

## Applying for Social Security Disability Benefits with Hydrocephalus

Social Security disability benefits are a financial resource offered by the Social Security Administration and can help cover the costs of your everyday living expenses. If you suffer from a disability that keeps you from working, such as hydrocephalus, and it causes you to become unable to work, you could qualify for Social Security disability benefits.

### What Programs Are Available?

There are two types of disability benefits that you could be eligible to receive through the SSA: [Social Security Disability Insurance](#) (SSDI) and [Supplemental Security Income](#) (SSI).

SSDI benefits are based on your employment history, and the amount of income you receive per month will depend on the amount of money you have paid in Social Security taxes through employment. In order to receive SSDI benefits, you must:

- Be between 18-65 years old
- Have earned enough "[work credits](#)," is a metric used to evaluate how much you worked based on your age
- Not working, **or** working and earning less than \$1,130 per month.

SSI benefits are not affected by your work history. People who have never worked in their lives can qualify. Instead, SSI benefits are solely need based. To qualify for SSI benefits, you must:

- Earn less than \$733 per month
- Own less than \$2,000 in assets if you are single, or \$3,000 if you are married
- Not have additional resources or financial support from friends and family

### How Do I Medically Qualify?

Hydrocephalus, also known as "water on the brain," occurs when there is an abnormal amount of cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) in or around the brain.

Hydrocephalus has over 181 different causes, each having their own name. Normally, it is a slow, progressing medical condition.

When a patient is first diagnosed, the hydrocephalus is defined as *Communicating* or *Non-Communicating*.

*Communicating* means that the 4 ventricles in the brain which make the spinal fluid (CSF) are "communicating" with one another and all appears to be working normally. The problem appears (to be) that the membranes, which cover the brain, that take in the used fluid and discard it, are not re-absorbing the used spinal fluid (CSF). An example of this is Normal Pressure Hydrocephalus, which occurs in aging adults.

*Non-Communicating* hydrocephalus occurs when there is a blockage in the pathway that the spinal fluid (CSF) flows through. It can be caused by a narrowing in the pathway, a cyst, a tumor, etc. This is the most common type of hydrocephalus.

Although the hydrocephalus can be treated with the implantation of a shunt, there can be residuals from the hydrocephalus. Many patients complain of difficulty with short-term memory, vision and/or hearing problems, and cognitive issues.

To qualify for either SSDI or SSI benefits through the SSA, your medical condition usually has to be listed in the [Blue Book](#). The Blue Book is the SSA's manual for evaluating a person's eligibility for disability benefits. Currently, neither form of hydrocephalus is listed in the Blue Book, meaning you will not be automatically approved for benefits based on this condition alone. In this case, you have two options:

- Match your hydrocephalus with another condition listed in the Blue Book
- Submit a "medical vocational allowance"

Matching your hydrocephalus with another condition or conditions in the Blue Book means that you prove to the SSA that your condition is as serious as another condition in the Blue Book. Sometimes hydrocephalus is caused or has developed due to another serious condition that could be listed in the Blue Book, and you should apply for benefits under that condition. Otherwise, you can compare your condition to a condition with similar symptoms. A few examples include:

- Epilepsy—[Section 11.02 & 11.03](#)
- Brain tumor—[Section 11.05](#)
- Cerebral trauma—[Section 11.18](#)
- Learning disabilities—[Section 12.05](#)
- Vision problems—[Section 2.02](#)
- Speech difficulty—[Section 2.09](#)

Some people also have other conditions not listed in the Blue Book, such as a brain cyst or hemorrhaging. If you do not meet a listed disability but still have difficulty working due to your hydrocephalus, you can still be approved under a medical vocational allowance. To be approved for benefits under a medical vocational allowance, you must fill out a "residual functional capacity" assessment. This assessment will take all of your physical and mental limitations caused by your hydrocephalus, as well as your education level, age, and work history, and determine if there is any type of work you can be reasonably expected to do.

For instance, if you are over 50 years old and have been a forklift operator at a construction company for your entire work history, and you have a minimal education level, the SSA may approve you for benefits because of the vision and memory problems caused by your hydrocephalus making it unsafe for you to operate a forklift. You also can't reasonably be expected to go back to school and learn a new career at this stage in life.

You can [download an RFC](#) for your doctor to fill out online.

To apply for disability benefits, you can fill out an online application on the [SSA's website](#). You can also apply in person at your local Social Security Administration branch. To schedule an appointment with your local office, you can call the SSA toll-free at 1-800-772-1213.