

# Appendix E — SSA MS Listing and Criteria Reference Sheet

## SSA's Listing of Impairments for Multiple Sclerosis, In "Easy-to-Understand Terms"

MS is one of the impairments that SSA recognizes as likely to cause disability severe enough to prevent you from working and entitle you to disability benefits. SSA's Listing of Impairments for MS is grouped into four criteria:

- Disorganization of Motor Function
- Visual Impairment
- Mental Impairment
- Fatigue

**The text below describes each of the four criteria in more detail and in easy-to-understand terms.** For the official criteria, see the **SSA MS Listings Criteria** above. Use the information here as a reference:

- To write in your journal about your MS symptoms and how they impact your ability to work.
- To complete the SSA Adult Disability Starter Kit.
- To complete the worksheets in this guidebook.
- To use the official language to help describe your symptoms and circumstances in your own words.

You can also **give a copy of this reference sheet to your doctor(s) and your authorized representative if you have one** to help them understand how SSA views MS-related impairments.

## Disorganization of Motor Function

Definition: Disorganization of motor function means problems with movement or other physical activities.

SSA considers the presence of problems with your ability to use your extremities (your arms, hands, and legs). Problems must be “significant and persistent,” and they must impact at least two of your arms and/or legs. Problems must seriously limit your ability to move, stand, walk, or use your hands and arms.

SSA also considers the presence of neurological impairments including: full or partial paralysis, tremors or involuntary movements, problems with muscle coordination, and sensory problems. You might have one of these problems or a combination of several problems. SSA considers the extent to which these problems make it difficult for you to walk, stand, maintain balance, and move your fingers, hands, or arms.

Examples might include:

- You find it difficult to walk or use stairs.
- You experience weakness or lack of control in muscles.
- Your arms or legs move when you don't want them to move, or you experience shaking, tremors, or muscle spasms.
- You lose balance when walking or standing still, or bump into walls.
- You do not have good hand-eye coordination.
- You lose control of one or more of your limbs when you are resting or trying to move.
- You experience numbness or stiffness.
- You have difficulty speaking and/or slur your speech.

For more information, visit the National MS Society Web site at:

**[www.nationalmssociety.org/spotlight-mobility.asp](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/spotlight-mobility.asp)**

## Vision Impairment

**Definition:** Visual Impairment means that you have vision problems that cannot be corrected by wearing glasses, contact lenses, or other means.

SSA considers your visual acuity, or whether the vision in your best eye is worse than 20/200, even with correction. Loss of visual acuity results in an inability to distinguish detail and prevents reading and fine work.

SSA considers your peripheral vision and any visual field defects in your best eye, such as if you have “tunnel” vision.

SSA also considers loss of visual efficiency — whether the combination of your problems with visual acuity and peripheral vision are particularly severe. Examples might include:

- You experience temporary blindness during a relapse of your MS symptoms.
- You have blurring or graying of vision, or blindness in one eye.
- You see dark spots in the center of your field of vision.
- You experience uncontrolled horizontal or vertical eye movements.
- You experience double vision, which could increase with fatigue or when you use a computer or read for an extended period.

For more information, visit the National MS Society Web site at:

**[www.nationalmssociety.org/spotlight-vision.asp](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/spotlight-vision.asp)**

## Mental Impairment

Definition: Mental Impairment means a psychological, emotional, or behavioral problem, associated with a brain disorder that interferes with your ability to carry out activities of daily living or perform work-related activities. The problem must be described in your medical history, and must be related to your loss of mental function. If you feel you have significant cognitive impairments, you can have a neuropsychological test performed to support your claim. This is normally covered by insurance.

You could meet the SSA criteria for MS-related mental impairment in one of two ways:

First, SSA considers whether you have lost cognitive abilities or experienced changes in your behavior, including disorientation to time and place; problems with short-term memory that make it difficult for you to learn new information; problems with long-term memory that cause you to forget things you once knew; problems such as hallucinations or delusions; personality changes; mood changes; sudden emotional outbursts; difficulty controlling impulses; or loss of intellectual ability.

Then:

1. The changes must seriously restrict your ability to carry out activities of daily living, cause problems maintaining social relationships, cause problems maintaining concentration, or cause repeated long-term periods where you are incapacitated, or
2. If you have a medical history of a chronic mental disorder that has lasted at least two years that limits your ability to do basic work activities and that is currently controlled by medications or counseling, SSA can consider whether the disorder has caused any of the following: repeated periods where you are incapacitated, situations where a minimal increase in mental demands or a change in your environment are predicted to cause you to become incapacitated, or needing a highly supportive living arrangement for at least one year and expecting a continued need for that support.

Examples might include:

- You have trouble remembering names, times, and dates.
- You cannot remember how to complete everyday activities or you feel confused when attempting to complete everyday activities.
- You cannot concentrate on a task or have trouble processing information, planning and prioritizing, multi-tasking, or problem-solving.
- You have trouble controlling your emotions.
- You have mood swings or panic attacks, making interacting with others difficult.
- You cannot remember words or feel like they are stuck on the tip of your tongue.

For more information, visit the National MS Society Web site at:  
**[www.nationalmssociety.org/Sourcebook-Cognitive.asp](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/Sourcebook-Cognitive.asp)**

## Fatigue

Definition: Fatigue means a lack of energy that is caused by the MS disease process.

SSA considers whether you have significant fatigue of motor function and substantial muscle weakness when you perform activities repeatedly and whether you experience fatigue often. SSA considers whether fatigue is evident during a physical exam performed by your doctor(s). SSA also considers whether fatigue results from neurological problems in areas of the central nervous system known to be affected by the MS disease process. Examples might include:

- You have fatigue because your MS symptoms cause mobility problems or you get exhausted by performing everyday activities.
- You have fatigue because your MS symptoms make it difficult for you to breathe.
- You experience fatigue on a daily basis.
- Your fatigue makes it difficult to walk.
- Your fatigue gets worse as the day progresses.
- You are extremely tired in the morning even when you get a restful night's sleep.
- Fatigue comes on easily and suddenly.
- Your fatigue is more severe than normal fatigue.
- Fatigue interferes with your daily responsibilities.

For more information, visit the National MS Society Web site at:  
**[www.nationalmssociety.org/Sourcebook-Fatigue.asp](http://www.nationalmssociety.org/Sourcebook-Fatigue.asp)**