

Qualifying for Social Security With HIV or AIDS

Because HIV progression can completely vary from person to person, some people can lead a perfectly normal life into adulthood with the disease, while some become ill to work anymore. If you can no longer keep your job due to HIV or AIDS, there may be assistance available for you and your family. The Social Security Administration (SSA) offers monthly disability benefits for those in need. While an HIV diagnosis does not automatically qualify, you may be eligible depending on the progression of the infection.

Medically Qualifying with HIV or AIDS

The SSA uses a medical guide known as the Blue Book to evaluate all applicants. HIV is listed in the Blue Book under [Section 14.11](#)—HIV Infection. The listing is very complicated, but you could medically qualify if you meet *one* of the following conditions:

- You're diagnosed with multicentric Castleman disease affecting multiple groups of lymph nodes, or organs containing lymphoid tissue
- You have primary effusion lymphoma
- You have progressive multifocal leukoencephalopathy
- You have Pulmonary Kaposi sarcoma
- You have an absolute CF4 count of 50 cells/mm³ or less
- You have an absolute CD4 count of less than 200 cells/mm³, or CD4 percentage less than 14%, plus EITHER a BMI under 18.5, or hemoglobin measurement of less than 8.0 grams per deciliter
- Your HIV complications have required at least 3 hospitalizations in a year, each of which lasting at least 48 hours.
- Findings *similar* to any of the above qualifications, but not quite meeting one, (such as having an absolute CF4 count of 55 instead of 50/mm³ or less), but the infection leads to symptoms like headaches, insomnia, weight loss, nausea, etc., that cause documented difficulty in one of the following:
 1. Limitation of activities of daily living, like getting dressed or eating
 2. Limitation in social functioning
 3. Limitation in your ability to complete tasks

As mentioned, the Blue Book listing for HIV is very complex. Almost all people with AIDS will meet one of these listings, but HIV may or may not qualify. You will need to speak with your doctor to know whether or not you qualify, or if you need to take an additional test to determine your eligibility. [The Blue Book](#) is available entirely online, so you can review the specific criteria with a medical professional who knows your current condition well.

There is one additional important note the SSA gives in the Blue Book regarding HIV qualification: Many people with HIV experience illnesses affecting other areas of the

body. If you do not meet a specific medical requirement for HIV, you could still qualify under another section of the Blue Book. A couple of examples the SSA gives include musculoskeletal disorders if you've required surgical reconstruction of a joint due to HIV, or neurologic impairments, such as neuropathy or seizures due to the illness or complications from your treatments.

For example, if you have been diagnosed with osteoporosis due to HIV complications, you will medically qualify if you're unable to "[ambulate effectively](#)," which means you cannot walk without a walker or a wheelchair, or you cannot climb more than a couple of stairs without the use of a handrail.

Starting Your Social Security Application

Most applicants can apply for Social Security benefits entirely online. You can even save your application progress for later if it's overwhelming to do at once. If you'd prefer to apply in person, you can do so at your closest SSA office. There are more than [1300 field offices](#) in the US. You can make an appointment by calling the SSA toll-free at 1-800-772-1213.

The final page of your application will be blank, and have room for you to add notes. It is imperative that you fill out as much as you can on this page. Some good information to include would be how your treatments and medication has affected you, any improvements you have (or have not) seen, and every symptom you have from both HIV and from your medications, plus any additional conditions you've developed due to HIV. The more medical evidence you have on your side, the better your odds of approval.