

# How the VA Rates Shoulder Conditions

Regulatory Source: 38 CFR § 4.71a – Diagnostic Codes 5200–5203

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

## Summary:

Shoulder injuries like rotator cuff tears, dislocations, and frozen shoulder are rated by how far you can raise your arm and whether you experience instability or bone damage.

## VA Rating Table:

Rating	Explanation
20%	Limited motion of the arm at shoulder level (flexion or abduction to 90°), or occasional dislocation with guarding of arm movement.
30%	Limited motion of the arm midway between side and shoulder level (~45°), or recurrent dislocations with frequent episodes and guarding.
40%	Limited motion of the arm to 25° from the side, or fibrous union of the humerus. May include flail shoulder or severe deformity.

## Required Evidence:

- Diagnosis of shoulder condition (e.g., rotator cuff tear, frozen shoulder, arthritis)
- Range of motion test results for flexion and abduction
- MRI or X-ray showing structural damage or degenerative changes
- Evidence of dislocations, guarding, or weakened motion
- Personal statement or physical therapy notes describing limitations

## Pro Tip:

If both shoulders are affected, be sure to claim each separately. Veterans may be rated bilaterally if both upper extremities are impaired.