



Brainwave The Irish Epilepsy Association
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Entitlements & Benefits

HEALTH, WELFARE & TAXATION ENTITLEMENTS, SUPPORTS, RELIEFS 2006

(Incorporating changes from Budget 2006 and revised February 2006)

Free Medication: All persons with epilepsy are entitled to anti-epileptic medication free of charge through the Long Term Illness Scheme. Where an applicant is eligible for the Medical Card Scheme (see below) this covers medication also. The L.T.I.S. is granted irrespective of means to all persons not entitled to a General Medical Services (GMS) Card. For the L.T.I.S. apply to your health board for a form to be completed by the applicant and a doctor/consultant.

PLEASE NOTE: Free Travel is available only to persons on specified benefits and allowances and not to all persons with epilepsy.

AIDS AND APPLIANCES: BRAINWAVE SCHEME: Brainwave the Irish Epilepsy Association runs a scheme for the provision of an Epi-Alert Identity Bracelet or a Safety Pillow free of charge to members only.

The bracelet carries the number of Contactors Medical Bureau in Dublin which will store applicants details as provided by their doctor. In the event of an emergency these details can be accessed from the Bureau by authorized personnel if the wearer is unconscious or unable to give details of their epilepsy and treatment to emergency services, hospitals or police. The safety pillow is suitable for those with sleep seizures. To qualify for either a free pillow or bracelet you need to be a paid up current member of Brainwave the Irish Epilepsy Association and complete an application form obtainable by contacting 01-4557500.

CONDITIONAL ENTITLEMENTS:

Primary Care Re-Imbursement Scheme (PCRS) (formerly GMS or Medical Card):

Those covered by a PCRS card get all medicines and health care free of charge. To Qualify: Household income must normally be below a certain level (except for those over 70 who automatically qualify). This level is adjusted every year, and it varies too according to whether you are single or married, the number of children in the family and any rent or mortgage you are paying and some travel expenses. In some cases, persons whose income is above the guidelines may still be given a medical card if the health board considers they are unable to provide the necessary care for themselves and their

family. A medical card may be awarded to an individual member of the family on an individual basis. Income is gross income less PRSI contributions.

There is also now a limited form of Doctor visit only PCRS card to cover GP visits but not the cost of prescriptions for those who don't qualify on income grounds but for whom the cost of visiting the GP is prohibitively high. This scheme is additional to the existing GMS scheme and up to 230,000 people may be able to access free GP services through this scheme. The scheme is currently accepting applications through the Health Services Executives areas.

How to Apply: Application forms are available at your HSE/health centre. In an emergency, you may be able to claim short-term assistance with medical costs from the Dept of Social Welfare.

PAYMENTS

DISABILITY ALLOWANCE

Paid by: This is a means tested payment from Department of Social Community & Family affairs.

To Qualify: You may be entitled to this if you are aged 16 to 66 years and are suffering from a specified disability which results in you being "substantially handicapped" in undertaking work which would otherwise be suitable for a person of your age, experience and qualifications. You must not be living in an institution. D.A. rates will increase by a minimum of E17 per week from January 2006.

Recipients qualify for Free Travel Pass, other Benefits are conditional.

DOMICILIARY CARE ALLOWANCE

Paid by: This is a health service executive payment which is paid monthly

To Qualify: This allowance is paid to parents of children with a severe disability who live at home.

Conditions: The child must be aged under 16 (at 16 the child may qualify for a disability allowance). The disability must be so severe that the child needs constant care and supervision, substantially more than a child of the same age. Only the child's means are assessed. DCA is only payable if the child lives at home. The full maximum rate is currently E250.90 per month. A reduced rate may be payable in some instances.

RESPIRE CARE GRANT

From June 2005 respite grant is now extended to all carers providing full time care to an older person or a person with a disability, irrespective of means but excluding those on unemployment payments or working outside the home for more than 10 hours per week. Budget 2006 increased this grant to from E1000 to E1200 per person being cared

for and abolished the limit on payment for only two care recipients.

The grant is paid annually at the end of June. Apply in the month of June if you are a fulltime carer for a child or adult with a disability. Form RCG 1 is available from your local social welfare office or from your local Citizens Information Centre or from www.welfare.ie or by phoning the LoCall Leaflet Request line 1890 20 23 25. Complete a separate form for each individual person if you are caring for more than one qualifying person.

Return the completed forms to: Respite Care Grant Section PO Box 10085, Dublin 2 Tel 01-6732222

NB you are not expected to be caring 24 hours each case is assessed individually. The Department will apply the arrangements in a flexible manner considering the needs of yourself and the person being cared for. You must have been caring for the person for at least six months including the first Thursday in June to qualify. You must live with the person or have a direct system of communication between your home and theirs. You may take up education, training or work outside home for up to 10 hours weekly if the Dept of Social, Community and Family Affairs approves this.

Full Time Care is defined as requiring: Continuous supervision and frequent help throughout the day with personal needs, walking and getting about, dressing, washing eating and drinking; or continuous supervision to avoid danger to themselves and full time care and needing attention for at least six months which must include the first Thursday in June.

DISABILITY (SICKNESS) BENEFIT

Paid by: The Department of Social Community and Family Affairs

To Qualify: You must be under 66, be incapable of work due to illness and have 52 PRSI contributions. The threshold for half rate child dependent allowance where the claimants spouse or partner has earns above E 300 gross weekly is amended to E350 per week. Rates of Disability Benefit are being increased from E148.80 to E165.80(personal).

INVALIDITY PENSION

Paid by: The Department of Social Community and Family Affairs

To Qualify: You may get this if you have been receiving Disability Benefit for at least twelve months or sending in certificates for credits for at least a year and will continue to be incapable of work for at least a further twelve months. It may be possible to go straight onto Invalidity Pension if the illness is of such a nature that you are unlikely to be able to work for the rest of your life. Budget 2006 gave an increase of E17 on the basic personal rate (under 65).

Conditions: You must have at least 260 contributions paid since entering insurance and at least 48 contributions paid or credited in the year before.

DISABLEMENT BENEFIT / UNEMPLOYABILITY SUPPLEMENT

Paid by: The Department of Social Community and Family Affairs.

To Qualify: You will receive this if you have a physical or mental disability as a result of an injury at work or an occupational disease and you are in insurable employment.

CARER'S ALLOWANCE

Paid by: This is a means tested payment by the Department of Social Community and Family Affairs. The weekly income disregard will be increased by E20 to E290 for a single person and by E40 to E580 for a couple. The weekly rate of payment will increase from E153.60 to E180 (aged under 66) and from E169.80 to E200 (aged 66 and over).

A carer providing full time care and attention to a qualifying person may qualify for payment.

Conditions: The person must be incapacitated and require full time care and attention and must be likely to require it for at least 12 months. They must be in receipt of a qualifying payment such as Invalidity or blind pension, Disability Allowance, a similar social security payment from another EU Member State or from a country with which Ireland has a bilateral social security agreement, or full rate Domiciliary Care Allowance. Recipients of this payment may be eligible in their own right for Free Travel and the Household Benefits package.

CARERS BENEFIT

This is a short term payment for up to 15 months currently (increasing up to 2 years from May 2006) for those who give up employment to care for someone who requires full time care. You must have sufficient PRSI contributions. The condition requiring recipients of Carers Benefit to be in employment in the three months prior to commencement of full time caring is abolished. You may now work up to 10 hours per week (increasing up to 15 hours) and still qualify for payment. The maximum income which you can earn from employment or self employment is currently E270. The weekly rate of payment is increased from E163.70 to E180.

PERSONAL DISABILITY PAYMENT

A weekly personal payment of E35 will be made to people resident in institutional settings who do not receive Disability Allowance.

INCOME TAX

Incapacitated Child Tax Credit may be claimed by a parent or guardian of a child who has a permanent disability whether physical or intellectual and is permanently incapacitated from maintaining him/herself independently in the long term. The conditions are that the child must have become incapacitated (1) before the age of 21

or (2) after age 21 whilst still in full-time education or training for a trade/profession for a minimum of 2 years. Apply to the revenue commissioners with medical evidence such as a doctors letter. The Tax Credit is now increased from E1000 to E1500. Qualifying disabilities include Cystic Fibrosis, Blindness, Deafness, Downs syndrome, Spastic Paralysis, Acute Autism,, certain forms of Schizophrenia. If the disability can be corrected by treatment the child is not considered permanently incapacitated so children whose epilepsy is controlled/controllable by medication would not be eligible unless they have another qualifying disability. If a child has epilepsy which is considered refractory or intractable the parent/guardian may apply for consideration for this credit. The list of disabilities above is not exhaustive.

Allowance for Employing a Carer for an Incapacitated Person: This allowance of up to E 50,000 at your highest tax rate is available where a person is employed to care for a person with a disability including a child. One or more family members of the person being cared for can claim the allowance.

Home Carers Tax Credit of E770 may be available to married couples who are jointly assessed where one spouse is a home carer for a dependent child or children (for whom Child benefit is paid) or for a person over 65, or someone who is permanently incapacitated. There are limits applicable to the level of income of the home carer.

Dependent Relative Tax Credit: This credit of E80 may be available to a person who maintains a relative who has a disability - subject to a maximum income level.

Health Expenses (FORM MED 1)

You may claim tax relief on certain medical expenses that you have already not claimed for from private health insurance such as cost of doctor's visits, hospital and nursing home charges, prescription charges, certain specified equipment, educational assessment and therapy.

For full details of all the above allowable reliefs and the conditions attached see www.revenue.ie or phone your regional revenue district.

Other Provisions under the Health Service Executive and Local Authority

The Drug Payment Scheme is available to ensure that the cost of prescription medicines for each family do not exceed a certain limit each month. Although people with epilepsy receive free medication on the Long Term Illness Scheme they do have to pay for prescriptions for some other conditions if they don't qualify for a medical card. Currently the threshold is E85 as the maximum payable by families registered for the scheme per month. Apply to your local Health service executive to register for the scheme. Payments made under the scheme may be allowable against income tax.

Hospital charges: Patient bed charges are E60 per night for a maximum of 10 nights per year i.e. maximum charge E600. Accident & Emergency charges are also increased to E60. In cases of hardship a letter outlining the circumstances should be sent to the patient accounts department of the hospital.

Health Board Aids and Appliances Scheme: If you require a safety appliance such as a helmet or alarm you may apply to your local health service executive (disability section) for funding with supporting documentation. Applications are assessed individually under the scheme.

Local Authority House Adaptation Grants for People with Disabilities: If you require adaptations to be made to your home on account of your epilepsy you may apply for a grant from your local authority for all or part of the cost. The types of work covered are usually at the level of modification of bathrooms to include showers but may extend to provision of ground level bathroom/bedroom. An Occupational Therapist report recommending the work to be carried out is essential.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE ABOVE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL HEALTH SERVICE EXECUTIVE, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL COMMUNITY AND FAMILY AFFAIRS, REVENUE DISTRICT OR CITIZENS INFORMATION CENTRE.

Acknowledgments:

This leaflet was compiled with the assistance of information supplied by COMHAIRLE - www.comhairle.ie; Dept. of Social, Community and Family Affairs - www.welfare.ie and Revenue - www.revenue.ie