

Attendance Allowance (AA)

Attendance Allowance (AA) is a benefit in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for people who are State Pension age or over. It is for people who have problems looking after themselves (personal care needs) because of an illness or disability.

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What is Attendance Allowance (AA)?

Attendance Allowance (AA) is a benefit in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for people who are State Pension age or over. It is for people who have problems looking after themselves (personal care needs) because of an illness or disability.

If you are under State Pension age, apply for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) instead of AA.

Who can claim?

To get AA, you must have problems with looking after yourself. You must need at least 1 of the following:

- help with your personal care
- someone to be with you to keep you safe during the day or night (supervision).

You must have needed this help for at least 6 months, unless you are [terminally ill](#) (page 3).

Help with personal care means help with things like:

- getting in and out of bed
- using the toilet or managing incontinence
- washing yourself – including getting in and out of the bath or shower
- looking after your appearance
- dressing and undressing
- moving around indoors
- eating and drinking
- taking medicines and managing treatments
- communicating with other people
- having dialysis, which is a type of treatment for kidney problems
- avoiding any danger to yourself or others.

You may need help with personal care because you are having problems with physical things, such as washing yourself. Or you may need help because of how you are feeling. For example, you may find it extremely stressful trying to do daily personal tasks.

If you often have problems looking after yourself or need someone with you to make sure you are safe, you should think about applying for AA.

It is also important to know that:

- you can claim AA whether you are working or not
- you do not need to have paid National Insurance to claim AA
- you do not need to have a carer or someone helping you to claim AA
- your income and savings do not affect your claim
- if you get AA, your other benefits will not be reduced – they may even increase
- AA payments are tax free.

Terminal illness (special rules)

If you are terminally ill, you can apply using a process called special rules. The process can help people nearing the end of life get easier access to some benefits. The special rules apply to people who are likely to have less than 12 months to live.

Claiming AA under special rules means:

- you do not need to have had problems looking after yourself for 6 months
- you may get a decision faster
- you get the benefit at the highest rate
- the money is paid weekly
- someone can make the claim on your behalf.

When you apply for AA, you must explain that you are claiming under special rules. Your doctor or nurse must also complete a form called an SR1. They send the form to:

- the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) if you are claiming in England or Wales
- the Department for Communities (DfC) if you are claiming in Northern Ireland.

How much you could get

AA is paid at 2 different rates. The rate you get depends on how much care you need:

- You get the lower rate if you need help or supervision either during the day or night.
- You get the higher rate if you need help or supervision both during the day and night, or if you are terminally ill.

You can find out the current rates of payment at [gov.uk/attendance-allowance/what-youll-get](https://www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance/what-youll-get)

The money is paid directly into your bank, building society or credit union account. It can also be paid to someone on your behalf if you cannot make a claim yourself.

There are no rules around how you can spend AA. You do not need to spend the money you get paying for care. Some people have support from family or friends and use the money for other things, such as equipment or transport.

How to claim

If you live in England or Wales, you can:

- apply online or download and print an application form at gov.uk/attendance-allowance/how-to-claim
- call the AA helpline on **0800 731 0122** or use textphone **0800 731 0317** and ask for a form.

If you live in Northern Ireland, you can:

- apply online or download and print an application form at nidirect.gov.uk/articles/attendance-allowance
- call the Disability and Carers Service helpline on **0800 587 0912** or use textphone **0800 012 1574** and ask them to send you a form
- visit your local Social Security or Jobs and Benefits office.

If you ask for a form to be sent to you by post, try to return it within 6 weeks. If you return the form within this time, the benefit can be backdated to the date you requested the form.

The form asks personal questions about how your health problems affect your daily life. Try to include as much detail as possible.

The claim form is long. Make sure you have plenty of time. You may find it helpful to read it through first. Then you can get all the information you need before you start. The form also comes with notes to explain and help you answer the questions.

You may want to record any problems you have in [a diary](#) (pages 5 to 6) to show how your condition affects your daily life. You can send it as supporting evidence along with your form.

Someone else can complete the form for you, if you can sign it. If you cannot sign the form, the person completing the form needs legal permission to sign it on your behalf. This is called power of attorney. You can find out more information about this at gov.uk/become-appointee-for-someone-claiming-benefits

If you are [terminally ill](#) (page 3), you do not need to sign the form.

Getting help with benefits

You can speak to a Macmillan money adviser by calling our Support Line on **0808 808 00 00**, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm. They are trained to help you get any benefits you may be entitled to.

You may also be able to meet a welfare rights adviser in person through a local service. This depends on where you live. Visit macmillan.org.uk/inyourarea to check whether this is possible in your area.

Other organisations can also help you get the financial support you need, including your local:

- Citizens Advice in England, Scotland and Wales – visit citizensadvice.org.uk
- Advice NI in Northern Ireland – visit adviceni.net

Keeping a diary

Recording the problems you have every day in a diary can help show:

- how your condition affects you
- how often you are affected
- that you have problems looking after yourself.

You can send your diary as supporting evidence along with your claim form. Other evidence could include reports or care plans from your GP, cancer doctor, specialist nurse or other healthcare professionals.

If you cannot do an activity, such as washing or getting dressed, think about the following things:

- Do you need help to do a task, and what help do you need?
- How long does the activity or task take?
- Does it cause you pain or discomfort?

The following table shows an example of what you could write in your diary.

| Task | Day(s) of the week I have difficulties with these tasks | Difficulties I had and what help I needed | How long it took | How many times in the day I needed help |
|-------------------------|---|---|--|--|
| Dressing and undressing | Sunday | I needed help as I cannot do up the buttons on my shirts and trousers, or manipulate the zips. I have to sit down due to dizziness while dressing and undressing. | It takes me 20 minutes every time I get dressed. | I needed help twice today as my fingers could not do up or undo my clothes. This is due to the peripheral neuropathy I have been left with after chemotherapy treatment. |

We have a sample diary on our website that you can download and complete – visit [macmillan.org.uk/benefits](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/benefits)

You can also use the diary in our booklet **Help with the cost of cancer**. Visit orders.macmillan.org.uk or call **0808 808 00 00** to order the booklet for free.

If your claim is approved

You will get a letter that explains whether you will get AA, and how much you will get. If your claim is approved, the letter will tell you how much you will get and for how long.

If your situation changes

If your situation changes, your AA claim may be affected. For example, if your condition gets worse, you may be able to get the higher rate.

Your benefit payments may be affected if you go abroad, or if you go into hospital or a care home for more than 4 weeks.

The rules are complicated, so it may be helpful speak with a welfare rights adviser. You can contact your local:

- Citizens Advice in England and Wales – visit citizensadvice.org.uk
- benefits advice centre or Advice NI in Northern Ireland – visit adviceni.net

Or call our money advisers on **0808 808 00 00**.

You should tell the benefits service if anything changes:

- If you live in England, or Wales, call the AA helpline on **0800 731 0122** or use textphone **0800 731 0317**.
- If you live in Northern Ireland, call the Disability and Carers Service on **0800 587 0912** or use textphone **0800 012 1574**.

If you are refused AA

If you disagree with a decision about your benefits, you may be able to ask for it to be reviewed again. For example, you might ask for this if you are refused AA or paid less than you think you should get.

If you are refused AA, you can ask the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) or Department for Communities (DfC) to reconsider the decision.

For more information about appealing a benefits decision, visit:

- gov.uk/appeal-benefit-decision if you live in England or Wales
- nidirect.gov.uk/appeal-benefits-decision if you live in Northern Ireland.

Challenging a benefits decision can be complicated. You can speak to our money advisers by calling **0808 808 00 00**, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

You may also be able to meet a welfare rights adviser in person through a local service. This depends on where you live. Visit macmillan.org.uk/inyourarea to check whether this is possible in your area.

More information and support

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00** (7 days a week, 8am to 8pm), or visit macmillan.org.uk

Would you prefer to speak to us in another language? Interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use. Are you deaf or hard of hearing? Call us using Relay UK on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the Relay UK app.

Sources

If you would like further information about the sources we use, please contact us at informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk

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