



BACK CLAIMS

CERVICAL VS THORACOLUMBAR RATINGS

An orthopedic blueprint for service connection, examination evidence, functional loss, and the current rating schedule.



STRUCTURAL FIELD REFERENCE

FOUR POINTS TO UNDERSTAND

NECK

CERVICAL SEGMENT

Uses its own motion thresholds and may produce upper-extremity neurologic abnormalities.

LOW BACK

THORACOLUMBAR SEGMENT

Uses separate motion thresholds and may produce lower-extremity neurologic abnormalities.

SEPARATE

RATE SEGMENTS SEPARATELY

VA generally evaluates cervical and thoracolumbar disabilities separately.

EXCEPTION

ENTIRE-SPINE UNFAVORABLE ANKYLOSIS

Unfavorable ankylosis of both segments is rated as a single entire-spine disability.

Use the regulation in effect for the rating period. Measure functional loss accurately, keep distinct manifestations separate, and avoid compensating the same symptom twice.

