

Some Do's and Don'ts
for persons seeking disability benefits

DO

Apply as soon as you know you'll be out of work for a year.
The process is often lengthy.

Seek advice early in the process.

Keep a record of all of the doctors and hospitals who have treated you.

Tell your doctors that you are applying for disability benefits and ask if they will support you.

Report all of your medical problems on your application, not just lupus or your primary impairment.

Report all of your symptoms on each and every medical visit.
Report fatigue, and Rx side effects as well as pain symptoms.

Tell your doctor about functional limitations (cook, clean, drive) and ask that they be included in your treatment records.

Report and get treatment for symptoms of depression or anxiety.
Treatment for these symptoms will strengthen your case.

DON'T

Wait to apply or get advice about benefits you may be eligible for.

Assume that the information SSA provides is reliable.

Assume that SSA will obtain all of your treatment records.

Assume that your doctors will support your disability application.

Assume that your diagnosis alone will result in a favorable decision. It won't.

Assume that your doctor knows how you feel or is recording your symptoms in your treatment records.

Let your doctor assume you can do things that you really can't. Tell him or her about your functional limitations.

Assume that depression is "normal" and doesn't need treatment. Get treatment.

DO

Keep a journal of your symptoms on your worst days. Record how you feel and what you couldn't do. Take your journal to each doctors visit.

Ask your doctors to keep good records of your symptoms and functional limitations.

Follow through with any testing recommended by your doctor.

Report any side effects of medications to your doctor.

See other specialists you are referred to by your doctor.

Contact an attorney if your are denied at any stage of the process.

DON'T

Assume that you'll remember your worst days later. You may not and your doctor needs to know and record those problems in your treatment records.

Assume that they will. Your doctor's treatment records are the most important part of any disability case.

Refuse testing, as it may mean evidence to support your claim is not available.

Refuse to take medication without a good reason. SSA will likely hold this against you.

Avoid other specialists you are referred to. SSA expects you to comply with these referrals.

Give up if your claim is denied. Do file a timely appeal.