



WeCare: Centrelink benefits when your child falls ill

What benefits does Centrelink offer people in my situation?

Reduced income is a common experience for people caring for a child with cancer. If you are concerned about your future income the good news is you may be eligible for some financial assistance through Centrelink. There are a number of benefits available and accessing them depends on the nature of your child's illness as well as your current income and assets.

What is Carer allowance and who is eligible?

Carer Allowance is a small, fortnightly payment paid to a carer of a child under 16 who qualifies on medical grounds. Carer Allowance isn't means-tested, so you can earn any level of household income and still get this payment if your child qualifies medically.

You will automatically receive Carer Allowance if your child is diagnosed with a specific illness which is on the Centrelink qualifying list. This list includes a range of conditions such as autism and diabetes.

What if my child's illness is not on the CentreLink qualifying list?

If your child's condition is not on the list, ask your doctor to fill in the *Carer Payment and Carer Allowance Medical Report* form. You will find this form on the Australian Government Department of Human Services website under Centrelink forms tab. Submit this form to Centrelink to have your child's condition assessed for your eligibility for Carer Allowance.

What else does the Carer Allowance entitle me to?

Carer Allowance also includes a Health Care Card in the child's name which provides concessions for the child's prescriptions, discounted hospital parking and other medical costs. If you receive Carer Allowance you will also receive a lump sum payment in July each year as an additional supplement.

How long will I receive the Carer Allowance for?

Once your child turns 16, Centrelink requires their condition be reassessed, regardless of whether their condition is on the list or not. Depending on their condition, they may qualify for a Disability Support Pension in their own right.

What is a Carer payment and who is eligible?

Carer Payment is a pension. Eligibility is determined by your taxable household income and your child's medical condition. If your taxable household income is under the threshold limit, then you will qualify for full or part Carer Payment. Depending on your income the payment can range from just a few dollars a fortnight up to \$780.00* (as at October 2015) per fortnight, for a

single parent with no other income.

For you to receive this payment your child must qualify on medical grounds. Ask your doctor to fill in the *Carer Payment and Carer Allowance Medical Report* form and submit it to Centrelink with your application. You will find this form on the Australian Government Department of Human Services website under the Centrelink forms tab.

What else does a Carer payment entitle me to?

A Carer Payment also entitles the carer to a Health Care Card or Pension Card. There are a range of benefits and concessions available for holders of these cards, which are detailed in the Concession Care benefits podcast. Health Care or Pension Card benefits can vary from State to State.

If you receive Carer Payment you will also receive a lump sum payment in July each year as an additional supplement.

What is a Carer Adjustment payment and who is eligible?

A Carer Adjustment Payment is a lump sum payment which can be made to a family which does not qualify for Carer Payment. If your child is under 7 years of age and has been given a traumatic diagnosis such as cancer, or suffered serious injury in an accident, and you earn too much to receive any regular Centrelink payments, you can apply for a Carer Adjustment Payment.

Could I be eligible for Newstart or Parenting benefits?

Sometimes both parents need to leave work, either to support each other, care for other children, or because they are finding it too difficult to cope with work and their child's illness.

When this happens, usually only one parent can receive the Carer Payment for the sick child, so the other parent may have to claim an alternative benefit.

If you find yourself in this situation you have two options.

Newstart is an unemployment payment. Generally Newstart payments come with obligations for job-seeking, however, if you have a sick child, your child's doctor can write a letter requesting an exemption from job-seeking obligations for up to 12 months.

Alternatively, if there are other children under 6 years of age, you may be eligible for **Parenting Payment**.

What other benefits and allowances are available?

There are some other benefits and allowances you and your child may be eligible for, including essential medical equipment, additional energy concessions, continence aids, rent assistance, and assistance for isolated children among other schemes. A list of other allowances with information about eligibility and applications can be found on the Commonwealth Department of Human Services website at www.humanservices.gov.au under the Carer Payment link.

Where can I get more help with Centrelink entitlements and benefits?



You can find more information on Centrelink benefits, as well as Centrelink forms, by visiting the Commonwealth Department of Human Services website at www.humanservices.gov.au and click on the Carers tab.

For free confidential advice contact WeCare toll free from anywhere in Australia by calling 1800 545 366. Or you can email WeCare at wecare@kildonan.org.au

A professional will speak to you about what you need and work out the next steps in order to assist you.