

Attendance Allowance

Extra money if you have a disability or health condition

Advice and support for older age



Thank you

We would like to thank everyone who shared their experiences for this guide and those who reviewed it.

Our publications

In this guide you'll find references to our other free publications. To order them, call **0800 319 6789** or visit **independentage.org/publications**.

If you would like this information in a different format (such as large print or audio CD), call us on **0800 319 6789**.

While some information may apply across the UK, generally our guides cover England.

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1. What is Attendance Allowance?

Attendance Allowance is extra money if you have a long-term disability or condition. You may be able to claim if you need help with personal support, or supervision to keep you safe.

Personal support includes getting dressed, washing, eating, going to the toilet, getting in and out of bed and taking medication.



Supervision means you need someone to watch over you because you could cause harm to yourself or others around you. For example, it could be that you forget to take your medication or have seizures or falls.

It doesn't matter whether you actually receive this help or supervision – it's the need for help that matters.

Attendance Allowance is for people over State Pension age. You can check this at [gov.uk/state-pension-age](https://www.gov.uk/state-pension-age). If you're under State Pension age, you may be able to claim Personal Independence Payment instead – see page 11.

2. Who can get it?

You can apply for Attendance Allowance if all of the following apply:



- you have reached State Pension age
- you have a long-term disability or condition
- you have needed frequent help with personal care or supervision because of your disability for at least six months.

If you're terminally ill, you can claim Attendance Allowance straight away.

To find out more about who is eligible to claim, visit [gov.uk/attendance-allowance/eligibility](https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance/eligibility).

It isn't just for people with a physical disability or illness. Mental health issues, cognitive impairments such as dementia, and sensory conditions such as sight or hearing loss are also included.

Attendance Allowance isn't means-tested, so your income and savings aren't taken into account.

3. How much could I get?

There are two weekly rates:

- £58.70 if you need help either in the day or at night
- £87.65 if you need help both during the day and night, or if you're terminally ill.



These rates apply from April 2019 – April 2020.

If you're awarded Attendance Allowance, you may become eligible to receive means-tested benefits you couldn't claim before such as Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Support. If you already receive these benefits, the amount you get may increase. Read our guides **Pension Credit** and **Council Tax** to find out more about them.

Getting Attendance Allowance can entitle you to other help, such as a Blue Badge that lets you park closer to where you need to go, and a Disabled Person's Railcard that gives money off train fares for you and a friend.

You don't have to spend your Attendance Allowance on a care worker – you can spend it however you want. Lots of people spend it on things that make life easier, like taxis, fuel bills or a cleaner.

4. How do I claim?

You can get a claim form by calling the Attendance Allowance helpline on **0800 731 0122**. You can also download a form from **[gov.uk/attendance-allowance/how-to-claim](https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance/how-to-claim)**.



It comes with notes and a checklist explaining how to fill it in. The form can look daunting, but don't panic: there is help available to complete it. See page 8 for places that can help.

If you request a form over the phone, your claim will start from the date of your call, rather than the date you return the completed form. This could be a difference of a few weeks' worth of benefits, so call up for the form if you can.

Your claim is usually just based on the information you provide on the form, so give as much detail about your difficulties as possible. See page 8 for more tips on completing the form.

5. Myth buster

My income and savings must be too high

Attendance Allowance is based purely on your care or supervision needs. It doesn't matter what your income or savings are.

I don't have anyone helping me

You don't need to have a carer to qualify. Your claim is based on the help you need, not what you're actually getting.

I don't want a carer coming in

That's fine, you don't have to spend your extra money on one. You can spend Attendance Allowance however you want.

I don't have a diagnosis

You don't need one to apply. For example, you might still be having tests to find out what's wrong. As long as you've needed help or supervision for at least six months, you can make a claim.

I'll only be turned down

Three out of four claims are accepted first time, so you stand a good chance of being awarded Attendance Allowance if you meet the eligibility criteria.



6. Tips for filling in the form

Attendance Allowance is based on your needs, so include as much detail as you can about how your condition affects your life. Don't downplay your difficulties or how much help you need.



The form might seem daunting at first but don't let it put you off. You can make an appointment at your nearest Citizens Advice (**03444 111 444**, [citizensadvice.org.uk](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)) or Age UK (**0800 169 6565**, [ageuk.org.uk](https://www.ageuk.org.uk)) for help. You can also call the Attendance Allowance helpline on **0800 731 0122**. They can help you over the phone or, in some circumstances, come to your home.

If you're filling in the form yourself, here are some tips.

- Give lots of detail about your personal care needs, even if you think it seems trivial or embarrassing.
- It might be helpful to keep a diary of your needs over the course of a week. You might find you forget about difficulties with tasks you don't do every day. Mention how frequently you need help. Attendance Allowance looks at how often you need help, as well as how much help you need.

- Include how long it takes you to carry out specific tasks and how much help you need with them, even if there isn't anyone to help you.
- Include any severe discomfort, pain, fatigue or breathlessness you experience.
- Describe any times you've fallen or hurt yourself.
- Think about everything you can't do, or have difficulty with, because of your condition.
- It's okay to repeat yourself if the information is relevant to more than one question.
- If you have good days and bad days, give details of the help you need on an average day, ie most of the time. You can use the boxes at the end of the questions to explain how your needs change and how bad it can be.

There's an optional section that can be completed by someone who knows you. Ask your GP, consultant, friend or relative to fill this in if you can.

Don't assume that the decision maker knows how your condition affects you: you know your situation best.

Our factsheet **Attendance Allowance** has more tips on how to fill in the form.

David's story



Picture posed by model

David, 72, was successfully treated for prostate cancer, but left with problems controlling his bladder. He often found himself caught short, and had to wear incontinence pads and change and wash his clothes more often.

When David contacted us to see if he could get any help with paying for extra costs relating to his health condition, our adviser Abdi explained he could claim Attendance Allowance. David applied for it and was awarded the lower rate. This meant that he also became eligible for Pension Credit, as claiming Attendance Allowance increased the amount of money that the government expected David to live on. Although David's Pension Credit was a small amount, it meant he was now eligible for full Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support too.

Overall, David's income went up by over £200 a week. He was happy he no longer had to worry about his finances and could enjoy his retirement.

7. What if I'm under State Pension age?

If you're thinking of waiting and applying for Attendance Allowance when you reach State Pension age, you might be better off claiming Personal Independence Payment (PIP) now instead. You might be able to get more money, as PIP looks at your mobility needs as well as your care needs. You must start claiming PIP before you reach State Pension age, but you can continue to receive it after that. Read our factsheet **Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance** to find out more.



About Independent Age

Whatever happens as we get older, we all want to remain independent and live life on our own terms. That's why, as well as offering regular friendly contact and a strong campaigning voice, Independent Age can provide you and your family with clear, free and impartial advice on the issues that matter: care and support, money and benefits, health and mobility.

A charity founded over 150 years ago, we're independent so you can be.

For more information, visit our website
independentage.org

Call us for information or to arrange free, impartial advice from an adviser. Lines are open 8.30am–6.30pm Monday to Friday and 9am–1pm Saturday. Freephone **0800 319 6789** or email **advice@independentage.org**



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