

Attendance Allowance

Attendance Allowance is a tax-free benefit for people aged 65 or over who need someone to help look after them because they are physically or mentally disabled.

Who can get Attendance Allowance?

You may get Attendance Allowance if:

- ◆ you have a physical disability (including sensory disability, such as blindness), a mental disability (including learning difficulties), or both
- ◆ your disability is severe enough for you to need help caring for yourself or someone to supervise you, for your own or someone else's safety

Your care needs

To get Attendance Allowance, your disability must be severe enough for you to need any of the following:

- ◆ help with things such as washing (and getting in or out of the bath or shower), dressing, eating, getting to and using the toilet, or communicating your needs
- ◆ supervision to avoid putting yourself or others in substantial danger, for example, needing someone to keep an eye on your medical condition or diet, or because you cannot control the way you behave
- ◆ someone with you when you are on dialysis

There are two rates of Attendance Allowance depending on how your disability affects you:

- ◆ the lower rate, if you need help with personal care frequently or supervision continually throughout the day only, help with personal care or someone to watch over you during the night only, or someone with you when you are on dialysis
- ◆ the higher rate, if you meet both a day and a night condition for the middle rate, or if you are terminally ill and claiming under special rules (see below)

You can get Attendance Allowance even if no one is actually giving you the care you need - even if you live alone.

Normally, you must have had these care or supervision needs for at least six months. However, if you are terminally ill, there are special rules for claiming the benefit.

If you are under age 65, you may be able to get Disability Living Allowance.

Attendance Allowance is not usually affected by any savings or income you may have.

Medical examinations

You will not usually need a medical examination when you claim for Attendance Allowance, but sometimes it is necessary in order to assess how your condition affects you.

Some people who make a claim for Attendance Allowance may be asked to have a medical examination. This is usually because more information is needed about your disability or illness before a decision can be made on your claim.

What is a medical examination?

A medical examination involves an interview and sometimes a medical examination with a doctor who has completed specialised training in disability and benefit awareness. The examination is likely to be different from what you would expect from your own doctor. The Medical Services doctor's examination is not to diagnose or discuss treatment of your medical condition; it is to assess how your condition affects you and the doctor may not need to carry out a physical examination.

How much do you get?

The amount you get depends on how much your disability affects you. There are two rates of Attendance Allowance.

- ◆ Higher rate £71.40 per week
- ◆ Lower rate £47.80 per week

How to claim

Claim straight away - if you delay you may lose benefit.

You can get a claim pack by:

- ◆ Telephone the Benefit Enquiry Line on 0800 88 22 00

If you request a claim pack from the Benefit Enquiry Line, the date of your phone call will be treated as your date of claim from which Attendance Allowance can be paid, as long as you send your form back within six weeks of that date. If you delay making a claim, you may lose out on benefit.

If you start to get Attendance Allowance, it might increase the amount of other benefits or credits you are entitled to. You may get an extra amount for severe disability with Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Pension Credit.

Attendance Allowance is normally ignored as income for working out these income-related benefits and credit.

The Warm Front Scheme

If you receive Attendance Allowance and live in England, you can get a grant from the Warm Front Scheme to help you with the costs of home insulation and other heating improvements.