

Attendance Allowance

A modern, blue upholstered armchair with vertical ribbing on the backrest and 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:

- £57.30 (lower rate) if you need help in the day **or** at night
- £85.60 (higher rate) if you need help both in the day **and** at night

These rates apply from April 2018 to April 2019.

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. The extra money can help you to stay independent in your own home. For example, it could help you pay for heating bills, delivery of pre-cooked meals 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.

Call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65** or look on the Age UK website at www.ageuk.org.uk for more information about PIP.

How do I apply?

You can get a **claim form** by calling the Attendance Allowance helpline on **0800 731 0122**. You can also download a claim form online at **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 **0800 587 0912** or go to **www.nidirect.gov.uk** to download a claim form.

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 **local Age UK**, you can phone Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65** or visit **www.ageuk.org.uk**.

Think about all the things you can't do, or have trouble with, because of your condition. Explain the effects of your disabilities and health conditions and how they interact with each other.

- Give plenty of **information in your own words** about your personal circumstances. Don't worry if you need to repeat yourself.
- List things that you **struggle to do unaided**, even if you've developed ways to cope. Include if an activity takes you much longer than it would for somebody without a disability, or if it's difficult to do it safely. Also say if you need reminding or encouraging to do things.
- 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.
- Describe any **accidents**, falls or occasions when you've hurt 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.

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. See page 5 for examples of care needs to include.

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; 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 or emails?

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, for example by leaving the door unlocked or leaving the gas on? Do you need someone to give you medication or to help calm you 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 **local Age UK**, you can phone Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65** or visit **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** to find your local 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 online at www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance.
- In Northern Ireland, call the Disability and Carers Service on **0800 587 0912** (textphone 028 9031 1092) or download a claim form at 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, 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

In Wales, contact

Age Cymru: 0800 022 3444

www.agecymru.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact

Age NI: 0808 808 7575

www.ageni.org

In Scotland, contact

Age Scotland: 0800 124 4222

www.agescotland.org.uk

Attendance Allowance helpline

Tel: 0800 731 0122

Textphone: 0800 731 0317

The evidence sources used to create this guide are available on request. Contact 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 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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Age UK is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales (registered charity number 1128267 and registered company number 6825798). The registered address is Tavis House, 1-6 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9NA. Age UK and its subsidiary companies and charities form the Age UK Group, dedicated to helping more people love later life. ID203787 04/18
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