

March 2019

Attendance Allowance

EXTRA MONEY
TO HELP YOU





What is Attendance Allowance?

Although many people continue to enjoy good health well into later life, some people find that they need help with daily living.

Attendance Allowance is a benefit which can be claimed by people who are over State Pension age who have a physical or mental disability which means that they need help with personal care or supervision.

It is a tax free benefit and is not means-tested, so you can apply regardless of how much income or savings you have.

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



Who may qualify?

If you do not already receive Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment you may qualify for Attendance Allowance if you:

- are over State Pension age (if you are under State Pension age you may be eligible for Personal Independence Payment instead). State Pension age is 65 and 3 months in April 2019 and is increasing.
- 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 sight or hearing impairments, dementia or mental health issues.
- have needed help for at least six months, but if you are terminally ill you can make a claim straight away.

You do not actually have to receive help from a carer, as Attendance Allowance is based on the help you need, not the help you actually receive.

You do not have to spend your Attendance Allowance on care – it is up to you how you use it. Attendance Allowance can help you to stay independent in your own home.

Do not hesitate to make a claim if you think you may qualify.





What do I need to explain on the form?

Attendance Allowance is awarded based on your care needs, not just on the types of health problem you have.

Many applications are turned down because people do not clearly explain how their illnesses or disabilities affect their lives. It is important not to underestimate your needs when filling in the form.

Think about all the things you cannot do, or have trouble with, because of your condition. Do not leave things out, even if you feel you can just about manage.

If you are claiming because you have personal care needs, you should give a detailed description of any difficulties you have with:

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 make-up; washing or drying your hair?

Going to the toilet

Do you need help adjusting your clothes after using the toilet, for example because you are partially sighted; finding the toilet in unfamiliar places; using the toilet during the night; changing clothes or bedding if you have an accident?

Mealtimes

Do you need any help eating and drinking? Do you remember to eat and drink? If you have sight loss, do you need someone to tell you where the food is on your plate, or read out menus?

Getting dressed or undressed

Do you need help with fastenings, shoelaces and buttons, because of arthritis, or with recognising when your clothes are on inside out? Do you remember to wear clothes appropriate for the weather when you are going out?

Help with medical treatment

Do you need help identifying your tablets; remembering to take medication; reading and understanding instructions for taking medication; managing a condition like 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?

Getting around indoors

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



If you are claiming because you need supervision to avoid danger to yourself or others, say why you need this help.

This may be because:

- You could be a danger to yourself or others
- You get confused, forgetful or disorientated
- You need someone to give you medication quickly if your condition suddenly gets worse
- You need support to calm you down during a panic attack
- You lack awareness of danger
- You have seizures or dizzy spells, perhaps because of epilepsy or diabetes
- You find it difficult to control your behaviour
- You cannot be safely left alone
- You forget to do things like locking doors or turning off the oven





Completing the form – explaining more about the help you need

- Attendance Allowance does not usually take into account problems with housework, cooking, or shopping. If you mention problems with these activities, make sure you also include other problems as you are unlikely to receive support if this is the focus of your application.
- Do not just say that you have particular conditions or disabilities, explain how they affect your daily life, for example are certain activities painful or do they cause you to be breathless?
- Do you have medical conditions which combined together cause you problems? For example problems remembering and also a condition which needs specific medication at a particular time?
- Emphasise what you cannot do rather than what you can. What happens if you do not receive the help you need? Describe any accidents, falls or times you have hurt yourself or had problems when trying to do things by yourself.
- If you have good days and bad days, complete the form with details of one of the bad days, including how often it happens.
- Make a list of things that you struggle to do by yourself, even if you have developed special ways to cope with certain activities. If an activity takes you much longer than it would somebody without a disability, or if it is difficult to do safely, this can be taken into account.



- Give plenty of information in your own words about the difficulties you have even if you find them embarrassing. Do not worry if you need to repeat yourself.
- Include any supporting letters from your GP, consultant or occupational therapist or a copy of your care needs assessment if you have one.
- Consider including a care diary to show your needs over a few different days.
- If you have a carer, talk to them about what they do to help you, and ask them to keep a care diary too
- 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.

How much is Attendance Allowance?

There are two weekly rates. The rate you receive depends on the help you need. The rates are:

- £58.70 if you need help throughout the day or at night.
- £87.65 if you need help both throughout the day and at night.

These rates apply from April 2019 to April 2020.

Claiming Attendance Allowance will not reduce any other income you receive, and it is tax-free. If you are awarded Attendance Allowance you may become entitled to other benefits such as Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction, or to an increase in these benefits.

How do I apply?

You can get a claim form by calling the **Attendance Allowance helpline** on 0800 731 0122(textphone: 0800 731 0317).

You can also download a claim form at **www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance/how-to-claim** but it is best to phone for a claim form as your payments will be backdated to when you phoned provided you return the form within 6 weeks.

If you need help to complete the form, contact the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** and speak with an adviser. We can arrange for someone from the Department for Work and Pensions to visit you in your home to help complete the application.

What if my application is turned down?

If your application is turned down or you are not happy with the decision you can ask for a mandatory reconsideration. This gives you the opportunity to say why you think their decision is wrong. Ask an advice agency such as your local Citizens Advice Bureau or Council's Welfare Rights Office for help to challenge the decision. Do this quickly as you only have one month to challenge the decision from the date it was sent to you.

Remember that your needs may change over time, so even if you are not eligible now, you may be able to claim successfully in the future.

Myth-busting

Some people miss out on Attendance Allowance because they mistakenly believe they do not qualify or are put off by the claims process. They might think:

‘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 now qualify.

‘My income is too high.’

It is assessed purely on your disability or health condition and your care or supervision needs. It is not means-tested so it does not matter what you earn or how much you have in savings.

‘I do not want a carer coming in.’

You do not 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 do not have a carer.’

You do not need to have a carer or someone looking after you. You qualify based on the help you need, not the help you actually receive.





Useful organisations

Age Scotland helpline **0800 12 44 222**

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

If you need an interpreter call **0800 12 44 222** and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

You can call us on **0800 12 44 222** for a copy of our publications list or download copies from our website at **www.agescotland.org.uk**.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can provide you with face-to-face information and advice. To find your local Bureau, contact **Citizens Advice Direct** on **0808 800 9060** or see the **Citizens Advice Scotland** website **www.cas.org.uk/bureaux**

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

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