



Arm/Shoulder: VA Disability Rating Explained

The VA rates limitation of motion of the arm under Diagnostic Codes 5200 to 5203, depending on the specific condition and severity. The ratings vary based on whether the condition affects the dominant (major) or non-dominant (minor) arm. Here's an overview of the rating criteria:

Diagnostic Codes and Rating Criteria for Limitation of Motion of the Arm

1. Diagnostic Code 5201: Limitation of Motion of the Arm

Major Arm (Dominant)

- **20%:** Limitation of motion at shoulder level (90 degrees).
- **30%:** Limitation of motion midway between the side and shoulder level (45 degrees).
- **40%:** Limitation of motion to 25 degrees from the side.

Minor Arm (Non-Dominant)

- **20%:** Limitation of motion at shoulder level (90 degrees).
- **20%:** Limitation of motion midway between the side and shoulder level (45 degrees).
- **30%:** Limitation of motion to 25 degrees from the side.



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2. Diagnostic Code 5200: Ankylosis of the Scapulohumeral Articulation (Shoulder)

Major Arm

- **30%:** Favorable ankylosis with abduction to 60 degrees, can reach mouth and head.
- **40%:** Intermediate between favorable and unfavorable.
- **50%:** Unfavorable ankylosis with abduction limited to 25 degrees from the side.

Minor Arm

- **20%:** Favorable ankylosis with abduction to 60 degrees, can reach mouth and head.
- **30%:** Intermediate between favorable and unfavorable.
- **40%:** Unfavorable ankylosis with abduction limited to 25 degrees from the side.

3. Diagnostic Code 5202: Other Impairment of the Humerus

Recurrent Dislocation at Scapulohumeral Joint

Major Arm

- **20%:** With infrequent episodes and guarding of movement only at shoulder level.
- **30%:** With frequent episodes and guarding of all arm movements.

Minor Arm

- **20%:** With infrequent episodes and guarding of movement only at shoulder level.
- **20%:** With frequent episodes and guarding of all arm movements.



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Fibrous Union of the Humerus

Major Arm

- **50%:** Fibrous union.

Minor Arm

- **40%:** Fibrous union.

Nonunion (False Flail Joint) of the Humerus

Major Arm

- **60%:** Nonunion.

Minor Arm

- **50%:** Nonunion.

Loss of Head (Flail Shoulder) of the Humerus

Major Arm

- **80%:** Loss of head.

Minor Arm

- **70%:** Loss of head.

4. Diagnostic Code 5203: Impairment of the Clavicle or Scapula

Major and Minor Arms

- **10%:** Malunion of the clavicle or scapula.
- **10%:** Nonunion without loose movement.
- **20%:** Nonunion with loose movement or dislocation.



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Range of Motion Testing The VA uses specific range of motion tests to determine the degree of limitation. Here are the key movements:

- **Forward Flexion:** Lifting the arm in front of the body.
- **Abduction:** Lifting the arm to the side.
- **Internal and External Rotation:** Rotating the arm towards and away from the body.

Additional Considerations

- **Pain and Functional Loss:** The VA considers additional factors such as pain, weakness, fatigability, or incoordination, especially during flare-ups or with repeated use over time.
- **Combined Ratings:** If a veteran has multiple conditions affecting the arm (e.g., limitation of motion and recurrent dislocation), the VA may assign separate ratings for each condition if they result in distinct functional impairments.

Evidence Required To support a claim for limitation of motion of the arm, veterans need to provide:

- Detailed **medical records** documenting range of motion and symptoms.
- **Imaging studies** (e.g., X-rays, MRIs) that support the diagnosis.
- **Evidence of treatments**, such as physical therapy or medications.
- **Personal statements** and, if applicable, statements from family members or coworkers describing the impact of the condition on daily life and functioning. By providing thorough medical evidence and detailed descriptions of how the arm condition impacts daily life and work, veterans can ensure their condition is accurately rated according to VA criteria.