

Chapter 17

Disfigurement and Social Impairment

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is to be applied when assessing conditions that cause disfigurement and embarrassment.

Only one rating may be determined by applying this chapter for any condition or combination of conditions. The rating determined by applying this chapter is to be combined with any other ratings for the disfiguring condition or combination of conditions determined under other chapters.

Widespread skin conditions that cause avoidance of ordinary public places should also be assessed under Chapter 11 (Skin Impairment).

“Severe facial disfigurement” and “very severe facial disfigurement” are also mentioned in Chapter 24 (Degree Of Incapacity For Specific Disabilities).

Calculation of the impairment rating for disfigurement

Follow the steps below to calculate the impairment rating due to disfigurement.

(Each step is elaborated in the following pages.)

STEP 1

Determine the impairment rating from Table 17.1 for the effect of all accepted conditions that cumulatively lead to disfigurement.

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STEP 2

If non-accepted conditions have contributed to the disfigurement, apply Chapter 19 (Partially Contributing Impairment) to adjust the rating determined in Step 1.

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Step 1: Determine the impairment rating from Table 17.1 for the effect of all accepted conditions which cumulatively lead to disfigurement:

For the purposes of Table 17.1, the following definitions apply:

“disfiguring condition” means any noticeable condition that causes the sufferer embarrassment in ordinary public places and may include, but is not limited to, the following :

- ◆ facial scarring;
- ◆ exfoliative skin disorders;
- ◆ disorders of gait or posture;
- ◆ involuntary facial expressions, or unusual or grotesque involuntary bodily movements;
- ◆ disorders of speech;
- ◆ vile odours which cannot be overcome by the use of deodorants or the application of normal oral hygiene;
- ◆ deficits of the visual field which may cause the veteran to lurch into people through not seeing them;
- ◆ painful conditions which may cause the veteran to cry out involuntarily (for example, in response to a sudden pain in a joint); and
- ◆ severe pruritic conditions which cause the veteran to scratch even though normal behaviour in a public place would recommend restraint;

“ordinary public places” includes suburban streets, shopping centres, public transport, theatres, clubs and many sporting venues, but does not include places where a great part of the skin is customarily bared such as swimming pools and beaches;

“avoidance” means the veteran feeling obliged as a result of embarrassment to restrict his or her use of public places to hours when few people are about, or to avoid totally use of public places at certain times, for example, when school children are likely to be about.

**Functional Loss
Table 17.1**



DISFIGUREMENT

Impairment Ratings	Criteria
NIL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A visible condition that the veteran does not consider to be disfiguring. • A noticeable condition that is not significantly disfiguring and which causes negligible or slight embarrassment such as some acne scars on face, or minor limps, or a slight stoop.
TWO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A noticeable condition. For example, severe acne scars, a unilateral squint, an intermittent stutter or stammer. • A noticeable condition which causes significant embarrassment and may cause avoidance of some normal activities. For example, an ungainly gait, a gross stoop, a persistent stutter or stammer, or an unsightly skin disorder.
FIVE	A very noticeable condition which causes marked embarrassment to some people in ordinary social contacts and causes avoidance of some normal activities. For example, a severe skin disorder of the face and/or hands, or a gross and persistent stutter or stammer.
TEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A very noticeable and marked condition which causes marked embarrassment and results in the avoidance of many normal activities. For example, moderate facial disfigurement. • A severe and marked condition which causes embarrassment and causes much avoidance of many public places and social intercourse. For example, severe facial disfigurement.
FIFTEEN	A pa causes extreme embarrassment and results in avoidance of public places and social intercourse to as great a degree as possible. For example, very severe facial disfigurement.

Only one rating is to be selected from this table for any condition or group of conditions which contribute to disfigurement.

**No age adjustment
permitted for
this table**

Both the objective and subjective components of a disfiguring condition are to be taken into account when applying Table 17.1. The *objective* component is the actual physical and/or temporal extent of the disfiguring condition as perceived by others. The *subjective* component is the veteran's own emotional and behavioural reactions to the disfigurement.

The two components will generally be aligned with one another. If the veteran has a noticeable condition that is objectively disfiguring but does not embarrass the veteran to the extent to which an average person of the same age, occupational and residential circumstances would be embarrassed, the assessment should be based on the average person's degree of embarrassment. The veteran's denial of his or her condition should not be taken into account when applying Table 17.1.

Step 2: If non-accepted conditions have contributed to the disfigurement, apply Chapter 19 (Partially Contributing Impairment) to adjust the rating determined in Step 1.

If non-accepted conditions have contributed to the disfigurement, Table 19.1 in Chapter 19 (Partially Contributing Impairment) is to be applied to adjust the impairment rating for the accepted conditions.

The rating obtained in this step (or in Step 1 if partially contributing impairment is not applicable) is the final rating for disfigurement, and is to be included in the final combining of all impairment ratings.