

A guide to completing Attendance Allowance forms for yourself or for someone else

What is Attendance Allowance?

If your health affects your ability to keep yourself safe or look after your own personal care, you may be able to claim Attendance Allowance.

Attendance Allowance (AA) is a non-means tested benefit and is currently tax free, therefore you don't have to declare it as income. If it is awarded you can spend it however you like.

If you are state retirement age or over, you can apply for Attendance Allowance.

There are 2 rates;

1. Low rate if you have care or supervision needs during the day
2. High rate if you have care or supervision needs during the day AND night.

If you do not have a form, you will need to ring the Department of Work and Pensions Attendance Allowance claim line. Call them on **0800 731 0122** and ask for a form to be sent to you.

If you think that you would find it difficult to complete the form yourself, please call us on 0300 500 1217, and we will try to provide help for you.

You do not have to be physically receiving care to qualify for Attendance Allowance.

You will need to state how you manage different tasks within your daily routine so you should think in terms of what difficulties you have. Describe 'what help you need' as well as any help that you get.

If you live alone you may not get any help; this does not mean that you would not benefit from help so think about the help you need and put this in the form.

The national AA unit will look at your form to see how you cope with daily or weekly tasks which they term 'bodily functions' (by this, they mean anything to do with your body and how it works). This includes washing, bathing, dressing, moving around indoors, getting in and out of bed etc. They also look at whether you need motivation.

Explain why you have the problems and all illnesses or disabilities that affect you in completing the task. Some tasks may not be a problem in themselves, but your level of mobility may prevent you from completing them quickly or easily. If you can only do certain tasks with pain or difficulty, or if someone has to remind you to do them, say so on the form.

It is important to remember that for an award to be made, the person assessing your claim will only be looking at the effects on your 'bodily functions' mentioned earlier. They are not concerned with the difficulties you have with domestic chores such as housework or shopping. However, if you do get Attendance Allowance there is nothing to stop you spending it on help with these tasks.

Do not worry about repeating the difficulties you face on different sections of the form. This helps to show how often these things affect you and will be taken into account in your assessment.

The person assessing your claim makes decisions based solely on what is written on the form and any information that you provide. You must put in as much detail as possible. Use extra paper if there is not enough space. Do not assume the decision maker will be able to read between the lines. You must spell things out for them. You may receive a letter asking you attend an assessment to check your eligibility the letter will explain where and when, you will need to take identification such as a driving license, birth certificate, bank statement or life policy.

You may find it helpful to keep a diary; write in it whether you find certain tasks difficult and how long it takes you to complete them. Particularly if you fall or stumble you would need to register this on the form When answering questions on the form, try and look at the bigger picture. Don't just look at whether you can complete a task, look at how you complete it, describing the process and how long it takes. You need to paint a picture in words to describe how you complete each task

You may perform some tasks differently to how you used to do them. Write how you have adapted the way you perform the tasks so you are able to cope.

Explain whether you need help from people or need to use aids or equipment to do certain things.

You can send in supporting documents written by any specialists who are involved in your care together with your application. These could be a discharge summary or a consultant's report or a care plan. If it takes extra time obtaining these supporting letters, explain on the form that you will forward them when you get them. Your GP may be able to

provide you with copies of letters if you tell them you are applying for Attendance Allowance.

Details of your illnesses and disabilities

You will need to list your conditions on the form, make sure you include them all. Say how long you have these conditions; approximate length of time is ok. The assessor will be particularly interested in any conditions you have had for 6 months or more as you need to have had your problems for at least 6 months in order to qualify for Attendance Allowance.

Attach an up to date prescription list to the form; this will save you having to write all your medication on the form.

Medical Professionals (other than your GP)

You can give details of any medical professionals (such as hospital doctors, consultants, district nurse) that you have seen in the past 12 months. If you have seen more than one then you can put their details in the Extra Information section at the end of the form. It would be a good idea to include any letters you have received from these people. Make sure you sign the consent for the assessor to contact these people; they may be able to provide information to support your application.

Aids and Adaptations

If you use any equipment to help you look after yourself then make sure you put this in the form. Examples would include small items such walking sticks, grab rails, and chair risers to larger items such as stair lifts and bath hoists. If you have any difficulty using equipment then make this clear on the form. For instance you could say "my stick keeps me steady but walking

is still painful” or “the extra bannister helps me up and down stairs but I still get breathless”.

Filling in the form

You will sign the form to say it is a true reflection of your circumstances so all your answers should be in the first person i.e. “I have difficulty...”. If someone else needs to sign the form for you, for instance if you do not have mental capacity due to dementia, then the answers can be in the third person i.e. “My mum struggles to...” or “Mr Smith has difficulty with...”.

Here are some examples of answers that could be put in an Attendance Allowance form.

Getting in and out of bed

Due to my angina, I have to sit on the edge of my bed for a few minutes in order to steady myself and catch my breath before I can get to my feet.

I have to use my walking frame for support in order to get to my feet due to the arthritis in my legs.

Because my balance is poor, I can't stretch out if my bedclothes fall off as I fear I may fall out of bed.

Due to the arthritis in my arms and legs I struggle to sit up in bed because this is very painful.

I am depressed and not motivated to do anything and I need a lot of encouragement to get out of bed.

Because my legs are weak, I need to have something to help lever myself to my feet.

Medication Management

Due to my deteriorating sight I am unable to read the labels and need someone to set out the correct medication for me.

My short-term memory loss means I often need to be reminded several times to take my medication.

My fingers are deformed due to arthritis and I have trouble opening medicine bottles or blister packs.

Help with toilet needs

The water retention in my feet means I can only walk very slowly so I sometimes do not reach the toilet on time.

My arthritis makes it difficult to undress myself in order to use the toilet, push the flush handle or turn the taps to wash my hands. I always need help with these tasks.

Because I can't see, someone needs to check whether I have washed and cleaned my hands properly after using the toilet.

After using the toilet/commode, I need help to put my clothes back on.

Washing and bathing

My arthritis means I need help to shave, wash my hair and check my appearance. Without help these activities are slow and painful; it can take me up to an hour and I am exhausted afterwards.

My bad back means I cannot step into, or out of, the bath or shower unassisted.

Most days I feel too depressed to bother with washing unless someone encourages me and checks that I have done it.

My mobility and balance are poor and I need to sit while washing my face or brushing my teeth.

Getting dressed or undressed

The pain in my back and legs means I have difficulty bending to get clothes out of cupboards and drawers. Someone has to help me.

Chronic asthma means I become very breathless and therefore have to rest between putting on or removing each item of clothing. I can take me half an hour or longer.

My severe rheumatism means I need help to fasten buttons, zips and laces as it is too painful to do it myself.

My hands are contorted due to arthritis and therefore I can't grip fastenings to do them up.

Sometimes I am in too much pain to want to get dressed unless someone encourages me to.

Due to confusion they don't wear the appropriate clothing (for example, not enough clothing on cold days or too many layers on a warm day).

Falls and Stumbles

I have to walk very slowly and hold onto things. I tend to shuffle when I walk. This causes me to stumble frequently.

I have poor circulation which often results in numbness in my legs causing me to fall.

I suffer from high blood pressure, which causes dizzy spells resulting in falls.

My deteriorating eyesight means I knock into things and this also affects my balance causing me to stumble or fall.

Moving about in the home

I have very weak legs and can only climb the stairs by putting both feet on each step rather than on alternate steps.

My arthritis means I can get very stiff sitting in a chair and need to rock to gain the momentum to get to my feet.

I am very unsteady on my feet and need to hold onto the walls and furniture.

I suffer from chronic arthritis and get extremely breathless. When I climb the stairs, I need to take a break and sit on them.

I suffer from dizzy spells and experience them when getting to my feet or trying to go upstairs.

I get very depressed and often don't want to do anything. I need encouragement to get up or move around.

Mealtimes

Since my stroke, I am unable to use my left/right side and therefore need my meals to be pre-cut.

The rheumatoid arthritis in my hands makes it difficult to grip cutlery and hold cups for drinking.

Due to my depression, I have no motivation to eat and need to be encouraged to have regular meals.

Due to their short-term memory loss they forget whether they have eaten and need supervision.

Communicating with other people

I cannot see to read, answer letters or fill in forms. Someone must read them for me and write the reply.

I can't hear, and rely on sign language to communicate so I cannot use the phone.

My speech is slurred due to suffering a stroke and I have difficulty being understood when talking to anyone who does not know me well.

My deafness means I have problems trying to communicate with unfamiliar people and therefore often have problems asking for help when needed.

As a result of short term memory loss, they find it difficult to hold a conversation because they forget the topic of conversation and start talking about something else.

Due to mental illness, they would find it difficult to cope in unfamiliar surroundings and with unfamiliar people.

Help at night

I sleep on four pillows to keep upright in bed as this helps ease the breathing problems caused by my asthma.

I sometimes get very confused and forget things. I don't always realise when the bedclothes fall off the bed, and therefore do not pull them back on. I need someone to do this for me.

Due to my mobility and balance problems I have a commode by my bed at night. I am not able to empty or clean this myself because of my arthritis.

Supervision to keep me safe

I get confused and don't know what time of day or night it is. I will make random phone calls at all hours if someone isn't with me to provide reassurance.

I have problems with my blood pressure which makes me light headed when I stand up. Sometimes I get dizzy and fall so I need someone to keep an eye on me.

I forget to eat; sometimes I forget to drink. I need someone to prompt me to do these things.

I hear voices which upsets me. I need to have someone I know tell me everything is ok.

At night I need to get up to go to the toilet. My wife has to listen out to make sure I get there and back to bed safely.