

The New York Heart Association (NYHA) Functional Classification in a Patient with Heart Disease

Overview: The New York Heart Association (NYHA) developed a functional classification for patients with heart disease.

Patients: Heart disease must be present.

Parameters:

(1) limitations on physical activity

(2) symptoms (undue fatigue palpitations dyspnea and/or anginal pain) with ordinary physical activity

(3) status at rest

Limitations on Physical Activity	Symptoms with Ordinary Physical Activity	Status at Rest	Class
none	none	comfortable	I
slight	symptomatic with ordinary activities	comfortable	II
marked	symptomatic at less than ordinary levels of activity	comfortable	III
unable to perform any activity	discomfort with any activity	symptomatic at rest	IV

In addition the level of objective evidence was also classified:

Objective Evidence of Cardiovascular Disease	Class
no evidence of disease	A
minimal disease	B
moderate disease	C
severe disease	D

Previous Classification (1964)

The NYHA classification above was introduced with the seventh edition of the manual. The AMA criteria for permanent impairment still uses an older classification.

Limitations on Physical Activity	Symptoms with Physical Activity	Findings at Rest	Class
none	none	comfortable at rest	I

slight	symptomatic with greater than ordinary activities	comfortable at rest	II
marked	symptomatic with ordinary activities	comfortable at rest	III
any activity increases symptoms	symptomatic at less than ordinary levels of activity	may or may not be symptomatic at rest	IV

where:

- Symptoms include undue fatigue palpitations dyspnea heart failure or anginal pain.

NOTE: If you combined both the old and newer classifications you would end up with 5 classes (class I = asymptomatic at increased activity levels; class V = symptomatic at rest).

References:

The Criteria Committee for the New York Heart Association. Nomenclature and Criteria for Disease Sixth Edition. Little Brown and Company. 1964.

The Criteria Committee for the New York Heart Association. Nomenclature and Criteria for Diagnosis of Diseases of the Heart and Great Vessels Ninth Edition. Little Brown and Company. 1994. pages 253-255.

Cocchiarella L Andersson GBJ (editors). Guides to the Evaluation of Permanent Impairment Fifth Edition. American Medical Association. 2001. (see noteTable 3-1 page 26).