



Attendance Allowance

► For more information on the benefits most commonly claimed by people with arthritis, see Arthritis Care's factsheet, 'Benefits you can claim'.

What is Attendance Allowance?

Attendance Allowance is a benefit paid to people aged 65 or over who have an illness or a disability, and need help with their personal care to live as normal a life as possible. Personal care may include such things as washing, dressing and going to the toilet, or supervision to keep you safe.

Who can claim Attendance Allowance?

Attendance Allowance is a tax-free, non-means tested benefit. You can claim whether or not you are working, and it is not affected by savings or earnings. You do not have to have made National Insurance contributions to claim.

What matters with Attendance Allowance is how much your arthritis (and any other condition you may have) affects you; it is based on the help you need — not the help you actually get. It does not matter if you receive a lot of help or support, or very little. It is up to you how you spend the allowance. However, your local authority may take your allowance into account when assessing whether, or how much, you need to pay towards any care services they provide.

To qualify for Attendance Allowance, you need to satisfy certain day-time and/or night-time disability conditions:

- **Day time:** you need help with personal care frequently throughout the day (during the middle of the day, as well as in the morning and evening) or you need continual supervision to avoid substantial danger to yourself or others (for example, if you are prone to falling).

- **Night time:** you need prolonged or repeated help with personal care; or you need someone to be awake at night for a prolonged period or at frequent intervals to watch over you to avoid substantial danger.

Normally, you only get Attendance Allowance if you have needed help for at least six months.

Can I qualify for Attendance Allowance?

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

- you are aged 65 or over
- you pass at least one of the disability tests outlined above, and have done so for the last six months
- you pass the residence and presence tests (i.e. you are not subject to immigration control, and you normally live in the UK and have been living here for at least 104 out of the last 156 weeks – although the last ‘past presence’ test does not apply to refugees and their family)
- you submit a completed claim-form (see opposite).

How much can I claim?

Attendance Allowance has just one component to cover your care or supervision needs (unlike PIP or DLA, which also have mobility components). It is paid at two different rates, depending on whether you need help in the day time, or through the night, or for both day and night:

- The lower rate (£55.10 per week) is payable if you satisfy *either* the day-time or the night-time disability test.
- The higher rate (£82.30 per week) is payable if you satisfy *both* the day-time and the night-time disability tests (see above).

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

If you are under the age of 65, you can claim a similar benefit, Personal Independence Payment (PIP), instead of Attendance Allowance. PIP has replaced an earlier benefit, Disability Living Allowance (DLA), which may continue for people already claiming it. If you are receiving either of these benefits when you reach the age of 65, you can go on claiming them, instead of claiming Attendance Allowance. You cannot receive either PIP or DLA at the same time as Attendance Allowance.

► See Arthritis Care’s factsheet on ‘Personal Independence Payment’ for more information.

How do I claim?

To claim Attendance Allowance you will need to complete and submit claim form AA1. You may also be asked to attend a medical assessment.

You can ask the Attendance Allowance Unit to send you a form by post, or you can download a form to print and complete. You also have the option to fill in the form on screen, save it and then print the completed form. However you fill it in, you will need to submit your completed form by post to the Attendance Allowance Unit. Emailed forms will not be accepted.

To contact the Attendance Allowance Unit:

For further information about making a claim, or to obtain a form, contact the Attendance Allowance helpline (tel: 0345 605 6055) or visit their website (gov.uk/attendance-allowance).

Advice on completing claim form AA1

It is a good idea to get advice on how to fill in your claim form. You can call the Attendance Allowance helpline (tel: 0345 605 6055). Or, if you cannot fill in the form yourself, contact a local advice centre, such as Citizens Advice, a local Age UK group (call 0800 169 65 65), DIAL (call Scope on 0808 800 3333 for details), or your local authority welfare rights service (call your local council for details).

► See page 7 for some useful further contacts.

Completing the claim form

If you are completing the form on paper, you may find it helpful to fill it out in pencil first before finalising your answers in pen, or to write your responses on a separate piece of paper first to avoid mistakes. Answer every question as clearly as you can.

It is a good idea to keep a copy of your completed answers, so you can refer back to them if necessary. It will make it easier when you need to renew the claim or if you need help to challenge a decision.

Most of the claim form consists of a series of questions that relate to your care and supervision needs. Each question looks at a different area of your day-to-day life. They usually follow a similar pattern. You are first asked to tick 'yes' or 'no' to confirm whether or not you have difficulties or need help with that area of day-to-day life. Read the whole page before answering this. You are then asked more specific questions on each subject, including how often you need help.

At the end of each question, there is space to provide details of your difficulties. You may live alone and manage because you have no choice, but it is important to describe what help you would ask for if someone was there to help. You might be managing by yourself at the moment, but some of the tasks may be difficult without help from someone else. For example, they could be painful, time-consuming or risky.

Your condition may be variable. Many people claiming Attendance Allowance focus on good days. But you need to explain what help you need on a regular basis. Try to focus on an average day and list the problems you face more often than not. Explain what you are like on your worst days and how often such days occur.

Over the following pages, we take you through some of the questions in the claim form in more detail.

Claim form questions

Help with your care needs during the day

Question 27 Question 27 asks you about getting in and out of bed. Morning stiffness is a common problem for many people with arthritis — particularly those who have rheumatoid arthritis or polymyalgia rheumatica.

Some questions to consider are:

- Do you feel pain and/or stiffness when you get out of bed in the morning?
- Do you need help to stand?
- Do you feel dizzy when you stand up?
- How long does it take before you can get out of bed?

Mention anything you think is relevant. If you use equipment, such as a hoist to help you get out of bed, make sure you include this on the form. If you have problems getting in and out of bed, it is probable that it will be every day. If this is the case, say so. If your arthritis is variable, remember to fill in the form to show how you are on your bad days. It is also important to mention if you need encouragement to get out of bed, to wash, get dressed or move around because of pain, depression or general difficulty with moving.

Question 28 Question 28 covers getting to and using the toilet. If you need help going to the toilet, say so. If you use any special equipment, such as a raised toilet seat, grab rails or a bottom wiper, make sure you note this on the form.

Question 29 Question 29 is about washing, bathing, showering and looking after your appearance. Things you should think about when describing your problems could include:

- Do you need help getting into or out of the bath or shower?
- Do you have to use a walk-in shower or are you likely to slip in the bath or shower?
- Do you have trouble washing your hair?
- Do you have difficulty squeezing a toothpaste tube, shaving or bending to use the sink?

Question 30 Question 30 asks you about dressing and undressing. Mention any part of the process that causes difficulty and estimate the extra time it takes to get ready. Write down if you have difficulty bending to put on socks or shoes, or if you avoid certain clothes because you struggle with zips, buttons or laces.

Question 31 Question 31 asks about difficulty moving about indoors. You may find you have difficulty getting in and out of a chair, getting into a comfortable position or arranging pillows or cushions. If getting into and

out of a chair is difficult because you feel stiff, mention this. You should also think about how long it takes you to stand again after sitting down.

Some questions to think about are:

- Do you have to hold on to furniture as you move about the house?
- Do you need help to get upstairs?
- List any occasions when you have fallen or stumbled on the stairs.
- If you use a stairlift, do you need help transferring to and from it?

Make sure you mention everything.

Question 32 Question 32 asks if you fall or stumble, asks what happens when you fall and whether you need help to get up. The form also asks for the date of your last fall and how often it happens.

Question 33 Question 33 asks about help you might need at mealtimes. Think about any problems carrying your plate to the table, cutting up food, and drinking or feeding yourself.

Question 34 Question 34 covers taking tablets, medicine or other medical treatments. If your fingers are stiff or painful, you may have difficulty opening some pill bottles, dealing with injections or applying creams. Mention any side effects of taking your medicines, such as dizzy spells or drowsiness. Dizzy spells and blackouts can happen as a side effect of medication, or even sometimes because of extreme pain. If this happens to you, make sure you include it.

Question 35 Question 35 is about communication. It is important to describe how much help you need from family or friends. If you find it hard to speak or if people find it hard to understand what you are saying, describe how this affects you. Cover things like: reading labels on medicine bottles; reading newspapers or magazines; needing someone to sign your name for you; reading street names, bus numbers and timetables; or recognising someone in the street. Also mention if reading and replying to your mail is difficult. If you are hard of hearing or use a hearing aid, say how long you have been affected. Describe how often you find it hard to hear the radio or TV, or to catch what someone is saying, especially if more than one person is talking.

Question 37 In your answer to Question 37, you need to explain the help you need from another person at home or when you go out. This can be help with things like social and religious activities, interests and hobbies. Include things you do not do now, but would if you had the help — perhaps things you used to enjoy or things you would like to be able to do if you had someone to help you.

Question 38 Question 38 is about having someone to keep an eye on you. If you have had falls and need help getting up, you should write about that here.

Help with your care needs during the night

- Question 40** Question 40 asks about the help you need with personal tasks during the night from another person. If you need help during the night to get in and out of bed because of stiffness or dizzy spells, or need help to use the toilet, it is important to mention it here. If turning over in bed causes you pain or discomfort, and help from someone else could make things easier, mention this as well.
- Question 42** Question 42 asks about someone needing to keep an eye on you in the night. If you have had falls at night and had to get someone to help you get up, include that here.
- Question 44** One page on the form (Question 44) invites you to tell them anything else that they may need to know. This gives you the chance to tell the decision-maker anything you have not been able to mention anywhere else. Make sure you mention anything that will give your claim a better chance of success. You can also use extra pages, but make sure you write your name and national insurance number on each page.

After submitting your claim

Your application may take several weeks to process, but if you are awarded Attendance Allowance, it will normally be backdated to the date on your claim form. Sometimes the person making the decision on whether to award you the benefit may need further information. If this is the case, they may contact one of the health professionals treating you. If they need still more information, they can arrange for a doctor to visit you to carry out a medical examination. If this happens, then, when the doctor comes, it is a good idea to have a family member or friend with you who knows your condition well.

What to do if your claim is unsuccessful

If your claim is unsuccessful, you have the right to challenge the decision and there are a number of options available to you – from requesting a reconsideration to submitting a formal appeal.

► For more information, see Arthritis Care's factsheet, 'If you are unhappy with your benefit decision'.

Other benefits

Receiving Attendance Allowance does not affect your eligibility for other benefits. It may entitle you to extra money, such as the disability premiums on means-tested benefits in recognition of the extra costs of disability. However, if someone is paid Carer's Allowance to look after you, it may affect your eligibility for the severe disability premium. In this instance, contact an advice centre to seek advice on your situation (see opposite).

Further help

For further advice and support, contact a local advice centre, such as Citizens Advice, Age UK (call 0800 678 1174), DIAL (call Scope on 0808 800 3333 for details) or local authority welfare rights service (call your local council for details).

Sources of information

- Arthritis Care factsheets — arthritiscare.org.uk
- Citizens Advice — citizensadvice.org.uk
- GOV.UK (England, Wales and Scotland) — gov.uk
- Disability Rights UK factsheets — disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help
- nidirect (Northern Ireland) — nidirect.gov.uk

Disclaimer: This factsheet is only a guide and does not cover every circumstance. We have done our best to make sure the factsheet is correct as per the date below. Some of the information may be oversimplified or may become inaccurate over time - for example, because of changes to the law. We recommend that you get independent advice before making financial decisions based on this factsheet.



ARTHRITIS CARE

How Arthritis Care can help you

Want to talk to someone about your arthritis?
Or read more about the condition?

Call our free, confidential Helpline on 0808 800 4050 for information and support. We're open weekdays from 09:30 to 17:00 – we'd really like to hear from you.

We have over 40 free booklets and factsheets on various aspects of arthritis, from diet and surgery, to managing pain and fatigue. These can be sent to you in the post – just ask our Helpline staff for details.

Go online

You can download all our booklets and factsheets as PDFs from arthritiscare.org.uk/information

We also have an Online Community, where you can chat to others with arthritis, and can be reached at arthritiscareforum.org.uk



Arthritis Care and Arthritis Research UK have joined together to help more people live well with arthritis. Read how at arthritiscare.org.uk/merger. All donations will now go to Arthritis Research UK and be used to help people with arthritis live full and active lives in communities across England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

Thank you

Contact us

Our Helpline:

0808 800 4050

Our website:

arthritiscare.org.uk

Our offices:

England:

020 7380 6540

Northern Ireland:

028 9078 2940

Scotland:

0141 954 7776

Wales:

029 2044 4155

Social media:



@arthritis_care



facebook.com/arthritiscareuk



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First printed in 2016. Next review 2017. ISBN: 978-0-99 55657-7-7

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