

Completing an Attendance Allowance form

Attendance Allowance is extra money from the Government for people over state pension age who have a long-term disability or health condition which affects their ability to look after themselves.

Attendance Allowance is:

- Not means tested.
- Tax-free.
- For you to spend as you like.
- Taken into consideration in a local authority financial assessment.

If you are over state pension age you can apply for Attendance Allowance. There are two rates, the lower rate if you have care or supervision needs during the day **or** night, and a higher rate if you have care or supervision needs during the day **and** night. To qualify, you need to have been having problems for at least six months.

To request a form, call the Department for Work and Pensions on 0800 731 0122. You can also apply online: <https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance/how-to-claim>

Remember to think about the help that you need and not just the help that you get. You do not have to be receiving care to qualify. You need to explain how you manage tasks within your daily routine so you should think in terms of the difficulties you have. If you live alone, you may not get any help, but this does not mean that you would not benefit from help, so you should describe the help you need.

A Decision Maker at the Attendance Allowance unit will assess your claim. They will consider how you cope with tasks in relation to *bodily functions*. By this they mean anything to do with your body and how it works, this includes: washing, bathing, dressing, moving around indoors, sleeping, seeing, managing medication and getting in and out of bed. They will also look at whether you need prompting or supervising to carry out these tasks.

You will need to explain why you have difficulties and which illnesses or disabilities affect you in completing a task. If you can only do certain tasks with pain or difficulty, or if you need someone to remind you to do them, say so. Do not worry about repeating yourself in different questions as this helps demonstrate how often these things affect you. Remember that the Decision Maker will be looking at the effects on your *bodily functions*. They are not concerned with difficulties you have with domestic tasks such as housework, shopping or gardening. However, if you are awarded Attendance Allowance you can spend it on help with these tasks.

Completing the form

Details of your illnesses and disabilities

You will need to list your health conditions on the form – make sure you include them all. The Decision Maker will mainly look at issues you have had for six months or longer. Attaching a recent prescription list to the form will save you having to write down all your medications.

Medical professionals

You can give any details of medical professionals that you have seen in the last 12 months, such as consultants, district nurses, occupational therapists. If there is more than one you can put their details in the extra information section at the end of the form.

Medical reports and tests and supporting evidence

Write in any recent health related tests you have had. It is helpful to send in supporting documents from professionals involved in your care. For example, a discharge summary or a care plan. If it will take time to get these documents write on the form that you will forward them when received.

Aids and adaptations

If you use equipment to help you look after yourself include these on the form. If you have any difficulty using the equipment, make this clear. For example, you might have a stair lift but need help with the controls, or you may use a walking stick, but walking is still painful.

The rest of the form

You should include some, or all, of the following in your answers:

- What difficulty you have with an activity.
- What causes the difficulty.
- What help you need.
- How long it takes to complete.
- How often you need help.
- What the consequence of not having help is.

The Decision Maker makes their decision based mainly on what is written on the form, so it is important to put in as much detail as possible. Do not assume that the Decision Maker will read between the lines. Use extra paper if there is not enough space and write your name and National Insurance number on each sheet. Do not worry about your spelling or handwriting.

Examples of answers

Getting dressed and undressed

- Chronic asthma means I get very breathless, so I have to rest between putting on items of clothing. It can take me more than half an hour to get dressed.
- My severe rheumatism means I need help with buttons, zips and laces as it is too painful for me to do these myself.
- Due to dementia, I need help to decide on appropriate clothing for the weather.
- Because of my sight loss, I need someone to check if my clothes are clean.

Taking medication

- My memory loss means I need to be reminded several times a day to take my medication.
- Arthritis means I cannot grip to open medicine bottles or blister packs, so I need someone to do this.
- My macular degeneration means I am unable to read labels and need someone to make sure I take the correct medication.

Supervision to keep me safe

- I get confused and don't always know whether it is night or day. Without reassurance I will make telephone calls to my family at unusual hours.
- I forget to eat regularly and need someone to prompt me.
- I hear voices, which upsets me. I need someone with me to tell me everything is ok.

What happens next?

Once the claim is received by the Department of Works and Pensions it will be assessed and processed. This can take 6-8 weeks or longer. The decision is based mainly on the form and supporting documents, but sometimes your GP or another professional will be contacted. Face to face assessments are very rare. You will receive a decision letter from the DWP confirming your entitlement. If you disagree with the decision, you have one month from the date of the letter to ask for it to be reconsidered.

If you need help or advice with the application, or support to challenge the decision, please contact us as soon as possible by calling 0333 241 2340 or email infoandadvice@ageukdevon.org.uk

You could be entitled to more money

Being awarded Attendance Allowance may mean that you, or someone who cares for you, could become eligible to extra money like pension Credit, Carer's Allowance, a reduction or discount of Council Tax, Housing Benefit and Warm Home Discount. It could increase existing entitlement or mean you become entitled for the first time. Why not ask us for a full benefit check? It is free and we will keep your details secure and confidential.

