

# Disability Programs



## Medical/Professional Relations

### Disability Evaluation Under Social Security (Blue Book- September 2008)

Search Blue Book

#### 8.00 Skin Disorders - Adult

[Adult Listings \(Part A\)](#)

[Childhood Listings \(Part B\)](#)

[General Information](#)

[Evidentiary Requirements](#)

[Listing of Impairments \(overview\)](#)

#### Section

#### 8.00 Skin Disorders

##### 8.01

##### Category of Impairments, Skin Disorders

*A. What skin disorders do we evaluate with these listings?*

We use these listings to evaluate skin disorders that may result from hereditary, congenital, or acquired pathological processes. The kinds of impairments covered by these listings are: Ichthyosis, bullous diseases, chronic infections of the skin or mucous membranes, dermatitis, hidradenitis suppurativa, genetic photosensitivity disorders, and burns.

##### 8.02

##### Ichthyosis

##### 8.03

##### Bullous disease

*B. What documentation do we need?*

##### 8.04

##### Chronic infections of the skin or mucous membranes

When we evaluate the existence and severity of your skin disorder, we generally need information about the onset, duration, frequency of flare-ups, and prognosis of your skin disorder; the location, size, and appearance of lesions; and, when applicable, history of exposure to toxins, allergens, or irritants, familial incidence, seasonal variation, stress factors, and your ability to function outside of a highly protective environment. To confirm the diagnosis, we may need laboratory findings (for example, results of a biopsy obtained independently of Social Security disability evaluation or blood tests) or evidence from other medically acceptable methods consistent with the prevailing state of medical knowledge and clinical practice.

##### 8.05

##### Dermatitis

##### 8.06

##### Hidradenitis Suppurativa

##### 8.07

##### Genetic photosensitivity disorders

*C. How do we assess the severity of your skin disorder (s)?*

##### 8.08

##### Burns

We generally base our assessment of severity on the extent of your skin lesions, the frequency of flare-ups of your skin lesions, how your symptoms (including pain) limit you, the extent of your treatment, and how your treatment affects you.

1. *Extensive skin lesions.*

Extensive skin lesions are those that involve multiple

body sites or critical body areas, and result in a very serious limitation. Examples of extensive skin lesions that result in a very serious limitation include but are not limited to:

- a. Skin lesions that interfere with the motion of your joints and that very seriously limit your use of more than one extremity; that is, two upper extremities, two lower extremities, or one upper and one lower extremity.
- b. Skin lesions on the palms of both hands that very seriously limit your ability to do fine and gross motor movements.
- c. Skin lesions on the soles of both feet, the perineum, or both inguinal areas that very seriously limit your ability to ambulate.

## 2. *Frequency of flare-ups.*

If you have skin lesions, but they do not meet the requirements of any of the listings in this body system, you may still have an impairment that prevents you from doing any gainful activity when we consider your condition over time, especially if your flare-ups result in extensive skin lesions, as defined in C1 of this section. Therefore, if you have frequent flare-ups, we may find that your impairment(s) is medically equal to one of these listings even though you have some periods during which your condition is in remission. We will consider how frequent and serious your flare-ups are, how quickly they resolve, and how you function between flare-ups to determine whether you have been unable to do any gainful activity for a continuous period of at least 12 months or can be expected to be unable to do any gainful activity for a continuous period of at least 12 months. We will also consider the frequency of your flare-ups when we determine whether you have a severe impairment and when we need to assess your residual functional capacity.

## 3. *Symptoms (including pain).*

Symptoms (including pain) may be important factors contributing to the severity of your skin disorder(s). We assess the impact of symptoms as explained in §§ 404.1528, 404.1529, 416.928, and 416.929 of this chapter.

## 4. *Treatment.*

We assess the effects of medication, therapy, surgery, and any other form of treatment you receive when we determine the severity and duration of your impairment

(s). Skin disorders frequently respond to treatment; however, response to treatment can vary widely, with some impairments becoming resistant to treatment. Some treatments can have side effects that can in themselves result in limitations.

a. We assess the effects of continuing treatment as prescribed by determining if there is improvement in the symptoms, signs, and laboratory findings of your disorder, and if you experience side effects that result in functional limitations. To assess the effects of your treatment, we may need information about:

i. The treatment you have been prescribed (for example, the type, dosage, method, and frequency of administration of medication or therapy);

ii. Your response to the treatment;

iii. Any adverse effects of the treatment; and

iv. The expected duration of the treatment.

b. Because treatment itself or the effects of treatment may be temporary, in most cases sufficient time must elapse to allow us to evaluate the impact and expected duration of treatment and its side effects. Except under 8.07 and 8.08, you must follow continuing treatment as prescribed for at least 3 months before your impairment can be determined to meet the requirements of a skin disorder listing. (See 8.00H if you are not undergoing treatment or did not have treatment for 3 months.) We consider your specific response to treatment when we evaluate the overall severity of your impairment.

[Back to Top](#)

*D. How do we assess impairments that may affect the skin and other body systems?*

When your impairment affects your skin and has effects in other body systems, we first evaluate the predominant feature of your impairment under the appropriate body system. Examples include, but are not limited to the following.

1. *Tuberous sclerosis* primarily affects the brain. The predominant features are seizures, which we evaluate under the neurological listings in 11.00, and developmental delays or other mental disorders, which we evaluate under the mental disorders listings in 12.00.

2. *Malignant tumors of the skin* (for example, malignant melanomas) are cancers, or neoplastic diseases, which we evaluate under the listings in 13.00.

3. *Autoimmune disorders* and other immune system disorders (for example, systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), scleroderma, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, and Sjögren's syndrome) often involve more than one body system. We first evaluate these disorders under the immune system disorders listings in 14.00. We evaluate SLE under 14.02, scleroderma under 14.04, HIV infection under 14.08, and Sjögren's syndrome under 14.10.

4. *Disfigurement or deformity* resulting from skin lesions may result in loss of sight, hearing, speech, and the ability to chew (mastication). We evaluate these impairments and their effects under the special senses and speech listings in 2.00 and the digestive system listings in 5.00. Facial disfigurement or other physical deformities may also have effects we evaluate under the mental disorders listings in 12.00, such as when they affect mood or social functioning.

*E. How do we evaluate genetic photosensitivity disorders?*

1. Xeroderma pigmentosum (XP). When you have XP, your impairment meets the requirements of 8.07A if you have clinical and laboratory findings showing that you have the disorder. (See 8.00E3.) People who have XP have a lifelong hypersensitivity to all forms of ultraviolet light and generally lead extremely restricted lives in highly protective environments in order to prevent skin cancers from developing. Some people with XP also experience problems with their eyes, neurological problems, mental disorders, and problems in other body systems.

*2. Other genetic photosensitivity disorders.*

Other genetic photosensitivity disorders may vary in their effects on different people, and may not result in an inability to engage in any gainful activity for a continuous period of at least 12 months. Therefore, if you have a genetic photosensitivity disorder other than XP (established by clinical and laboratory findings as described in 8.00E3), you must show that you have either extensive skin lesions or an inability to function outside of a highly protective environment to meet the requirements of 8.07B.

You must also show that your impairment meets the duration requirement. By inability to function outside of a highly protective environment we mean that you must

avoid exposure to ultraviolet light (including sunlight passing through windows and light from unshielded fluorescent bulbs), wear protective clothing and eyeglasses, and use opaque broad spectrum sunscreens in order to avoid skin cancer or other serious effects. Some genetic photosensitivity disorders can have very serious effects in other body systems, especially special senses and speech (2.00), neurological (11.00), mental (12.00), and neoplastic (13.00). We will evaluate the predominant feature of your impairment under the appropriate body system, as explained in 8.00D.

### 3. *Clinical and laboratory findings.*

a. *General.* We need documentation from an acceptable medical source, as defined in §§404.1513 (a) and 416.913(a), to establish that you have a medically determinable impairment. In general, we must have evidence of appropriate laboratory testing showing that you have XP or another genetic photosensitivity disorder. We will find that you have XP or another genetic photosensitivity disorder based on a report from an acceptable medical source indicating that you have the impairment, supported by definitive genetic laboratory studies documenting appropriate chromosomal changes, including abnormal DNA repair or another DNA or genetic abnormality specific to your type of photosensitivity disorder.

b. *What we will accept as medical evidence instead of the actual laboratory report.* When we do not have the actual laboratory report, we need evidence from an acceptable medical source that includes appropriate clinical findings for your impairment and that is persuasive that a positive diagnosis has been confirmed by appropriate laboratory testing at some time prior to our evaluation. To be persuasive, the report must state that the appropriate definitive genetic laboratory study was conducted and that the results confirmed the diagnosis. The report must be consistent with other evidence in your case record.

### F. *How do we evaluate burns?*

Electrical, chemical, or thermal burns frequently affect other body systems; for example, musculoskeletal, special senses and speech, respiratory, cardiovascular, renal, neurological, or mental. Consequently, we evaluate burns the way we evaluate other disorders that can affect the skin and other body systems, using the listing for the predominant feature of your impairment. For example, if your soft tissue injuries are under continuing surgical management (as defined in 1.00M), we will evaluate your impairment under 1.08.

However, if your burns do not meet the requirements of 1.08 and you have extensive skin lesions that result in a very serious limitation (as defined in 8.00C1) that has lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months, we will evaluate them under 8.08.

*G. How do we determine if your skin disorder(s) will continue at a disabling level of severity in order to meet the duration requirement?*

For all of these skin disorder listings except 8.07 and 8.08, we will find that your impairment meets the duration requirement if your skin disorder results in extensive skin lesions that persist for at least 3 months despite continuing treatment as prescribed. By persist, we mean that the longitudinal clinical record shows that, with few exceptions, your lesions have been at the level of severity specified in the listing. For 8.07A, we will presume that you meet the duration requirement. For 8.07B and 8.08, we will consider all of the relevant medical and other information in your case record to determine whether your skin disorder meets the duration requirement.

*H. How do we assess your skin disorder(s) if your impairment does not meet the requirements of one of these listings?*

1. These listings are only examples of common skin disorders that we consider severe enough to prevent you from engaging in any gainful activity. For most of these listings, if you do not have continuing treatment as prescribed, if your treatment has not lasted for at least 3 months, or if you do not have extensive skin lesions that have persisted for at least 3 months, your impairment cannot meet the requirements of these skin disorder listings. (This provision does not apply to 8.07 and 8.08.) However, we may still find that you are disabled because your impairment(s) meets the requirements of a listing in another body system or medically equals the severity of a listing. (See §§ 404.1526 and 416.926 of this chapter.) We may also find you disabled at the last step of the sequential evaluation process.

2. If you have not received ongoing treatment or do not have an ongoing relationship with the medical community despite the existence of a severe impairment(s), or if your skin lesions have not persisted for at least 3 months but you are undergoing continuing treatment as prescribed, you may still have an impairment(s) that meets a listing in another body system or that medically equals a listing. If you do not have an impairment(s) that meets or medically equals a

listing, we will assess your residual functional capacity and proceed to the fourth and, if necessary, the fifth step of the sequential evaluation process in §§ 404.1520 and 416.920 of this chapter. When we decide whether you continue to be disabled, we use the rules in §§ 404.1594 and 416.994 of this chapter.

[Back to Top](#)

### **8.01 Category of Impairments, Skin Disorders**

**8.02 *Ichthyosis***, with extensive skin lesions that persist for at least 3 months despite continuing treatment as prescribed.

**8.03 *Bullous disease*** (for example, pemphigus, erythema multiforme bullosum, epidermolysis bullosa, bullous pemphigoid, dermatitis herpetiformis), with extensive skin lesions that persist for at least 3 months despite continuing treatment as prescribed. .

**8.04 *Chronic infections of the skin or mucous membranes***, with extensive fungating or extensive ulcerating skin lesions that persist for at least 3 months despite continuing treatment as prescribed.

**8.05 *Dermatitis*** (for example, psoriasis, dyshidrosis, atopic dermatitis, exfoliative dermatitis, allergic contact dermatitis), with extensive skin lesions that persist for at least 3 months despite continuing treatment as prescribed.

**8.06 *Hidradenitis suppurativa***, with extensive skin lesions involving both axillae, both inguinal areas or the perineum that persist for at least 3 months despite continuing treatment as prescribed.

**8.07 Genetic photosensitivity disorders**, established as described in 8.00E.

A. Xeroderma pigmentosum. Consider the individual disabled from birth.

B. Other genetic photosensitivity disorders, with:

1. Extensive skin lesions that have lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months,

OR

2. Inability to function outside of a highly protective environment for a continuous period of at least 12 months (see 8.00E2).

**8.08 Burns**, with extensive skin lesions that have lasted or can be expected to last for a continuous period of at least 12 months (see 8.00F).

[Back to Top](#)



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