

Table 4 – Spinal Function

Introduction to Table 4

Table 4 is to be used to assess the functional impact of a diagnosed condition when performing activities involving spinal function, that is, bending or turning the back, trunk or neck. The diagnosis of the condition causing the impairment must be made by an appropriately qualified medical practitioner.

There must be corroborating evidence of the person's impairment.

Self-report of symptoms must be supported by corroborating medical evidence.

Examples of corroborating evidence for the purpose of this Table include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a report from the person's treating doctor;
- a report from a medical specialist confirming diagnosis of conditions commonly associated with spinal function impairment (such as spinal cord injury, spinal stenosis, cervical spondylosis, lumbar radiculopathy, herniated or ruptured disc, spinal cord tumours, arthritis or osteoporosis involving the spine, or chronic pain affecting the spine);
- a report from an allied health practitioner (such as a physiotherapist, or occupational therapist), confirming loss of range of movement in the spine or other effects of spinal disease or injury.

Restrictions on overhead tasks resulting from shoulder conditions should be rated under Table 2.

Restrictions resulting from hip conditions should be rated under Table 3.

Restrictions on lower limbs resulting from lumbar spine conditions, such as nerve pain and lower limb weakness, should be rated under Table 3.

Upper or lower limb impairment resulting from a spinal condition such as nerve root compromise can be additionally assessed under Table 2 or Table 3 if the Table 4 rating does not fully account for the overall level of impairment.

Where a person has nerve damage in an upper or lower limb or an impingement in the neck affecting the upper limbs, an additional rating on Table 2 or 3 can be considered.

When determining whether a descriptor applies that involves a person performing an activity, the descriptor applies if that person can do the activity when they would be expected to do so and not only once or rarely.

When assessing episodic or fluctuating impairments and conditions such as chronic pain, a rating must be assigned which reflects the overall functional impact of those impairments, taking into account the severity, duration and frequency of the episodes or fluctuations as appropriate.

The examples used in descriptors are not an exhaustive list and are to be used only as a guide.

Assistance means assistance from another person rather than any aids or equipment the person may use, unless specified otherwise.

Points	Descriptors
0	<p><i>There is no or minimal functional impact on activities involving spinal function.</i></p> <p>(1) The person can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) bend down to pick a light object off the floor, such as a piece of paper; and (b) turn their trunk from side to side; and (c) turn their head to look to the sides or upwards.
5	<p><i>There is a mild functional impact on activities involving spinal function.</i></p> <p>(1) The person has mild difficulty in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) activities overhead height such as activities requiring the person to look upwards; or (b) bending to knee level and straightening up again; or <p style="padding-left: 40px;"><i>Example: the person cannot bend down from a standing position to put on socks or shoes.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (c) turning their trunk or moving their head such as looking to the sides or upwards.

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There is a **moderate** functional impact on activities involving spinal function.

(1) The person is able to sit in or drive a car for at least 30 minutes, and at least one of the following applies:

(a) the person has moderate difficulty sustaining overhead activities such as accessing items above head height; or

Example: looking up to hang washing on a clothesline.

(b) the person has moderate difficulty moving their head to look in all directions; or

Example: turning their head to look over their shoulder;

(c) the person has moderate difficulty bending forward to pick up a light object placed at knee height; or

(d) the person has moderate difficulty standing up from a sitting position in a standard chair without assistance.

Example: the person has moderate difficulty standing after being seated in a dining chair.

Note 1: this impairment rating level includes a person who can:

(a) move around independently using a wheelchair and can independently transfer to and from a wheelchair; or

Example: the person can use a wheelchair accessible toilet independently.

(b) move around independently using walking aids such as a quad stick, crutches or walking frame.

Note 2: the person may require additional time and effort to move around a workplace, may need to use accessible entries, lifts and toilets, and may not be able to access some areas of a workplace or training facility.

20	<p><i>There is a severe functional impact on activities involving spinal function.</i></p> <p>(1) The person has severe difficulty with at least one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) looking upwards to perform any overhead activities; or (b) either turning their head, or bending their neck at all, without moving their trunk; or (c) bending forward to hip height; or <p><i>Example: the person cannot bend forward to wipe a table or pick up a light object weighing less than 1kg from hip height.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (d) remaining seated for at least 10 minutes. <p><i>Example: the person frequently changes positions between sitting and standing or frequently shifts weight in a chair when seated.</i></p> <p><i>Note: this impairment rating level includes a person who requires assistance to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) move around in, or transfer to and from a wheelchair; or <p><i>Example: the person needs personal care assistance to use a toilet;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (b) move around using walking aids such as a quad stick, crutches or walking frame and the person requires assistance from another person to walk on some surfaces and cannot move independently around a workplace or training facility, even when using a walking aid. <p><i>Example: the person is at significant risk of, or has frequent falls due to balance or other issues.</i></p>
30	<p><i>There is an extreme functional impact on activities involving spinal function.</i></p> <p>(1) The person cannot perform activities involving spinal function.</p>