



advice and support for older age

**Independent
Age**

Factsheet

Disability benefits: Attendance Allowance

Attendance Allowance is extra money for people who have long-term physical or mental health problems. You can get it however high your income or savings are. This factsheet explains who can apply for Attendance Allowance and how to do it.

Call FREE on **0800 319 6789** Visit **www.independentage.org**

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About Independent Age

Whatever happens as we get older, we all want to remain independent and live life on our own terms. That's why, as well as offering regular friendly contact and a strong campaigning voice, Independent Age can provide you and your family with clear, free and impartial advice on the issues that matter: care and support, money and benefits, health and mobility.

A charity founded over 150 years ago,
we're independent so you can be.

The information in this factsheet applies to England only.

If you're in Wales, contact Age Cymru
(0800 022 3444, agecymru.org.uk)
for information and advice.

In Scotland, contact Age Scotland
(0800 12 44 222, agescotland.org.uk).

In Northern Ireland, contact Age NI
(0808 808 7575, ageni.org).

In this factsheet, you'll find reference to our other free publications. You can order them by calling 0800 319 6789, or by visiting www.independentage.org/publications

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1. What is Attendance Allowance?

Attendance Allowance is a disability benefit for people aged 65 or over, who have a long-term illness or disability and need frequent help with personal care or continual supervision, even if you don't currently get that support. Disabilities don't have to be physical – mental health problems, learning difficulties and sensory conditions such as blindness are also included.

Personal care includes daily living tasks, such as:

- getting dressed or undressed
- washing
- getting in or out of the bath or shower
- eating
- taking medication
- going to the toilet
- getting in or out of bed.

Supervision means that you need someone to be there to watch over you. You may need continual supervision because you could cause harm to yourself or others around you. For example, this could be the case if you forget to take your medication, you get confused or wander, you have seizures or falls, or you forget to turn off appliances.

2. Who can claim Attendance Allowance?

To claim Attendance Allowance, you must:

- be aged 65 or over
- have needed frequent help with personal care or continual supervision from someone else for six months before you claim, and will need help for at least six months after you claim. It doesn't matter whether or not you actually receive this help or supervision – it is the need for help that matters.

You can't claim Attendance Allowance if you already receive Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment.

Good to know



From 6 December 2018, the minimum age you can claim Attendance Allowance is gradually increasing in line with State Pension age. You can find out when you will reach State Pension age by using the calculator on gov.uk/state-pension-age.

Remember



If you have a terminal illness, you can claim straight away (see chapter 7). Special rules may also apply for some people on renal dialysis – contact Citizens Advice for more information ([03444 111 444](tel:03444111444), citizensadvice.org.uk).

If you're nearly 65, you should claim Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and not wait to claim Attendance Allowance. PIP looks at your mobility needs as well as your care needs, so you may find you're eligible for more money with PIP than you would be with Attendance Allowance. You must start claiming

PIP before the age of 65, but you can continue to receive it after you're 65. For more information, see our factsheet **Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance**.

3. How much is Attendance Allowance worth?

Attendance Allowance is paid at two different weekly rates. How much you receive depends on the level of care and supervision you need:

Lower rate

£57.30 per week if you need frequent care or continual supervision during the day, or need prolonged or repeated attention or watching over during the night

Higher rate

£85.60 per week if you need care or supervision during the day and night, or if you're terminally ill

This benefit isn't means-tested, which means you can claim it regardless of your income and savings. It is tax-free and is not based on National Insurance contributions. Attendance Allowance is paid by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). It won't affect your State Pension.

If you're awarded Attendance Allowance, you can spend the money on whatever you need. You don't have to have care workers, relatives or neighbours caring for you – you can claim even if you live by yourself and receive no outside help.

4. Examples of who can claim Attendance Allowance

Marek's story

Marek, 69, lives on his own and suffers from epilepsy. Despite taking medication, he still suffers from frequent seizures. They can occur any time and without warning. He has injured himself many times because of the seizures. He can't go out without his carer.

Mrs Beasley's story

Mrs Beasley, 72, lives alone and had a heart attack several years ago. She has developed diabetes, become increasingly forgetful and has started to forget when she needs to take her heart medication. Sometimes she misses a tablet, other times she takes too many tablets. She needs to be reminded to eat and drink and often gets confused and wanders.

Joan and Carol's story

Joan and Carol are sisters living together. They are both in their 80s and each receive Pension Credit. Joan has arthritis and needs help frequently during the day with daily tasks including getting into and out of bed, washing, dressing and going to the toilet. Over the last couple of years, Carol has become forgetful and may be developing dementia. She needs continual supervision because she sometimes wanders off and forgets to turn off appliances. Joan and Carol can both claim Attendance Allowance because they both need help with personal care.

As they get Attendance Allowance, they receive a higher amount of Pension Credit as a Severe Disability Addition is included in the Pension Credit calculation.

As they are looking after each other for over 35 hours a week, they can each claim Carer's Allowance. This also increases the amount of Pension Credit they get, as a Carer Addition is included in the Pension Credit calculation.

5. How to claim Attendance Allowance

You can claim Attendance Allowance by filling in form AA1 (see chapter 6 for advice on filling this in). You can get a claim form by phoning [0800 731 0122](tel:08007310122) or you can download a form from Gov.uk ([gov.uk/attendance-allowance](https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance)). It comes with notes and a checklist explaining how to fill it in.

Attendance Allowance cannot be backdated but if you order a form over the phone, your claim will start from the date of your call, rather than from the date you return the completed form. You have six weeks from the date stamped on the form to complete and return it.

Getting help to claim

If you're filling in the form yourself and want some assistance or advice, your local Age UK ([0800 169 6565](tel:08001696565), [ageuk.org.uk](https://www.ageuk.org.uk)) may be able to help you complete it. You may also be able to get help from your local Citizens Advice but you might need to make an appointment as the form is quite long ([03444 111 444](tel:0344411444), [citizensadvice.org.uk](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)).

If you can't manage your own affairs, you get confused or you are terminally ill, someone else – a relative, carer or friend – can make a claim for you. There is a section on the claim form to fill in if someone else is claiming Attendance Allowance on your behalf.

6. Filling in the form for Attendance Allowance

Your claim form is usually the main information the Disability Benefits Centre has to work out whether you qualify for Attendance Allowance. This means it's important to give as much detail about your difficulties as possible, to provide a clear picture of the problems you have. Try to provide additional information describing your difficulties in the box at the end of each question that applies to you.

Example from the Attendance Allowance claim form:

Help with your care needs during the day (continued)

Is there anything else you want to tell us about the difficulty you have or the help you need getting in or out of bed?

For example, you may go back to bed during the day or stay in bed all day.

Yes Tell us in the box below. No Go to question 28.

Example answer:

I'm very stiff in the mornings and I'm often in pain. I need someone to help me get off the bed and onto my feet. Sometimes I feel dizzy when I stand up and I need my husband to help me put on my socks and slippers because of arthritis in my hands. I get depressed because of my arthritis and need a lot of encouragement to get out of bed.

If you have difficulties with any of the following activities you may be able to claim Attendance Allowance. These should be described in detail on the claim form:

- getting dressed or undressed
- getting in or out of the bath or shower
- washing, shaving or brushing your teeth
- eating or drinking
- going to or using the toilet
- dealing with incontinence
- taking medication or receiving medical treatment
- walking around your home, standing or using stairs
- sitting down or getting out of a chair
- getting in or out of bed, or turning over in bed

OR

- you are unsteady on your feet
- you have falls
- you cannot see or hear very well
- you get confused or suffer from anxiety
- you have difficulty concentrating or motivating yourself
- you are prone to seizures or dizzy spells
- you find it difficult to control your behaviour
- you forget to take your medication or take too much
- you cannot be left alone
- you forget to turn off appliances, lock doors etc.

If you have a visual impairment, it could cover needing help to read post, choosing appropriate clothing, being guided and warned of dangers. If you have severe hearing problems, it might cover needing help to communicate with others.

Tips for filling in your form

- Keep in mind that a medical diagnosis alone will not entitle you to Attendance Allowance. If you have a medical condition or diagnosis, you should give its medical name (if you know it), but most importantly you should explain how this affects your day-to-day life and what personal tasks you have difficulties with.

Good to know



Don't assume that the decision maker knows how your medical condition affects you. You know your situation best.

- You should answer as many questions as you can. Give lots of description and detail about your personal care needs, even if you think it may seem trivial or embarrassing. It will make a lot of difference to your claim.
- It's okay to repeat yourself if the information is relevant to more than one question.
- Don't mention the help you need with household tasks, such as cleaning the house, shopping, cooking or gardening unless your difficulty is linked to your disability. These tasks will not be considered and may distract from your personal care needs, which do need to be considered.
- Include the time it takes you to carry out specific tasks and how much help you need with them, even if there is no one to help you.
- Include any severe discomfort, pain or breathlessness you experience.

- Ask an advice service (such as your local Age UK or Citizens Advice) to help you fill in the application form. Some people find that as they have lived so long with their health problem, they've developed ways to manage and it's easy for them to overlook or underestimate their difficulties. It can be useful to have someone else's view.
- It may be helpful to keep a diary of what problems you have and the help you need over the course of a week. You might find you forget about difficulties with tasks you don't do every day. For example:

Monday

Help I needed	How often during the day?	How often at night?	Notes
I needed help to get to the toilet	<input type="text" value="5"/> times	<input type="text" value="2"/> times	
I needed help to use the shower	<input type="text" value="1"/> times	<input type="text" value="1"/> times	Needed help to shower in the morning and at night after wetting the bed
I needed help to get into bed	<input type="text" value="1"/> times	<input type="text"/> times	
I needed help to put on my socks and shoes	<input type="text" value="1"/> times	<input type="text"/> times	Couldn't put on my shoes, even when sitting
I needed help to get out of my chair	<input type="text"/> times	<input type="text"/> times	
I needed help to cut up my food	<input type="text"/> times	<input type="text"/> times	
I needed help to take my medication	<input type="text"/> times	<input type="text"/> times	

- Remember that the decision maker is interested in what you can't do, not what you can do. If you struggle to do things, find them painful or it takes you a long time, you should emphasise this on the form.
- Explain what happens when you don't receive the care you need, especially if this has left you at risk of falls or injury or struggling to manage.
- Some days you may be able to do more for yourself than other days, but it is important not to fill in the form as if it was one of your best days. Complete the form with details of the help you need on an average day (ie most of the time). You can use the box at the end of the question to explain how your needs change and how bad it can be.
- If you have adaptations or equipment that help you with your daily life, explain any help that you need to use them.
- If there are things you avoid doing because they are difficult for you, put this on the form – for example, if it's difficult bending and reaching to put on and take off socks even while sitting down.
- Give examples of your difficulties, such as when you have fallen or hurt yourself. It can be useful to include supporting letters from your carer, GP or consultant.

Remember



It's important to provide your GP's contact details and permission to contact them, or it may delay your claim.

Keep a copy of the form and any supporting documents that you send with it. You might need to refer to it again later if you have to renew your claim or make a new one, or if you want to appeal.

7. How long until I start receiving Attendance Allowance?

Usually your form is all that is required; occasionally, you may need a face-to-face assessment or your GP might be asked for more details.

If this is a new claim, you should be notified in writing of the result of your claim within four weeks. If it's a current claim and you have asked for it to be looked at again, you should be notified of the result within 13 weeks. If you've been awarded Attendance Allowance, you'll be told the rate that you are eligible for. You may be awarded it indefinitely or for a set period of time. It is usually paid every four weeks in arrears.

Renewing your claim

If your Attendance Allowance is awarded for a fixed period, you should get a new claim form from the DWP about four months before it's due to end. If you don't receive one, call the Attendance Allowance helpline on [0800 731 0122](tel:08007310122).

The renewal form is the same as the original claim form, so it's a good idea to keep a copy of the original to help you fill it out.

You might also have to renew your claim if Attendance Allowance is awarded for an indefinite period. This just means that there is no fixed date to review it.

If you have a terminal illness

There are special rules to speed up applications for people with progressive diseases who aren't expected to live more than six months. These claims can be dealt with within one week without the need for a medical examination. You can claim

immediately – you don't need to have been ill for six months before applying.

Your doctor or consultant should complete a DS1500 report, which provides information about your condition so your application can be processed under the special rules. You don't have to see the doctor or pay for this. You can send the DS1500 later if it's getting close to the six-week time limit.

You'll need to fill in some parts of the Attendance Allowance claim form but you don't have to answer all the questions. Make sure you tick the box that says you are claiming under the special rules. You will automatically be awarded the higher rate of Attendance Allowance from your date of claim.

If you're caring for someone who is terminally ill but doesn't know how seriously ill they are, you can claim on their behalf, but make sure you tell them that a claim for Attendance Allowance has been made. This is because the DWP may need to contact them to verify their details; the decision will be sent to them; and payments will be made directly to them. There will be no indication on their award letter of their life expectancy.

8. If you're turned down for Attendance Allowance

It may be worth challenging the decision, as success rates for benefits appeals are good. If your claim is refused, the reason for this should be explained in the decision letter. If you disagree with the decision or want a fuller explanation, follow the points below. It's a good idea to get advice first; call Independent Age ([0800 319 6789](tel:08003196789)).

If you'd like more information about why you were turned down, contact the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and ask for an explanation of the decision. Their contact details should be on the decision letter.

1. You can ask the DWP to send you the explanation in writing – this is known as a statement of reasons. They should do this within 14 days.
2. If you're not satisfied with the explanation, you can ask for the decision to be reconsidered. To do this, write to the DWP and ask for a 'mandatory reconsideration'. You'll need to do this within one month of receiving the original decision letter, or within one month and 14 days if you asked for a written explanation. You should:
 - explain why you think the decision is wrong, for example, that you've underestimated your disabilities and the care you need
 - include any evidence you have to support what you are saying, such as a supporting statement from your doctor.

You could ask for a copy of all the evidence they used to make the decision, and ask them not to take any further action until you have received all the evidence, read through it, and sent in your comments.

3. Your case will be considered again, usually by a different person.
4. You'll be informed of the outcome of the reconsideration in writing with a 'mandatory reconsideration notice'.

Appealing a decision

You can only appeal once you've received a mandatory reconsideration notice. You have one month from the date on it to make an appeal if you still disagree with the decision.

To appeal:

1. Get an SSCS1 form from HM Courts and Tribunals Service ([0300 123 1142](tel:03001231142), Gov.uk). When filling in the form, you might want to get help from an advice organisation, such as your local Age UK ([0800 169 6565](tel:08001696565), ageuk.org.uk) or Citizens Advice ([03444 111 444](tel:03444111444), citizensadvice.org.uk). You'll need to give reasons for your appeal and include any supporting evidence you have, from your doctor for example.
2. Return the completed form to HM Courts and Tribunals Service within one month from the date on the mandatory reconsideration notice, and send it with a copy of the notice. You should get an acknowledgement letter when it's been received and processed (this usually takes ten working days).
3. You'll then be told the date of your appeal hearing in due course. The hearing will decide your appeal. You can choose to have a hearing without you being present (a paper hearing) but you have a better chance of success if you attend. You can arrange for a representative to attend with you. Make sure you put their details on the SSCS1 form and ask for any help you need.
4. If your appeal or request for a mandatory reconsideration is successful, the DWP will backdate your award to the date of the original claim.

9. How Attendance Allowance affects your other benefits

Attendance Allowance won't reduce your other benefits. In many cases, being awarded Attendance Allowance can mean you're entitled to a higher rate of benefits such as Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support, or that you become eligible to receive these benefits. This is because receiving Attendance Allowance can increase your 'appropriate minimum guarantee' – the minimum amount of money the government says you need to live on each week.

If you're awarded Attendance Allowance and you're already receiving Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support, you should inform the Pension Service ([0800 731 0469](tel:08007310469), [gov.uk/contact-pension-service](https://www.gov.uk/contact-pension-service)) and your local council's Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support office straight away.

To do



If you're awarded Attendance Allowance and don't already claim Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support, check whether you're now eligible for these benefits. Contact Independent Age for advice ([0800 319 6789](tel:08003196789), [independentage.org](https://www.independentage.org)) or try our online benefits calculator ([independentage.org/benefit-calculator](https://www.independentage.org/benefit-calculator)).

If you're claiming Universal Credit, the rules around some of the benefits mentioned in this factsheet will be different. Call Citizens Advice to find out more ([03444 111 444](tel:03444111444), [citizensadvice.org.uk](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)).

Benefits for carers

If you have a friend or family member caring for you and you're awarded Attendance Allowance, then your carer may be entitled to claim Carer's Allowance. But it's important to note that if your carer is paid Carer's Allowance, it can affect both their benefits and yours, so it's a good idea to get advice before they make a claim so you both understand how you may be affected. For more information, read our factsheet **Carer's Allowance**. To get a claim form, contact the Carer's Allowance Unit on [0800 731 0297](tel:08007310297).

10. If your care needs change

If you currently receive the lower rate of Attendance Allowance but your care needs have increased, you may be entitled to the higher rate. To qualify for this, you need to show that you have frequent care needs or continual supervision needs during the day, and that you also need either prolonged or repeated attention or someone to watch over you during the night.

You should contact the Disability Benefits Centre dealing with your benefit and ask for your claim to be looked at again. You will be asked to complete a form giving details of how your needs have changed.

You need to show you have had additional care needs for at least six months before you can receive the higher rate of Attendance Allowance (although you can apply for the increase before the six months are up).

If you apply for your Attendance Allowance to be looked at again, the decision maker could decide to keep your existing rate, increase it, or stop your award completely. This means it's a good idea to seek advice before requesting this. You can contact Independent Age (0800 319 6789, independentage.org), or if you want face-to-face advice try your local Age UK (0800 169 6565, ageuk.org.uk) or Citizens Advice (03444 111 444, citizensadvice.org.uk).

You should also inform the DWP if your condition improves.

11. If you go into hospital

Attendance Allowance stops after 28 days if you're admitted to an NHS hospital. It will restart when you return home. Contact the Attendance Allowance helpline ([0800 731 0122](tel:08007310122)) to let them know the date you go into hospital and then tell them the date you're discharged. It can also be paid for any days that you return home for a visit or a trial discharge period.

If you don't tell them, you could get a £50 civil penalty and have to repay any benefits you've been overpaid. If someone receives Carer's Allowance for looking after you, their benefits will also be affected, so they should let the relevant offices know.

If you go back into hospital after being at home for less than 28 days, the two (or more) hospital stays are added together and your Attendance Allowance will stop after a combined total of 28 days. You will still be paid for the days spent at home in between the hospital stays.

If you're receiving a Severe Disability Addition as part of your Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support award, you should let the Pension Service ([0800 731 0469](tel:08007310469)) and your local council's Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support office know if your Attendance Allowance is suspended or stops.

If you weren't already receiving Attendance Allowance before going into hospital, you can claim while you're in hospital. However, if you qualify, you won't receive a payment until you return home.

12. If you move to a care home

If you move to a care home, your Attendance Allowance may continue or stop, depending on who pays your fees:

Situation	Will I be paid Attendance Allowance?
If you receive help towards your fees from your local council	Your Attendance Allowance will stop after 28 days
If you pay your own fees	Your Attendance Allowance will continue
If the NHS pays your fees (NHS Continuing Healthcare)	Your Attendance Allowance will stop after 28 days
If you have entered into a deferred payments arrangement with your council (where they cover the costs of your care while your property is being sold and claim back the costs later)	Your Attendance Allowance will continue
If you get NHS-funded nursing care in a nursing home but don't get help from the council to pay your fees	Your Attendance Allowance will continue

Contact the Attendance Allowance helpline ([0800 731 0122](tel:08007310122)) to let them know if you move to a care home.

13. If you go abroad

It's sometimes possible to continue to receive Attendance Allowance when you go abroad, but this is a complicated area and you should get advice from the Attendance Allowance helpline ([0800 731 0122](tel:08007310122)).

You can keep receiving Attendance Allowance if you're going abroad for up to 13 weeks, if your stay abroad is unlikely to be longer than one year.

If you go abroad specifically for medical treatment for a condition that began before you left Great Britain, you can continue to receive Attendance Allowance for up to 26 weeks. You should talk to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in advance to discuss your situation.

Moving abroad

You may be able to continue receiving Attendance Allowance if you move to another country in the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland. You will need to contact the DWP to check whether you qualify.

If you move to a non-EEA country, your Attendance Allowance will stop.

For more information about benefits abroad, see our factsheet **Moving abroad** or go to gov.uk/claim-benefits-abroad/disability-benefits. If you want to make a claim or change your personal details such as your address or bank account, you must write to: Exportability Co-ordinator, Room B215, Pension, Disability and Carers Service, Warbreck House, Warbreck Hill Road, Blackpool, FY2 0YE.

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The sources used to create this publication are available on request. Contact us using the details below.

Thank you

Independent Age would like to thank those who shared their experiences as this information was being developed, and those who reviewed the information for us

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