

# Attendance Allowance

A blue, upholstered armchair with vertical ribbing on the backrest and seat. It has four gold-colored legs. The chair is centered in the frame against a white background.

Extra money  
**to help you**

Information and advice to help you **love later life**

# What is Attendance Allowance?

As we get older, many of us need a little extra help to look after ourselves, especially if we have a long-term illness or disability.

If you're aged 65 or over and your ability to keep safe or look after your personal care is affected by physical or mental illness or disability, you may be able to claim Attendance Allowance. You don't actually have to receive help from a carer, as Attendance Allowance is based on the help you need, not the help you actually get.

This guide explains how to increase your chance of making a successful claim.

## How much is it worth?

**There are two weekly rates. The rate you get depends on the help you need. You'll get:**

- £55.65 (lower rate) if you need help in the day **or** at night
- £83.10 (higher rate) if you need help both in the day **and** at night.

These rates apply from April 2017 to April 2018.

Claiming Attendance Allowance won't reduce any other income you receive, and it's tax-free. If you're awarded it, you may become entitled to other benefits such as Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support (also known as Council Tax Reduction), or an increase in these benefits.

You don't have to spend your Attendance Allowance on a carer – it's up to you how you use it. Attendance Allowance can help you to stay independent in your own home. For example, the extra money could help you pay for heating bills, pre-cooked meals to be delivered or taxis to get you to and from the shops.

# Can I claim it?

## You could be eligible if you:

- are 65 or over (if you're under 65, you may be eligible for Personal Independence Payment instead)
- could benefit from help with personal care, such as getting washed or dressed, or supervision to keep you safe during the day or night
- have any type of disability or illness, including dementia, sight or hearing impairments, or mental health issues
- have needed help for at least six months (if you're terminally ill you can make a claim straight away).

Attendance Allowance isn't means-tested, so your income and savings aren't taken into account.

Claim as soon as possible as Attendance Allowance cannot be backdated to cover any period before the date of your claim. So don't delay making a claim if you think you could be eligible.

If you're already claiming Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP), you'll continue to receive these payments after your 65th birthday. If you've been asked to claim Attendance Allowance instead of your current benefit, contact your local Age UK.

For more information about PIP, call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65** or look on the Age UK website at **[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)**.

## How do I apply?

You can get a **claim form** by calling the Attendance Allowance helpline on **0345 605 6055**. You can also download a claim form online at **[www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance](http://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance)** and send it by post to the Attendance Allowance Unit.

In Northern Ireland, contact the Disability and Carers Service on **0300 123 3356** or you can download a claim form from **[www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)**.

Making a claim by phone may be the better option because when you call, the date will be recorded on your form. If your application is successful, your first payment will be from the date of your phone call. However if you use the online form, your first payment will be based on when your form was received by the Attendance Allowance Unit. This could be a difference of a few weeks' worth of benefits paid.

Attendance Allowance is awarded based on your needs, not just on your medical condition. On the claim form you will need to describe how your illness or disability affects you. See page 5 for examples of common care needs to include on your form.

**Some applications are turned down because people don't mention, or aren't clear about, how their illness or disability affects their lives. Don't underestimate your needs.**

Ask your local Age UK if they can help you fill in the form to increase your chances of being awarded Attendance Allowance. To find your nearest **Age UK**, you can phone Age UK Advice for free on **0800 169 65 65** or look on the Age UK website at **[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)**.

Think about all the things you can't do, or have trouble with, because of your condition. Don't leave things out, even if you feel you can manage well enough.

- Describe any accidents, falls or occasions when you've hurt yourself.
- Explain the effects of all your disabilities and health conditions and how they interact with each other.
- List things that you struggle to do unaided, even if you've developed special ways to cope. If an activity takes you much longer than it would somebody without a disability, or if it's difficult to do it safely, this can be taken into account. Say if you need reminding or encouraging to do things, as this also counts as help.
- Focus on how frequently you need help. To qualify for the lower rate of Attendance Allowance, you have to show you need help 'frequently' during the day or at night. For example, if you're partially sighted you could need help to look after your appearance six or seven times a day, including help to check your clothes are clean after a meal and help to find matching shoes.
- Give plenty of information in your own words about your personal circumstances. Don't worry if you need to repeat yourself.
- If you have good and bad days, complete the form with details of one of the bad days, including how often they happen.
- If there is a charity that provides help and support for people with your condition or disability, contact them to see if they have any specific advice on what to include on the claim form.

Bear in mind that Attendance Allowance doesn't usually take into account problems with housework, cooking, shopping and gardening. If you struggle with carrying out these activities, make sure you give details of other problems as well, as you're unlikely to receive support if these activities are the focus of your application.

# Common care needs to include

**Washing, bathing and looking after your appearance** – Do you need help getting in and out of the bath or shower; adjusting shower controls; shaving; putting on skin cream; washing or drying your hair?

**Going to the toilet** – Do you need help adjusting your clothes after using the toilet, for example because you're partially sighted; using the toilet during the night; changing clothes or bedding if you have an accident?

**Getting dressed or undressed** – Do you need help with fastenings, shoelaces and buttons, for example because of arthritis, or with recognising when your clothes are on inside out?

**Mealtimes** – Do you need any help eating and drinking? For example, if you have sight loss, do you need someone to tell you where the food is on your plate, or read out menus?

**Help with medical treatment** – Do you need help identifying your tablets; reading and understanding instructions about taking medication; managing a condition such as diabetes; recognising whether your condition is deteriorating; adjusting your hearing aid?

**Communicating** – Do you need help understanding or hearing people, or being understood by them; answering the phone; reading and writing letters?

**Supervision** – Do you need someone to watch over you in case you have a seizure or pass out; lack awareness of danger; get confused, forgetful or disoriented? Could you be a danger to yourself or others? Do you need someone to give you medication or to help calm you down during a panic attack?

**Getting around safely** – Do you need help navigating stairs; getting up from a chair; getting in and out of bed; moving safely from room to room?

## **Tom called Age UK Advice because he was worried about his parents.**

‘My dad’s 81 and my mother’s in her late 70s. My dad’s struggling to manage at home, as well as being the main carer for my mum. She’s partially sighted and needs help during the night.

‘I contacted Age UK Advice on behalf of my parents and they put me in touch with my local Age UK. An Age UK volunteer visited their home and he helped me fill out the claim form for both my parents. As a result, my dad was awarded lower-rate Attendance Allowance and my mum was awarded higher-rate Attendance Allowance.

‘The man who came round to help me complete the form also gave my parents a full welfare benefits check. As a result, they went on to apply for Pension Credit and Carer’s Allowance. All in all, they now get an extra £175 per week.’


To find your nearest **Age UK**, you can phone Age UK Advice for free on **0800 169 65 65** or look on the Age UK website at **[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)**.



# Myth-busting

People **miss out** on Attendance Allowance because they **mistakenly believe they don't qualify** or are put off by the claims process.

**Do any of these apply to you?**



'My claim was **turned down.**'

Your circumstances **may have changed** since the last time you applied, especially if it was a while ago. If your care needs have increased, you may find you're **now eligible.**



'My income's **too high.**'


Attendance Allowance is assessed purely on your disability or health condition and your care or supervision needs. **It isn't means-tested** so it doesn't matter what you earn or how much you have in savings.





‘I can get by  
**without it.**’

You’ve paid into the tax system all your life. Now it’s time to get something back. Think about what support or equipment **might help you** to carry on living independently at home for longer.



‘I don’t  
want **a carer**  
coming in.’

You don’t have to spend Attendance Allowance on a carer. Many older people spend it on **other types of help in the home, or equipment** to help them stay independent.



‘I don’t have  
**a carer.**’

You don’t need to have a carer or someone looking after you. You qualify based on the **help you need**, not the help you actually get.



‘The claim  
form’s  
**too long.**’

Ask your local **Age UK** if they can help you fill it in. Call Age UK Advice for free on **0800 169 65 65** or visit **[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)** to find your nearest Age UK.

## What do I do now?

### If you think you may be eligible for Attendance Allowance:

- You can get a claim form from the Attendance Allowance helpline or download a form or claim online at [www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance](http://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance). In Northern Ireland, call the Disability and Carers Service on **0300 123 3356** or download a claim form at [www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk).
- Speak to your local Age UK if you would like more information or some help with completing the claim form.

## What if my application is turned down?

If your application is turned down, ask an advice agency such as Age UK about whether you should challenge the decision. Look at all the common care needs on page 5. Have you missed any out?

Remember that your needs may change and increase, so even if you're not eligible for Attendance Allowance now, you may be able to claim successfully in the future.



**Speak to your local Age UK**  
for help with  
completing the  
claim form.

# Useful organisations

## Age UK

We provide advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK advice line, publications and online. Our publications are also available in large print and audio formats.

**Age UK Advice:** 0800 169 65 65

Lines are open seven days a week from 8am to 7pm.

[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

In Wales, contact

**Age Cymru:** 0800 022 3444

[www.agecymru.org.uk](http://www.agecymru.org.uk)

In Northern Ireland, contact

**Age NI:** 0808 808 7575

[www.ageni.org](http://www.ageni.org)

In Scotland, contact

**Age Scotland:** 0800 124 4222

[www.agescotland.org.uk](http://www.agescotland.org.uk)

## Attendance Allowance helpline

Tel: 0345 605 6055

Textphone: 0345 604 5312

The evidence sources used to create this guide are available on request. Contact [resources@ageuk.org.uk](mailto:resources@ageuk.org.uk)

## Providing the information and advice you need to help you love later life.

We're Age UK and our goal is to enable older people across the UK to love later life. Whether you're enjoying your later life or going through tough times, we're here to help you make the best of your life.

We rely on donations from our supporters to provide our guides and factsheets for free. If you would like to help us continue to provide vital services, support, information and advice, please make a donation today by visiting [www.ageuk.org.uk/donate](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/donate) or by calling **0800 169 87 87**.



If contact details for your local Age UK are not in the box below, call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65**.

This information guide has been prepared by Age UK and contains general advice only, it should not be relied on as a basis for any decision or action.

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