



A **guide** to filling out the Attendance Allowance claim form

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Before you get started

Find out more about Attendance Allowance

If you're at the stage of filling out a claim form, you probably already have a sense of the rules around Attendance Allowance. However, if you'd like more general information, including rates and eligibility:

- visit the Age UK website and search 'Attendance Allowance'
- read our **Attendance Allowance** guide – it's available on the Age UK website, or you can call **0800 678 1602** to order a free print copy.

Get a claim form

If you don't already have an Attendance Allowance claim form, you can:

- download a digital copy at www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance/how-to-claim
- call the Attendance Allowance helpline on **0800 731 0122** for a print copy.

If you call the helpline to request your claim form, you have 6 weeks to complete and return it. Your benefit can be backdated to the date you called the helpline – which can make the difference of a few weeks' worth of money.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is the Government department that makes decisions about applications for Attendance Allowance.

Applying for someone else?

If someone you care for is too ill to fill in the claim form, or if they don't have mental capacity, then you can help them. But if they can't sign the form themselves, you'll need to have the legal authority to do that for them – as their attorney, deputy or appointee for benefits.

If you're signing the form on someone else's behalf, then you can write in the third person – for instance, saying 'My mum struggles to...' instead of 'I struggle to...'.

If you need more help

We hope this guide makes filling out the claim form more straightforward – but if you find that you need more support, we're here.

- Your local Age UK might be able to provide support in person, over the phone or online. Call **0800 678 1602** or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/services/in-your-area to get the details of your local Age UK.
- Our national Advice Line has dedicated benefits team who can help over the phone – call **0800 678 1602** to ask about an appointment.

Completing the form

General tips

1. Think about the help you need – not just the help you already get

You don't need to be receiving any care to qualify for Attendance Allowance.

2. Think about the tasks in your daily routine

The Attendance Allowance claim form focuses on personal care tasks such as washing, dressing, moving around indoors, managing medication and getting in and out of bed. It's more important to explain the difficulties you have with personal care tasks like these than any difficulties you may have with tasks like housework, shopping or gardening.

3. Explain how your illnesses or disabilities affect you

Include more than just the tasks you struggle to do because of your condition – include ones that you can't complete easily, safely or in a normal timeframe, ones that involve pain or difficulty, and ones that you've had to adapt to doing differently. Consider how much time and effort tasks take you, and how you feel afterwards. If you have multiple illnesses or disabilities, think about the combined impact they have on you – and be sure to include any mental health conditions as well as physical ones.

4. Explain if you need prompting to do tasks

Even if you can do a task yourself, say if you need prompting or motivating to do it – or if someone needs to supervise you. This might include reminding you to take medication, to change your clothes or have a wash, for example.

5. Say if you need help with tasks

If you need aids, equipment or help from other people, then include details of that.

6. Don't worry about repeating yourself

It's fine if you repeat various difficulties in your answers to different questions in the form. This helps to show how often your illnesses or disabilities affect you.

7. Spell things out clearly

Don't assume the person reading the form will read between the lines or make assumptions about how your illnesses or disabilities affect your ability to carry out your daily routine. Be clear and detailed about the difficulties you face.

8. Include as much detail as you can

Always explain if a task is painful for you, takes you a long time, puts you or someone else in danger, or makes you breathless or unsteady. If you need extra space in any of the sections, use more sheets of paper – write your National Insurance number on them and make a note of them in the Extra Information section (Q63) to make sure they aren't overlooked.

You might find it helpful to keep a diary to make a note of when you find tasks difficult and how long it takes you to complete them. It can help you fully understand and explain how your illnesses or disabilities affect you.

Q16 Illnesses and disabilities

Include all of your conditions, even ones that may not seem as important, and how long you've had them – just an approximate length of time is OK. To meet Attendance Allowance eligibility criteria, you usually need to have had your problems for 6 months or more.

Including a recent prescription list with your completed form can save you from having to write down all of your medication. Write your National Insurance number on it and make a note of it in the Extra Information section (Q63) to make sure it isn't overlooked.

Q17-20 Health and care support

Give details of any medical professionals (such as consultants, district nurses or occupational therapists) that you've seen in the past 12 months. If you've seen more than one, you can put their details in the Extra Information section (Q63) at the end of the form. Note down anyone else who helps you because of your illnesses or disabilities.

If you sign to give your consent for the DWP to contact these people, they may be able to provide information to support your application.

Q21-23 Health reports and tests

You can include details of any recent health-related tests you've had. Even if you haven't had the results yet, or if the result was 'ongoing monitoring' of your condition, you can include it.

It's helpful to send in any supporting documentation from medical professions or other people involved in your care – for example, a discharge summary, a consultant's report or a care plan. Write your National Insurance number on them and make a note of them in the Extra Information section (Q63) to make sure they aren't overlooked.

Your GP may be able to make copies of letters for you if you explain you're applying for Attendance Allowance. If it'll take some time to get supporting documentation, explain on the claim form that you'll forward them when you get them.

Q27 Aids or adaptations

Make sure you include any aids, equipment or adaptations that you use to help you with tasks – even if they're small. Here are some common examples:

- walking stick
- grab rail
- perch stool
- magnifying glass
- hearing aid
- dosette box
- pendant alarm
- chair riser
- stairlift
- bath hoist
- raised toilet seat
- 'grabber'.

Explain if you have difficulty using any equipment – for example, if you have an extra banister to help you up and down the stairs, but you struggle to grip it and still worry about falling.

Q55-62 Supporting statement

A carer, friend or relative can complete this section to show another perspective and reinforce your explanation of how your illnesses or disabilities affect you.

Examples of answers

Here are some examples of what someone might include in an Attendance Allowance claim form. They can help you think through your own difficulties with daily living tasks and understand how to phrase the problems you face.

Q29 Getting in and out of bed

- Because of my angina, I have to sit on the edge of my bed for a few minutes to steady myself and catch my breath before I can get up.
- Because my balance is poor, I can't reach out if the bedclothes fall off as I'm worried I'll fall out of bed.
- I struggle to sit up in bed because the arthritis in my arms and legs makes it very painful.
- I'm depressed and I don't feel motivated to do anything – I need a lot of encouragement to get out of bed each day.

Q30 Toilet needs

- The water retention in my feet means I can only walk very slowly, and 3-4 times a week I don't make it to the toilet in time.
- My arthritis makes it difficult for me to undress myself to use the toilet, flush the toilet or turn on taps to wash my hands. I always need help with these tasks.
- Because I can't see, someone needs to check whether I've cleaned myself properly after using the toilet.
- I need help to adjust my clothes after using the toilet.

Q31 Washing, bathing, showering and looking after your appearance

- 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 can't get in or out of the bath or shower unassisted.
- Most days, I feel too depressed to bother with washing unless someone checks whether I've done it and encourages me.
- My balance is poor, so I need to sit down while washing my face and brushing my teeth to avoid falling.

Q32 Dressing and undressing

- The pain in my back and legs means I have difficulty bending to get clothes out of cupboards and drawers, so someone has to help me.
- My chronic asthma means I become very breathless – I have to rest between putting on or removing each item of clothing. It can take me half an hour or longer to get changed.
- 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 with arthritis and I can't grip fastenings like zips or buttons – someone has to help me.

Q33 Moving around indoors

- I have very weak legs and I can only climb the stairs by putting both feet on each step rather than on alternate steps. It takes me several minutes to get up and down the stairs.
- My arthritis means I can get very stiff sitting in a chair – I need to rock forwards and backwards to gain the momentum to get to my feet.
- I'm very unsteady on my feet and I need to hold onto the walls and furniture otherwise I will fall.
- I suffer from dizzy spells and I often need to take a break halfway through climbing the stairs to sit on them until the dizziness subsides.

Q34 Falls or stumbles

- I have poor circulation which often results in numbness in my legs. This can then cause me to fall.
- I suffer from high blood pressure, which causes dizzy spells resulting in falls.
- My deteriorating eyesight means I regularly knock into things, causing me to stumble.
- When I fall, I don't have enough strength to pick myself up and need to call for help.

Q35 Eating and drinking

- My Parkinson's causes trembling in my hands, which makes it difficult to eat and drink without spilling.
- Since my stroke, I haven't been able to use my left side and so I need someone else to pre-cut my meals.
- The arthritis in my hands makes it difficult to grip cutlery, cut food, open packaging and hold cups.
- Due to my depression, I have no motivation to eat and I need to be encouraged every day to have regular meals.

Q36 Medicines and medical treatment

- Due to my deteriorating sight, I am unable to read the labels on my medication – I need someone to set out the correct medication for me.
- My short-term memory loss means I need to be reminded 4 times a day to take my medication.
- My fingers are deformed due to arthritis and I have trouble opening medicine bottles or blister packs.
- I struggle to recognise when my hearing aid needs adjusting, and I then need someone to help me adjust it.

Q37 Communicating

- I can't see properly, so I need someone to read letters for me and help me write the reply.
- I'm deaf and I rely on sign language, so I can't use the phone or hear the doorbell.
- My speech is slurred due to a stroke and so I struggle to be understood by people who don't know me well.
- I find it hard to hold a conversation because I have short-term memory loss. I often forget the topic of conversation and start talking about something else.

Q40 Supervision

- I get confused and don't always know what time of day or night it is. About 5 times a week I make phone calls to my family at unusual hours if someone isn't with me to provide reassurance.
- I have problems with my blood pressure which makes me lightheaded when I stand up. Sometimes I get dizzy and fall so I need someone to keep an eye on me.
- I hear voices which upsets me. I need to have someone I know tell me everything is OK.
- Each night I need to get up to go to the toilet at least twice. My wife has to listen out to make sure I get there and back to bed safely.

Help with your care needs during the night

- I need help to turn over and rearrange my pillows during the night to ease my pain and breathing difficulties due to asthma. I can't manage this independently.
- I sometimes get very confused and forget things. I don't always realise when the bedclothes fall off the bed, so 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 can't empty or clean this myself because of my arthritis.

What happens next?

Getting a decision

It's a good idea to keep a copy of your completed Attendance Allowance form in case you need to refer to it later.

Once your claim has been received by the DWP, it will be assessed and a decision will be made. The decision is based mainly on the application form and supporting documents you submit. Sometimes, the DWP will contact your doctor or another professional named in your form for further information – but face-to-face assessments with the person making the application are rare.

You'll receive a letter from the DWP with a decision about your entitlement to Attendance Allowance. This letter will also explain how you can challenge the decision if you're unhappy with it.

You can ask the DWP for a 'mandatory reconsideration' of their decision – which means they look at it again to see if they can change it. If you're not happy with the result, you can appeal – get in touch with Age UK for more advice.

Reviewing your claim

Attendance Allowance has 2 rates:

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

If your needs change in the future, you can ask for your claim to be reviewed – for example, because you receive the lower rate but you develop personal care difficulties during the night as well. You normally need to have had the new difficulties for 6 months or more before you can be awarded an increased rate.

A review form is often much less involved than the main Attendance Allowance claim form, focusing mainly on what's changed.

It's a good idea to get advice before having your Attendance Allowance award reviewed, as there's a risk it could be removed rather than increased.

What else could you be entitled to?

Other benefits

Being awarded Attendance Allowance can mean you or someone who cares for you becomes eligible for other benefits. These benefits include:

- Carer's Allowance
- Council Tax Reduction
- Pension Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Universal Credit.

If you already claim, it could increase your existing entitlement.

If you have care needs due to illness or disability, you may also be entitled to a free care needs assessment from the local council's adult social care team to get aids and equipment fitted for free.

Get a benefits check

To make sure you're getting everything you're entitled to, ask your local Age UK for a benefits check or call the Advice Line on **0800 678 1602** to book an appointment with our dedicated benefits team.

For a quick indication of what you could be eligible for, you can use our online benefits calculator at www.ageuk.org.uk/benefits-check.