

AMA Criteria for Permanent Impairment of the Upper Extremity Associated with Peripheral Vascular Disease

Overview: Peripheral vascular disease involving the upper extremity can result in impairment. The AMA has developed criteria for determining the severity of the impairment.

NOTE: The scale here determines the impairment of an upper extremity rather than the level of impairment for the whole person.

NOTE: The assignment of whole person impairment needs to be clarified. According to the AMA Guides impairment is assigned for each upper extremity with total impairment based on combining both levels of impairment.

Parameters:

- (1) intermittent claudication and pain
- (2) edema
- (3) Raynaud's symptoms
- (4) evidence of vascular damage on physical examination

Intermittent Claudication and Pain	Edema	Raynaud's Symptoms	Impairment of Upper Extremity
neither at rest	only transient	with or without obstructive physiology that completely responds to lifestyle changes and/or medical therapy	0 – 9%
during severe usage	persistent edema of moderate severity controlled by elastic supports	with obstructive physiology that incompletely responds to lifestyle changes and/or medical therapy	10 – 39%
on mild usage	marked edema that is only partially controlled by elastic supports		40 – 69%
on mild usage	marked edema not controlled by elastic supports		70 – 89%
severe and constant at rest	marked edema not controlled by elastic supports		90 – 100%

where: • Calcification of arteries is usually detected on X-rays.

- Obstructive physiology in Raynaud's disease include finger:brachial indices < 0.8 or low digital temperatures with decreased laser Doppler signals that do not normalize with warming of affected digits.

Evidence of Vascular Damage on Physical Examination	Impairment of Upper Extremity
loss of pulses minimal loss subcutaneous tissue of fingertips calcification of arteries asymptomatic dilation of arteries or veins not requiring surgery or curtailing activities	0 – 9%
healed painless stump of an amputated digit showing evidence of persistent vascular disease or a healed ulcer	10 – 39%
healed amputation of 2 or more digits of one extremity with evidence of persisting vascular disease or superficial ulceration	40 – 69%
amputation at or above a wrist amputation of 2 or more digitis of both extremities with evidence of persistent vascular disease persistent widespread or deep ulceration involving one extremity	70 – 89%
amputation at or above wrist of both extremities amputations of all digitis of both extremities with evidence of persistent vascular disease widespread or deep ulceration involving both upper extremities	90 – 100%

whole person impairment = 0.6 * (impairment of the upper extremity)

References:

Cocchiarella L Andersson GBJ (editors). Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment Fifth Edition. American Medical Association. 2001. (page 73; Table 4-4 page 74).