

INFORMATION ABOUT APPLYING FOR THE DISABILITY SUPPORT PENSION

*click on links in document

Getting the right medical evidence

Showing you are medically eligible is the most important part of your application

The right medical evidence is very important for your DSP application

Without the right supporting medical evidence, it is unlikely you will be granted the DSP. The best medical evidence is from the doctors or specialists who treated your medical conditions.

Evidence from doctors or specialists who have been treating you longer will usually be better.

Note that the below information is for people who do not qualify for a Manifest Grant. (see page 5 of this document for info about Manifest rules)

The letter

A letter from your doctor or specialist is usually very important for your DSP application. DSP help have developed a tool to help get the right information to your treating doctor or specialist so that they can write the best letter.

(CLICK>>) [Medical Evidence bot.](#)

Form of the letter (The letter should):

- Be on your doctor or specialist's letterhead.
- Be dated and signed.
- Include your doctor or specialist's full name.
- Include your doctor or specialist's qualifications.
- Include your doctor or specialist's contact details.

Diagnosed

The letter should explain the diagnosis of your condition. It should include:

- What your medical condition is.
- When your medical condition was diagnosed.
- Who diagnosed your medical condition.

It is important that your medical condition was diagnosed by an appropriate doctor or specialist.

Some medical conditions must be diagnosed by specific specialists.

- Mental health conditions must be diagnosed by a psychologist or a psychiatrist.
- Intellectual conditions must be diagnosed by a psychologist.
- Hearing and ear conditions must be diagnosed by an audiologist or an ear, nose and throat ('ENT') specialist.
- Vision and eye conditions must be diagnosed by an ophthalmologist.

If you have a condition that does not have an official diagnosis or is hard to diagnose, you will need to discuss and resolve this with your doctor or medical practitioner. Getting on the DSP requires you to have a diagnosis.

Reasonably treated and stabilised

The letter should include a summary of the treatment you have received for your medical condition. This may include, for example, medications and other treatment that have been tried. Your doctor or specialist should say whether the condition is reasonably treated and stabilised. In particular, the letter should ideally confirm:

- That your condition is unlikely to change within the next 2 years; and
- That there is no further treatment that is available (at least in the next 2 years) that would allow you to return to work.

If there are treatments you have not tried, your doctor or specialist should explain why. For example, if a certain treatment is too expensive or too risky, your doctor or specialist should say this.

Overview: Diagnosed treated and stabilised

Your medical condition must be diagnosed, treated and stabilised to meet the Disability Support Pension (DSP) general medical rules.

- [When your condition is diagnosed](#)
- [When your condition is reasonably treated](#)
- [When your condition is stabilised](#)

Your condition must be diagnosed, treated and stabilised for Centrelink to assess you under the general medical rules. You won't get DSP if they assess that your condition is not diagnosed, treated and stabilised. A team of appropriately qualified health professionals uses your medical evidence to assess this.

Centrelink will assess your [medical evidence](#) according to social security law.

Your [medical evidence](#) will need to show the following:

- details of any treatment
- that a qualified health professional has diagnosed your condition.

For example, an ophthalmologist must support a diagnosis of an eye condition affecting vision.

When your condition is diagnosed

For your condition to be diagnosed, your treating doctor or appropriately qualified health professional must have:

- examined and diagnosed your condition
- detailed this in [medical evidence](#).

When your condition is treated

To assess if your condition is treated, Centrelink first check what type of treatment you've had. This is treatment from your doctor or health professional. Centrelink will also check your current treatment and if any further treatment is planned for you. Centrelink consider the next 2 years from when you claim.

Centrelink will look at your [medical evidence](#) to assess:

- the suitability of the treatment
- the outcomes of the treatment
- if further treatment may help
- if there are medical or other reasons why you can't get treatment.

When your condition is stabilised

To check if your condition is stabilised, Centrelink will look at your [medical evidence](#). Centrelink will assess whether your ability to work will get better or stay the same with more treatment or rehabilitation. Centrelink consider the next 2 years from when you claim.

You won't get DSP if they assess that your condition is not diagnosed, treated and stabilised.

Level of impairment

The letter should include your doctor or specialist's opinion of the level of impairment you suffer as a result of your condition. They will need to refer to the [DSP 'Impairment Tables'](#). First, your doctor or specialist will need to determine which impairment table is relevant. There are 15 tables. Each table covers different kinds of symptoms a person may have.

[Social Security \(Tables for the Assessment of Work-related Impairment for Disability Support Pension\) Determination 2023 \(legislation.gov.au\)](#)

[Go to the above website to see more details about the Impairment Tables:](#) pages

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Then, your doctor or specialist needs to assess how badly your symptoms affect you according to the table's severity ratings. There are four levels of impairment severity ratings for each table: mild (5 points), moderate (10 points), severe (20 points), and extreme (30 points). Each severity rating has criteria that must match your symptoms for you to meet that rating. Your doctor or specialist should include in the letter their opinion as to whether your symptoms meet the mild, moderate, or severe levels in the relevant table for your condition.

You need to get 20 points in total across one or more Tables.

Your doctor or specialist can give severity ratings under more than one table.

Your doctor or specialist can also give a severity rating under one table where you have several conditions with overlapping symptoms.

Ability to work

Your doctor or specialist should state whether your medical conditions prevent you from working. Your doctor or specialist should state whether you will be able to work 15 or more hours each week within the next two years.

They should keep in mind your work history and skills.

Supporting medical evidence

A letter from your doctor or specialist is the most important medical evidence for a DSP application.

Your doctor or specialist may have given you other documents about your medical conditions. For example, you may have treatment histories or diagnostic reports.

If these documents show that you are unable to work because of your medical conditions, you may include these with your DSP application. You should include these *with* the letter.

Inability to work evidence

Other people may know about your difficulty with work. For example, your employer may know you can only work a few hours each week. Or your school may know you have had difficulty with study.

You may ask these people to write a letter in support of your DSP application.

The letter should talk about:

- Difficulty you have had with work and study.
- Whether your work or study hours have been reduced.
- Whether you will likely be able to work or study in the next two years.

Program of Support for Disability Support Pension

You may need to participate in a Program of Support before you claim Disability Support Pension. If someone has not completed 78 weeks of **Active** Program of Support with a Disability Employment Support Agency in the last 3 years, they will need to get 20 points from one Impairment Table. If they have completed 78 weeks, they can get 20 points across multiple Tables. *(The amount of time of the program excludes medical certificates.)*

- [Who doesn't have to participate](#)
- [Who has to participate](#)
- [Who the Program of Support providers are](#)

A Program of Support helps people with disability to prepare for, find and keep a job. It may include help with:

- job preparation and job search
- work experience and training
- injury management.

Who doesn't have to participate

You don't need to take part in a Program of Support if we assess that you either:

- meet [manifest medical rules](#)
 - have an impairment rating of 20 points or more on a single Impairment Table.
-

RULES:

What the manifest medical rules are:

A condition will meet the manifest medical rules if any of the following apply:

- you are permanently blind
- you need nursing home level care
- you have a terminal illness with average life expectancy of less than 2 years
- you have an intellectual disability with an IQ of less than 70
- you have category 4 HIV/AIDS
- you get a Department of Veterans' Affairs Disability Compensation Payment at the Special Rate (totally and permanently incapacitated) paid under the *Veterans' Entitlement Act 1986*.

What it means if you meet the manifest medical rules:

If you meet any of the manifest medical rules, you may be able to get DSP.

Keep in mind, you also need to meet the [non-medical rules](#) to get DSP.

What it means if you don't meet the [manifest medical rules](#)

If you don't meet these rules, you may still meet the [general medical rules](#).

What the general medical rules are?

The general medical rules are:

- your condition will last more than 2 years
- your condition is [diagnosed, treated and stabilised](#)
- you have an [impairment rating](#) of 20 points or more
- you meet [Program of Support](#) rules, if these apply to you
- your condition will stop you working at least 15 hours a week in the next 2 years.

If you meet all of these rules, you may be able to get DSP.

What it means if you meet the general medical rules?

You may be able to get DSP if you meet all the general medical rules.

Keep in mind, to get DSP you must also meet the [non-medical rules](#).

Non-medical rules:

You need to meet all the non-medical rules to get Disability Support Pension (DSP).

The non-medical rules you need to meet are:

- you must be at least 15 years and 9 months and under [Age Pension age](#) when you claim
- you meet the [residence rules](#)
- you meet the [income and assets tests](#).

If you're under 16 when claiming, you can only be paid from when you turn 16.

If you don't meet all the non-medical rules, you can't get DSP.

Keep in mind, you'll also need to meet [medical rules](#) to get DSP.

You may be able to get [other payments](#), if you can't get DSP.

What it means if you don't meet the general medical rules:

If you don't meet either the general or [manifest medical rules](#), you are not medically eligible.

This means you can't get DSP. If you can't get DSP you may be able to get [other payments](#).

What happens if your application is rejected?

If your application is rejected, you can still get help

Step 1: Application is rejected

If Centrelink decide you are not eligible for the DSP they will reject your application. If you do not agree with this decision, you may ask Centrelink to review it.

Step 2: Internal review

You may ask Centrelink to have your rejection reviewed by an Authorised Review Officer.

Authorised Review Officers review Centrelink decisions and decide if they are correct.

If an Authorised Review Officer decides a decision is not correct, they will change it.

It is important to ask Centrelink to review their decision within 13 weeks of receiving it.

If you disagree with the decision of an Authorised Review Officer, you may ask the Administrative Appeals Tribunal to review it.

You may seek help when applying for the DSP or if you have been rejected.

Social Security Rights Victoria (SSRV) is a community legal centre that can help with the DSP. SSRV may be able to give you advice about your specific situation. In some cases, SSRV may be able to assist you with an appeal if your claim for the DSP has been rejected.

[Social Security \(Tables for the Assessment of Work-related Impairment for Disability Support Pension\) Determination 2023 \(legislation.gov.au\)](#)

The above information has been taken from the DSP Help page:

www.dsp.help.org.au (Social Security Rights)

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