



S O C I A L  
S E C U R I T Y  
A G E N C Y

# Going into hospital?

A basic guide to  
benefits you may be able to  
get and the effects on benefit  
you already get



An agency within

Department for  
Social Development  
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# Going into hospital?

Anyone can be affected by sickness, injury and disability at any time, often when least expected. You or someone you claim for may have to go into hospital. You may need social security benefits to help you and your family.

- This leaflet gives basic advice on the benefits you may be able to get. We want to make sure you and your family get the right help, at the right time, in the right way.
- If you (or someone you claim for) have to go into hospital, the rules for some benefits you already get may also change.

Most social security benefits are paid to help with day-to-day needs or special needs because of a disability. If you (or someone you claim for) go into hospital, the Health Service (HS) takes responsibility for some of these needs. This means the amount of benefit paid may go down during a stay in hospital.

If you get any benefits, the **most important** thing is to let your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office know if you (or someone you claim for) are going into or coming out of hospital.

If you have a question that is not answered in this leaflet, or if you just want more advice, please contact your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office. See '*Where to get help and advice*' on page 16 of this leaflet for details.

# Benefits you may be able to get

**Check first what benefit or benefits you may be able to get. Also check if there are any effects on benefits you are already getting.**

If you were working for an employer and earning enough to be relevant for National Insurance (NI) purposes (this amount is lower than the amount when you have to start **paying** NI contributions), check **Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)** (see page 5).

If you want to know how much you have to earn to be relevant for NI purposes, contact your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office.

If you were not working when you became sick, you were self-employed or you have been sick for more than 28 weeks, check **Incapacity Benefit** (see page 5).

If you and your partner are on a low income and any of the following apply, check **Income Support** and **Pension Credit** (see pages 6 and 7).

- You are sick or disabled.
- You are aged 60 or over.
- You are a lone parent.
- You are caring for someone who is ill or disabled.
- You are registered blind.

We use partner to mean a person you are married to or a person you live with as if you are married to them, or a civil partner or a person you live with as if you are a civil partner.

**If you cannot manage your own affairs while you are in hospital,** make sure someone tells the office that pays your benefit.

If you are already getting benefits, check if they are affected by going into hospital (see page 9).

## National Insurance (NI)

**For some benefits you must have paid or be treated as having paid National Insurance (NI) contributions. For more information, contact your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office.**

## Benefits you may be able to get

### Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)

- Paid by your employer.
- Paid for up to 28 weeks.

#### Were you:

- ✓ sick for at least four days in a row including weekends and bank holidays?
- ✓ employed when you became sick?
- ✓ earning enough on average to be relevant for NI purposes (this amount is lower than the amount when you have to start **paying** NI contributions)?

#### If you can answer 'Yes' to all, you can claim SSP.

If you want to know how much you have to earn to be relevant for NI purposes, contact your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office.

- You can get SSP for up to 28 weeks in one period of sickness.
- Periods with eight weeks or less between them are counted as one period.
- If you have more than one job, you may be able to claim SSP from each employer.
- SSP is not affected if you go into hospital.

If SSP ends, claim Incapacity Benefit.

### Incapacity Benefit

- If SSP has ended or you cannot get SSP.
- It is not paid if you were over State Pension age when you became sick.

#### Have you:

- ✓ paid NI contributions?
- ✓ been sick for at least four days in a row including weekends and bank holidays?

#### If you can answer 'Yes' to both, you can claim Incapacity Benefit.

Incapacity Benefit can be paid at three different rates.

#### Short-term Incapacity Benefit at the lower rate

This is paid if you do not get SSP and have been sick for at least four days in a row, including weekends and bank holidays.

#### Short-term Incapacity Benefit at the higher rate

This is paid if you have been getting Incapacity Benefit for more than 28 weeks and less than 52 weeks.

#### Long-term Incapacity Benefit

This is paid if you have been getting Incapacity Benefit for over 52 weeks.

**How to claim - see page 8**

## Special circumstances

- If you became sick before reaching State Pension age, you may be able to get Incapacity Benefit after State Pension age. It can be paid at the State Pension rate for up to one year of sickness.
- If you get the highest-rate care component of Disability Living Allowance or you are terminally ill, you will get Incapacity Benefit paid at the long-term rate after you have been sick for 28 weeks.
- To find out how your Incapacity Benefit is affected if you (or someone you claim for) go into hospital, see page 10.
- If you get the long-term rate of Incapacity Benefit, you may qualify for extra money depending on your age when you became sick.

## If you have children

- You may be able to get Child Tax Credit. To find out more about Child Tax Credit, phone the HM Revenue & Customs Helpline on **0845 603 2000**. If you use a textphone, the number is **0845 607 6078**.

## Extra help for adult dependants

- If your partner is aged 60 or over, or another adult cares for your children, you may be able to get extra money.

We use partner to mean:

- A person you are married to or a person you live with as if you are married to them, or
- A civil partner or a person you live with as if you are civil partners.

## Additional State Pension

- Depending on your NI record, you may build up additional pension, through State Second Pension, for every full tax year you get long-term Incapacity Benefit, starting from 6 April 2002. For more information, see leaflet PM2 'State pensions - your guide.'

## Pension Credit

Pension Credit is a new entitlement for people aged 60 or over.

Pension Credit provides a contribution towards a guaranteed level of income of at least £114.05 a week for single people aged 60 or over, and at least £174.05 for couples (at least one of whom must be aged 60 or over). These amounts will increase if you have caring responsibilities, are severely disabled or have certain housing costs.

## Benefits you may be able to get

People aged 65 and over who have made modest arrangements for their retirement (for example, through a pension or savings) may also be rewarded. This reward can be worth as much as:

- £17.88 a week for a single person; or
- £23.58 a week for a couple.

You can phone the Pension Service application line to apply for Pension Credit on **0800 100 6165**. The line is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Saturday. If you have speech or hearing difficulties, the text phone number is **0800 100 1165**.

One of our staff will fill in an application form for you over the phone or can call you back at a more convenient time to fill the form. They will then post the filled-in form to you so you can check it and sign it.

To find out how your Pension Credit is affected if you (or someone you claim for) go into hospital, see pages 11 and 12.

## Income Support

- This is for people on a low income, but savings over £8000 usually mean you cannot get Income Support (£12,000 if you or your partner are aged 60 or over, and £16,000 if you live in a care home).

### Are you:

- ✓ aged 16 or over?
- ✓ on a low income?
- ✓ not working, or working on average less than 16 hours a week (24 hours a week for your partner)?

### If you can answer 'Yes' to all, you can claim Income Support.

- Savings over £3000 (£6000 if you or your partner are aged 60 or over), or over £10,000 if you live in a care home, usually affect how much Income Support you can get.
- You may be able to get extra money to help towards certain housing costs.
- You can usually get extra money for your family.
- If you are sick and not getting SSP, you should claim Incapacity Benefit as well as Income Support.
- To find out if you can get Income Support because of a low income, check with your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office.
- To find out how your Income Support is affected if you (or someone you claim for) go into hospital, see page 11.

**How to claim - see page 8**

# How to claim

## 1 When to claim

Claim straight away. If you delay, you may lose benefit.

## 2 Claim form

Ask your employer about SSP. For other benefits, contact your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office for a claim form. For your nearest Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office, look for the **Social Security Agency** display advert in the business numbers section of the phone book.

## 3 Filling in the form

Before you fill in your form, check that you are applying for everything you may be entitled to. Use this leaflet as a guide.

## 4 Proof of identity

It is important that we can be sure of your identity when you make a claim. We may need to ask you about your background and look at any official documents you have to support the information you give. This could be your original birth certificate, your passport or other documents. You may need more than one.

If you are not sure about this, get leaflet **GL25** '*How to prove your identity for Social Security*' from your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office.

**Now check what happens to benefits when you go into hospital.**

# What happens to benefits when you go into hospital

You must tell your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office as soon as you (or someone you get benefit for) go into or comes out of hospital.

If you get Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), you must tell your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office about going into or coming out of hospital.

Most benefits reduce after you have been in hospital for a certain number of weeks.

For information about how much benefit you can get when you are in hospital, get leaflet **GL23** '*Social Security benefit rates*' from your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office.

When we work out the date your benefit should reduce, we count periods in hospital with four weeks or less between them as one period.

**Statutory Sick Pay (SSP)**

**Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit**

**Reduced Earnings Allowance (REA)**

**Retirement Allowance**

These benefits are not affected however long you are in hospital.

## If you are getting one of these benefits

- State Pension
- Incapacity Benefit
- Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA)
- Bereavement benefits
- Widows' benefits
- Over-80 Pension
- Industrial Death Benefit

- ✓ Are you going into hospital?
- ✓ Is someone you get extra money for going into hospital?

If you can answer 'Yes' to one, check the details below.

### As soon as you (or someone who depends on you) go into hospital

- Nothing will usually happen to your benefit straight away.
- If you get extra money for someone who looks after children for you and that person goes into hospital, the extra money may stop straight away.

### After 12 weeks

- If you get extra money for a child and they are in hospital, the extra money may stop. The extra money may continue if you regularly spend money on them for things like toys, gifts and visits while they are in hospital.

## What happens to benefits when you go into hospital

### Income Support

#### If you are getting Income Support

- ✓ Are you going into hospital?
- ✓ Is someone you get extra money for going into hospital?

If you can answer 'Yes' to one, check the details below.

#### As soon as you (or someone who depends on you) go into hospital

- Nothing will usually happen to your Income Support straight away.

#### After four weeks

- If you stop getting Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance, your Income Support will be reduced if you or your partner are in hospital.

*We use partner to mean a person you are married to or a person you are living with as if you are married, or a civil partner or a person you live with as if you are civil partners.*

#### After 12 weeks

- If any children you claim for are in hospital, your Income Support will usually be reduced.
- If you get help with housing costs, we will look at them to see if they should continue. We will do this every 12

weeks if you are still in hospital.

#### If someone living with you who does not depend on you goes into hospital

- If you get help with your housing costs in your Income Support and someone who shares your accommodation but is not dependent on you has been in hospital for more than 52 weeks, we will stop making a deduction from your housing costs in respect of their contribution to your household

### Pension Credit

#### If you are getting Pension Credit

- ✓ Are you going into hospital?
- ✓ Is your partner going in to hospital?

If you can answer 'Yes' to one, check the details below.

#### As soon as you go into hospital, or someone who depends on you goes into hospital

- Nothing will usually happen to your Pension Credit straight away.

## After four weeks

- If you stop getting Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance, your Pension Credit will be reduced if you or your partner are in hospital.

*We use partner to mean a person you are married to or a person you live with as if you are married to them or a civil partner or a person you live with as if you are civil partners.*

## If someone living with you who does not depend on you goes into hospital

- If you get help with your housing costs in your Pension Credit and someone who shares your accommodation but does not depend on you has been in hospital for more than 52 weeks, we will stop making a deduction from your housing costs for their contribution to your household finances.

## Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)

### If you are getting JSA

- ✓ Are you going into hospital?
- ✓ Is someone you get extra money for going into hospital?

**If you can answer 'Yes' to one, check the details below.**

### As soon as you (or someone who depends on you) go into hospital

- Nothing will usually happen to your

JSA straight away.

- But you must tell your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office straight away that you have gone into hospital. If you do not, your JSA may stop.

### After two weeks

- If you are the person in hospital, your JSA will stop.
- You may be able to get Incapacity Benefit or Income Support.

### After four weeks

- If your partner is the person in hospital and you get a Severe Disability Premium for them, this will usually stop.

### After 12 weeks

- If any children you claim for are in hospital, your JSA will usually be reduced.

### After 52 weeks

- If your partner is the person in hospital, your JSA will usually be reduced.

## If someone living with you who does not depend on you goes into hospital

- If you get help with your housing costs in your Jobseeker's Allowance and someone who shares your accommodation but does not depend on you has been in hospital for more than 52 weeks, we will stop making a deduction from your housing costs for their contribution to your household finances.

## What happens to benefits when you go into hospital

### Attendance Allowance (AA)

### Constant Attendance Allowance (CAA)

#### If you are getting one of these benefits

- ✓ Are you going into hospital?

#### If you can answer 'Yes', check the details below.

##### After four weeks

- Your AA or CAA will usually stop.

#### As soon as you go into hospital,

Let the Disability & Carers Service or your local Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office know if you are receiving AA. The phone number for the Disability & Carers Service is **02890 906178**.

If you are receiving CAA paid with your War Pension, you must let the Veteran's Agency know (see page 14 for details).

Let the Industrial Injuries Branch or your local Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office know if you are receiving CAA.

### Disability Living Allowance (DLA)

#### If you are getting DLA

- ✓ Are you going into hospital?

#### If you can answer 'Yes', check the details below.

##### After four weeks

- If DLA is paid for someone aged 16 or over, it will usually stop.
- If you go into hospital and you benefit from the Motability Scheme, this may continue until your Motability agreement ends.

##### After 12 weeks

- If DLA is paid for a child aged under 16, it will usually stop.

Let the Disability & Carers Service or your local Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office know if you, or a child you are looking after, are receiving DLA. The phone number for the Disability & Carers Service is **02890 906182**.

### Carer's Allowance (CA)

#### If you are getting CA

- ✓ Are you going into hospital?
- ✓ Is someone you get extra money for going into hospital?
- ✓ Is the person you look after going into hospital?

#### If you can answer 'Yes' to one, check the details below.

#### As soon as you, or someone you get extra money for, or the person you look after go into hospital

- CA may stop straight away. But in certain circumstances it may continue for up to 12 weeks.

## What happens to benefits when you go into hospital

- Let the Disability & Carers Service or your local Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office know. The phone number for the Disability & Carers Service is **02890 906186**.

### Housing Benefit

- If you do not expect to be in hospital for more than a year, Housing Benefit may continue.
- But you must still tell your local Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) or the Rate Collection Agency (RCA) immediately if you or a member of your family go into hospital.
- If someone who shares your accommodation but does not depend on you has been in hospital for more than 52 weeks, we will stop making a deduction from your Housing Benefit for their contribution to your household finances.

### Child Benefit

### Guardian's Allowance

#### Are you:

- ✓ getting Child Benefit or Guardian's Allowance for a child who is going into hospital?

**If you can answer 'Yes', check the details below.**

#### If the child normally lives with you

- You will continue to get Child Benefit or Guardian's Allowance unless:
  - your child has been in hospital for more than 12 weeks; and
  - you no longer regularly spend money on things like toys, gifts and visits on the child while they are in hospital.
- If the child does not usually live with you, but you get Child Benefit or Guardian's Allowance because you pay to support them, this can continue as long as you continue to support the child.
- If you stop spending money on the child, you must let us know, as your Child Benefit or Guardian's Allowance will usually stop.

### War Pension

- War Disablement Pension and War Widow's or War Widower's Pension can be affected if you or one of your dependants go into hospital.

You must contact the Veterans Agency at:

**The Veterans Agency  
Marlborough House  
Victoria Street  
Belfast  
BT1 3GG.**

# Travel costs

## Travel costs to and from hospital

- Help with the cost of your fares or petrol when you go into hospital for Health Service treatment and when you come out of hospital.
- Help with the cost of your fares or petrol when you go to and from hospital as an outpatient for HS treatment.

### Do you get:

- ✓ Income Support?
- ✓ income-based Jobseeker's Allowance?
- ✓ Pension Credit?

**If you can answer 'Yes' to one, you can get help with travel costs to hospital. Ask the hospital staff for more information.**

If you answer 'No', you may be able to get help with travel costs through the HS Low-Income Scheme. Ask for form HCI at your local Social Security or Jobs & Benefits Office.

- If you need someone to travel with you, you may also be able to get help with the cost of their fares.

- If you want more information, get leaflet **HC11** 'Are you entitled to help with health costs' from the hospital or from your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits Office.
- For information on a range of health-related subjects, call the Northern Ireland Health Charges Adviceline on **0800 587 8982**.

## Travel costs to visit someone in hospital

- Help with the cost of your fares or petrol when you, or a member of your family, visit a close relative or close friend in hospital.

### Do you get:

- ✓ Income Support?
- ✓ income-based Jobseeker's Allowance?
- ✓ Pension Credit?

**If you can answer 'Yes' to one, you or a member of your family may get help with travel costs to visit someone in hospital.**

If you want more information, get leaflet **S16** 'A guide to the Social Fund' or contact your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits Office.

## Where to get help and advice

To get more information or other leaflets, get in touch with your Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office or look for our display advert in the business numbers section of the phone book.

You can get more information from our website. The address is **[www.dsdni.gov.uk](http://www.dsdni.gov.uk)**

A confidential phone service is available for people with disabilities and their carers. Ring the **Benefit Enquiry Line (BEL)** on **0800 22 06 74**.

People with speech or hearing problems using a textphone can dial **0800 24 37 87**.

The person taking your call will not have your personal papers but will be able to give you general advice. You must not take this advice to be a decision on any matter you are asking about.

Remember that this leaflet is a general guide to benefits. It is not a full and authoritative statement of the law. We have made every effort to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct at the date shown on the cover. However, changes in the law may make the leaflet become gradually less accurate.

Leaflet GL12 from April 2006. Replaces leaflet GL12 from April 2004.

