

How the VA Rates Wrist Conditions and Carpal Tunnel Syndrome

Regulatory Source: 38 CFR § 4.124a – Diagnostic Codes 8515 (Median Nerve), 5214–5215

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

Summary:

Wrist conditions, including carpal tunnel syndrome, are rated based on limitation of motion and nerve involvement. The median nerve is most commonly affected, and higher ratings are assigned for paralysis or loss of fine motor function.

VA Rating Table:

Rating	Explanation
10%	Mild incomplete paralysis or limitation of motion. Pain, numbness, or weakness without full loss of function.
20%–30%	Moderate limitation of wrist flexion/extension or moderate incomplete paralysis. Grip strength or fine motor skill impairment is evident.
40%–50%	Severe incomplete paralysis or significant limitation of wrist movement. May require brace or surgical correction.
70%+	Complete paralysis of the median nerve, wrist frozen in unfavorable position, or extreme loss of hand use.

Required Evidence:

- Diagnosis of carpal tunnel syndrome, arthritis, or wrist sprain
- EMG/NCS studies showing nerve involvement (for neuropathy claims)
- Range of motion tests (flexion, extension, deviation)
- Surgical reports, brace usage, or steroid injection history
- Personal statement about fine motor skill problems or work interference

Pro Tip:

Use detailed EMG/NCS test results to justify nerve damage ratings. If both wrists are affected, they can be rated separately and may qualify for bilateral factor increases.