

Attendance allowance

Money, grants and benefits

Find out more about
Attendance Allowance,
how it can help and
how to claim



Attendance allowance

If you have Parkinson's, you might be worried about how you'll manage financially. If you need help with your day-to-day needs, this can lead to extra costs. But there is financial support available, so it's important to find out what benefits you're entitled to.

This information explains what Attendance Allowance is, who qualifies, how to claim and what information you need to provide to apply.

The information in this publication is correct as of June 2024, but is subject to change. Our most up-to-date information is on our website at parkinsons.org.uk/benefits. Our helpline can also give advice on benefits. Call **0808 800 0303** or email hello@parkinsons.org.uk

What is Attendance Allowance?

If you've reached pension age, have an illness or disability, and you also need help with your personal care or safety, you may be able to claim Attendance Allowance.

The qualifying age for Attendance Allowance is State Pension age, currently 66 years old. You can check your State Pension age at www.gov.uk/state-pension-age

This benefit is for you, not for a carer, and you don't need to have someone supporting or caring for you to qualify. If you do have a carer, they may be able to claim Carer's Allowance (or Carer Support Payment in Scotland) or National Insurance contribution credits.

Find out more: see our information on Carer's Allowance/Carer Support Payment.

Attendance Allowance is based on the help you need, not on the help you currently get. It doesn't matter whether you live alone or with other people, or if you get a lot of help or none.

The Attendance Allowance claim form is quite long, and can be difficult to fill in because it deals with personal care issues, but it's worth taking the time to do it, because getting Attendance Allowance can increase your weekly income.

If you need help filling out the form, you can call our free confidential helpline on **0808 800 0303** to speak to your Parkinson's local adviser.

Do I qualify for Attendance Allowance?

You're eligible for Attendance Allowance if:

- you are State Pension age. You can check if you are at www.gov.uk/state-pension-age

- you have had care or supervision needs for the last six months (the 'qualifying period')
- you have been living in the UK for two of the last three years and your immigration status doesn't prevent you from claiming
- you are 'habitually resident' in the UK **and**
- you are terminally ill, **or**
- you satisfy one of the disability tests

What are the disability tests?

To get Attendance Allowance, you must have a severe physical or mental disability (or both) that means you need:

- care from another person several times throughout the day to help with your 'bodily functions'. This can include help getting in and out of bed, getting dressed and undressed, washing and other personal hygiene needs, going to the toilet, taking medication, eating, cutting up food, drinking and communicating with other people, **or**
- continual supervision (being checked on or watched regularly – but not non-stop) throughout the day to make sure you're safe or not a danger to yourself or others, **or**
- care from another person at least twice each night, or for 20 minutes or more, to help you with your 'bodily functions' (as described above), **or**
- another person to be awake and watch over you to make sure that you're safe or not a danger to others, at least three times each night, or for 20 minutes or more each night

How much will I get?

Attendance Allowance is paid at one of two weekly rates, depending on the amount of help you need:

- The lower rate is £72.65 per week and applies if you need the care or supervision described in the previous page throughout the day or the night.
- The higher rate is £108.55 per week and applies if you need care or supervision throughout the day and the night too.

'Special rules' claims

If you're terminally ill and unlikely to live more than 12 months, you will be able to get the higher rate under 'special rules'.

In this case, your doctor, consultant or specialist nurse will need to confirm that you have a terminal illness (they can do this using an SR1 form, which they should keep at the surgery/hospital).

There is no six-month 'qualifying' period for terminal illness claims. Under the rules, someone else can apply on your behalf with or without your knowledge. Special rules claims are reviewed every three years.

If you're terminally ill and live in Scotland, there is no 12-month rule, an award is based on medical opinion alone.

Does Attendance Allowance affect other benefits?

Receiving Attendance Allowance can increase the amount of any means-tested benefits (such as Pension Credit) you get. Attendance Allowance can be paid in addition to any other social security benefits.

However, your local authority might take Attendance Allowance into account when considering if you need to contribute to the cost of any care and support services you receive from them.

Attendance Allowance is not taxable. It's not based on National Insurance contributions. Attendance Allowance is also not means-tested. So any income or savings you have do not affect whether you're awarded it or how much you get.

Can I claim Attendance Allowance alongside DLA or PIP?

No. If you already get Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP), you'll continue to get that benefit and you won't be able to claim Attendance Allowance.

Changes to Attendance Allowance in Scotland

Attendance Allowance is due to be replaced in Scotland (only) by a new benefit called Pension Age Disability Payment. It will be very similar to Attendance Allowance.

For new claimants, it will be launched in five local authority areas in October 2024. They are Argyll & Bute, Highland, Aberdeen City, Orkney and Shetland. On 24 March 2025 it will expand to another 13 local authority areas before becoming available nationally from 22 April 2025.

People already receiving Attendance Allowance will be transferred in 2025 to this new benefit paid by Social Security Scotland.

How is Attendance Allowance paid?

Attendance Allowance is usually paid every four weeks directly into a bank, building society or Post Office card account.

Find out more: if you don't have a bank account, see our 'general information about benefits' booklet, which has information about how to open one.

What if I go into hospital or a care home?

Your Attendance Allowance will stop after you've been in hospital for a total of four weeks (either in one stay, or several stays, where the gaps between stays are no more than four weeks each time).

You can't usually get Attendance Allowance if you live in a care home and your care is paid for by your local authority. You can still claim Attendance Allowance if you pay for all your care home costs yourself.

How long is Attendance Allowance awarded for?

Attendance Allowance may be awarded to you for an indefinite period or for a fixed period of time.

If it's for a fixed period, you'll normally be sent a renewal claim form four months before your existing claim runs out.

How do I claim?

You can download the Attendance Allowance claim form AAI from **www.gov.uk/attendance-allowance/how-to-claim**

If you live in England, Scotland or Wales, you can request the form by calling the Attendance Allowance helpline on **0800 731 0122** (textphone **0800 731 0317**).

You can find out about Attendance Allowance eligibility in Northern Ireland by calling **0800 587 0912** (textphone **0800 012 1574**).

If the Attendance Allowance helpline sends you the claim form, it will be stamped with the date you asked for it. If Attendance Allowance is awarded to you, it will be paid from this date, as long as you return the claim form within six weeks. If you download the form, the date the Department for Work and Pensions receives it is treated as the start date for the claim.

Once you send off the completed claim form, the Department for Work and Pensions (or the Disability and Carers Service in Northern Ireland) may contact your GP, specialist or Parkinson's nurse for further information, or it may send one of its doctors to your home to assess you before they approve your claim.

When can I make a claim?

You must have been in need of care or supervision for six months before you can start being paid Attendance Allowance. You can make your claim during this six-month qualifying period, but the benefit will not be paid until it has ended. If you apply under the special rules for terminal illness, there is no six-month qualifying period.

Tips for making a claim

- Use an up-to-date claim form.
- Make a photocopy of the claim form once you've completed it.
- You normally have six weeks to complete the form, so take your time filling it in – try to get help if you need it. You can call the Parkinson's helpline on **0808 800 0303**.
- Don't be afraid to add extra pages if needed – just remember to write your name and National Insurance number on each page.
- Don't underestimate your needs. If you have a carer, think about what it would be like without them. If you manage on your own, don't be afraid to make it clear how difficult it is for you.
- If an assessor visits you, try not to feel uncomfortable or be rushed into making hasty comments, such as "I can manage by myself". Keep in mind why you're applying for this benefit. If you live by yourself, you might have to manage by yourself – but if you get help you may be able to do things more effectively, or quicker, or without risk or pain. Let the assessor know if this is the case.

- Your condition may change throughout the day. It's important that you write down this information when you complete the claim form.
- If your condition changes from day to day, explain what you're like on an average or typical day, but also include what you're like on both a good and bad day. Write down how often you have both good and bad days (for example, "I have bad days around four days each week").

Take some time to think about how Parkinson's affects you. It might be helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- Is dressing a problem?
- Is bathing or showering difficult?
- Do you need help cutting toenails or fingernails?
- How do you get out of bed?
- Do you find it difficult to start moving?
- Do you fall or stumble sometimes? If so, is it difficult to get up again?
- Do you need someone with you when you go outside?
- Does your condition change throughout the day?
- Do you have times during the day when you go 'off'?
- What's your handwriting like?
- What's your speech like?

For some of these points, it may also help to keep a daily diary of your care needs.

Find out more: see our information on monitoring your Parkinson's.

Write down in the claim form any changes you've had to make to your routine because of your condition. For example, you may have difficulty putting on make-up, wearing jewellery or tying a tie.

If you wear lipstick and have problems applying it, you may give up wearing it. But why should you if that's part of your appearance? This needs to be explained.

You may want to wear a tie every day because you don't feel properly dressed without one. But you might need help because it's difficult to do it yourself. This also needs to be mentioned.

You might now wear a different style of clothes. This could be because you find them easier to put on.

For example, you might wear a sweatshirt without buttons rather than a cardigan, or shoes without laces, because they're easier to manage. If this is the case, always say so in the claim form and explain why you now wear a particular piece of clothing.

What if I'm refused Attendance Allowance?

If you feel that you've been wrongly refused Attendance Allowance, it's worth asking the Department for Work and Pensions (the Disability and Carers Service in Northern Ireland) for a 'mandatory reconsideration' of its decision.

You have one month from the date of the decision to do this. You can ask for a mandatory reconsideration over the phone, but it's best to confirm in writing.

It can help if you get a letter from your GP, specialist or Parkinson's nurse, pointing out what your care needs are. The letter may simply state that they have read the diary you've kept of your care needs and they agree that those needs are a result of your condition.

If you've asked for a mandatory reconsideration and the Department for Work and Pensions doesn't change its mind, you have another month to appeal to an independent tribunal.

To do this, fill in an Attendance Allowance appeal form at **www.gov.uk/appeal-benefit-decision**. Alternatively complete a SSCSI form. In Northern Ireland, download form NOA1(SS) from **www.nidirect.gov.uk/publications/appeal-form-noa1ss**. You can get a paper copy from Citizens Advice.

There are organisations that can offer help and advice (some for free) with your appeal, such as Citizens Advice, local welfare rights groups or local solicitors.

What if there's a change in my condition?

If you get the lower rate of Attendance Allowance and your condition progresses, you can ask the Department for Work and Pensions (the Disability and Carers Service in Northern Ireland) to look at your claim again and consider the higher rate.

They may do this if you need help to keep yourself safe, you need to be looked after both during the day and the night, or if you develop a terminal illness. Before putting in your request, try to get some advice and information about the process. If the Department for Work and Pensions receives information that your care needs have decreased, your benefit may be withdrawn.

Before asking for a review, you should consider how your needs have increased on a daily basis. What extra support and help do you need now that you didn't need when you first claimed Attendance Allowance? Keeping a diary of your daily care needs might help you with this.

It can be helpful to get medical support before you ask for a review. A letter from your GP, specialist or Parkinson's nurse that points out what your current care needs are will help. The letter may simply say that they've read the diary of your care needs and agree your condition would create the needs you've mentioned.

When you ask for a review, you need to contact:

- Attendance Allowance Unit (for England, Scotland and Wales) on **0800 731 0122** (textphone **0800 731 0317**)
- Disability and Carers Service – Attendance Allowance (for Northern Ireland) on **0800 587 0912** (textphone **0800 012 1574**)

You'll normally be sent a review form to complete. If your condition improves, you'll also need to get in touch with the Attendance Allowance Unit or Disability and Carers Service as soon as you can.

They'll normally send you a review form, so they can reassess your award.

It's always important to provide full, accurate information to the Attendance Allowance Unit or Disability and Carers Service, and to let them know if your circumstances change.

More information and support

Parkinson's nurses

Parkinson's nurses have specialist experience and knowledge of Parkinson's. They can:

- support people coming to terms with their Parkinson's diagnosis
- help people to manage their medication, so they get the best results and fewer side effects
- make referrals to other professionals such as speech and language therapists and physiotherapists

Some nurses are based in the community, such as your GP surgery. Others are based in hospital settings and clinics.

Talk to your GP or specialist for more details on speaking to a Parkinson's nurse.

Parkinson's UK information and support

Whatever your journey with Parkinson's, you're not alone.

From the moment you or someone you care about is diagnosed, we have information and support for you.

Speak to one of our friendly expert advisers, including specialist Parkinson's nurses, care advisers, and benefits and employment advisers. We've got information and advice on all aspects of living with Parkinson's.

Get help managing your diagnosis. Our information packs, webinars, courses and support groups can help you and your loved ones understand your Parkinson's diagnosis and better manage your symptoms.

Read our up to date, reliable health information. Our website, booklets and magazines can help you better understand Parkinson's. They're full of tips and advice on managing your condition and supporting a loved one.

Find ways to get active, stay active and live well with Parkinson's. Whatever your fitness level, we'll help you find the right activities for you.

Connect with other people with Parkinson's, families, friends and carers. Across the UK, in your local area or online. We'll help you meet others who understand what you're going through, because they're going through it too.

Find out more

- Call our helpline on **0808 800 0303** or email **hello@parkinsons.org.uk** to speak to an expert adviser.
- Visit **parkinsons.org.uk/information-and-support** to read our information or find support that's local to you.
- Call **0330 124 3250** or visit **parkinsons.org.uk/order-print-booklets** to order free printed information.

Thank you

Thank you very much to everyone who contributed to or reviewed this information.

Thanks also to our information review group and other people affected by Parkinson's who provided feedback.

Feedback

If you have any comments or feedback about our information, please call **0800 138 6593**, email **feedback@parkinsons.org.uk**, or write to us at Parkinson's UK, 50 Broadway, London, SW1H 0BL.

If you'd like to find out more about how we put our information together, or be part of the team that reviews our health content, please contact us at **healthcontent@parkinsons.org.uk** or visit our website at **parkinsons.org.uk/health-content**.

Can you help?

At Parkinson's UK, we are totally dependent on donations from individuals and organisations to fund the work that we do. There are many ways that you can help us to support people with Parkinson's.

If you would like to get involved, please contact our Supporter Care team on **0800 138 6593** or visit our website at **parkinsons.org.uk/donate**.

Thank you.

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We're Parkinson's UK,
the charity that's
here to support every
Parkinson's journey.
Every step of the way.

Free confidential helpline **0808 800 0303**
Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm,
Saturday 10am to 2pm (interpreting available)
Relay UK **18001 0808 800 0303** (for textphone users only)
hello@parkinsons.org.uk | parkinsons.org.uk

Parkinson's UK, 50 Broadway, London SW1H 0DB



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