

How the VA Rates Knee Conditions

Regulatory Source: 38 CFR § 4.71a – Diagnostic Codes 5256–5263

VA Source: <https://ecfr.gov>

Summary:

Knee conditions are rated based on range of motion, instability, and pain. The VA often uses multiple diagnostic codes to rate issues like limited flexion, extension, instability, or cartilage damage.

VA Rating Table:

Rating	Explanation
10%	Limitation of flexion to 45° or extension to 10°, slight instability, or symptomatic removal of semilunar cartilage.
20%	Limitation of flexion to 30° or extension to 15°, moderate instability, dislocated semilunar cartilage with frequent locking, pain, and effusion into the joint.
30%	Limitation of flexion to 15° or extension to 20°–30°, severe recurrent subluxation or lateral instability.
40%–50%	Extension limited to 30° (40%) or 45° (50%) or extremely severe symptoms with ankylosis or joint immobility.

Required Evidence:

- Diagnosis of knee condition (e.g., patellofemoral syndrome, arthritis, torn meniscus)
- Range of motion testing during C&P; or physical therapy
- Documentation of joint instability or dislocations
- Imaging results (X-rays or MRIs for arthritis or cartilage damage)
- Personal statement on flare-ups, pain during movement, or instability episodes

Pro Tip:

You can receive multiple ratings for the same knee if both limited motion and instability are documented. Mention all symptoms, including locking, pain, or weakness.