your work history to the RFC to the SSA. The SSA will examine everything and try to find

some work that you can do. They will look at things like your age, your health, and what skills you have. If they can't find any type of work that you could reasonably be expected to do with your symptoms, then you may be approved for benefits.

## Applying For Social Security Disability Benefits

Don't feel intimidated by the application process to get Social Security benefits. If you are having trouble filling out the forms because you don't understand them or physically have trouble filling them out, then you can go to a lawyer, family member, or a friend to get assistance completing the forms. You can also get assistance from the SSA directly by making an appointment at your local branch office of the SSA. At the appointment a staff member will help you fill out and file a claim.

## Resources:

- IFFGD: <https://iffgd.org/>
- Blue Book: <https://www.ssa.gov/disability/professionals/bluebook/5.00-Digestive-Adult.htm>
- Crohn's Disease: <https://www.disabilitybenefitscenter.org/social-security-disabling-conditions/crohns-disease>
- Medical Vocational Allowance: <https://www.disabilitybenefitscenter.org/glossary/medical-vocational-allowance>
- Residual Functional Capacity <https://www.disabilitybenefitscenter.org/blog/residual-functional-capacity-what-is-rfc>
- Local SSA Office: <https://www.disabilitybenefitscenter.org/state-social-security-disability>

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## About IFFGD

The International Foundation for Gastrointestinal Disorders (IFFGD) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit education and research organization. We work to promote awareness, scientific advancement, and improved care for people affected by chronic digestive conditions. Our mission is to inform, assist, and support people affected by gastrointestinal disorders. Founded in 1991, we rely on donors to carry out our mission. Visit our website at: [www.iffgd.org](http://www.iffgd.org).

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