

# Factsheet

## Attendance Allowance



### **What is Attendance Allowance**

Attendance Allowance (AA) is a tax-free benefit for people aged 65 or over who are physically or mentally disabled and need help with personal care or supervision to remain safe.

You do not actually have to be getting any help. It's the help you need that is relevant, not what you get. You can get AA even if you live alone; you do not need to have a carer. AA is not means tested, there are no national insurance contribution tests, and it is paid in addition to other money in most cases.

You must be aged 65 or over and have satisfied one of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) disability tests for the past 6 months, unless you are terminally ill, in which case special rules apply and the award can normally be agreed much more quickly.

A typical case would be that of a woman aged 82 who is living alone and has arthritis. She is in pain and/or discomfort when carrying out everyday activities like getting in and out of bed, when trying to reach the various parts of her body when washing, when getting dressed and undressed. She cannot do up buttons and has difficulty closing zips etc. She also has difficulty with all aspects of going to the toilet. She has care needs day and night, and is awarded the Higher Rate of AA.

Another example may be a man suffering from Alzheimer's Disease, who is at the stage where he needs supervision all day and night, to ensure that he does not wander off, he gets the right medication on time, to remind him to do things, as well as needing physical help with personal care. He is awarded the Higher Rate of AA. The form would be completed and signed by his partner, because he is not mentally capable of understanding it.

A couple living together could both be eligible for AA.

### **How to claim**

Many people find it difficult to assess themselves because of having learnt to live with their difficulties. When completing the various sections, try answering the questions by comparing yourself with someone who is totally fit. It is essential to be frank, open and supportive of your claim. The DWP will not assume how you are affected by your condition, no matter what illness or disability you have, so the more relevant detail you provide the better. The current claim form has very limited space for describing how you are affected, so add separate sheets if necessary. Many people need help to complete the form, so consider contacting one of the organisations

detailed below, because they are independent and can provide ongoing advice and support.

Under the section headed "Part 11 Statement from the person who knows best about you and how your illnesses and disabilities affect you"; try to get your GP or Specialist to complete this section. You will then have a form that includes a medical diagnosis to go with your description of how you are affected. Make sure that the GP or Specialist is aware of your current condition, so that this section can be completed accurately. If a medical opinion is not provided, the DWP will probably request a report anyway, but by getting it yourself you have had some input into it. Keep a copy of the claim form as a record.

**Current rates are as follows:**

<b>Lower Rate for help during the day <u>or</u> night</b>	<b>£47.10 a week</b>
<b>Higher Rate for help during the day <u>and</u> night</b>	<b>£70.35 a week</b>

If you are already receiving AA for help during the day, review your situation and if you have care needs during the night as well, consider claiming for the higher rate.

An award or awards of AA may lead to the award of other benefits i.e., Carers Allowance, Council Tax Discounts and/or Disregards or may help you become eligible or to an increase in means tested benefits e.g., Pension Credit, Housing Benefit (help with the payment of rent) Council Tax Benefit (help with the payment of Council Tax).

AA is paid to the person awarded the allowance and not to the carer and it can be spent on anything.

A claim form can be obtained by telephoning the Benefits Enquiry Line on 0800 882200. You have six weeks from the date of the request to return the form to get backdating to the date you requested it. If it is returned after the six week period has expired, it will still be considered but only backdated to the date received. It is better to request the form only and not to discuss your eligibility, because you can do this with an independent organisation like one of those detailed below:

Put as much effort into the claim form as you can because this will give you the best chance of being successful.

It's much better to make a claim and get a decision than to try and guess what the decision might be and perhaps talk yourself into not claiming.

For advice and assistance contact the Citizens Advice Bureau or Age Concern Office. Website addresses are as follows:

[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

– click on Get advice to find your local Citizens Advice Bureau

[www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk)

– click on about us then Find your local Age Concern Office.

This factsheet does not cover all the rules and regulations that apply but it will hopefully help you understand what Attendance Allowance is. For more information please contact IET Connect's Advice worker on 020 7344 5430 or email [ietconnect@theiet.org](mailto:ietconnect@theiet.org)

Last revised date Sept 2009

This information is intended as a guide only. For advice on your specific situation, please phone our helpline on 0845 685 0685.