



**ILL?
CLAIMING
BENEFITS?**

THIS BOOKLET ONLY APPLIES TO PEOPLE WHO MADE (OR WERE DEEMED TO HAVE MADE) THEIR FIRST CLAIM FOR AN 'INCAPACITY FOR WORK BENEFIT' PRIOR TO 27TH OCTOBER 2008.

INCAPACITY FOR WORK QUESTIONNAIRE

(This booklet is based on the Incapacity for Work Questionnaire – Coded: IB50 07/02)

Introduction

This pack is intended to help with filling in the IB50 questionnaire which is sent to most people who are claiming benefit because they are not fit for work (e.g. Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance, Income Support or National Insurance Credits).

THE QUESTIONNAIRE IS VERY IMPORTANT because the Jobcentre Plus will use it to decide whether you are still incapable of work. Even if you are asked later to go for a medical examination, the doctor you see will only ask you about what you have already put on the form.

NB: If you have already filled in this questionnaire before or been seen by a Jobcentre Plus doctor, you should not assume that the Jobcentre Plus will therefore know all about you. You need to assume that they know nothing and give full details every time.

Many people are wrongly found to be fit for work because they do not fill in the form accurately and so give the Jobcentre Plus a false impression of their condition.

What should you do now?

Use this information pack to fill in the form or, if you prefer, go to one of the advice agencies listed later for help. **It is important to get advice with filling in this form.**

What this pack contains

This pack is made up of separate sections to cover the different parts of the form. They may not all apply to you. Decide which of them you need to look at. There is also a section about the medical examination in case you are asked to go for one.

Some general guidance

1. Make sure that what you write on the form can be read easily.
2. Read the notes on each page as you go through the form to see exactly what they want.
3. Take time to make notes and plan your answers on scrap paper before you put them on the form.
4. If you run out of space, use extra paper but make sure each sheet has your name and National Insurance number on it, and indicate on the form that there are extra sheets attached.
5. Mention if doing any of the activities causes you pain, fatigue, breathlessness, dizziness etc, or if you have been advised by your doctor not to do them.

NB: Don't exaggerate but don't understate your difficulties either. If your condition varies, explain about this.

6. If you can, get someone who knows you well to read through the form when you have finished and check that you have given a clear picture of how your illness or disability affects you on a daily basis.
7. Photocopy the form before you send it in and keep the copy somewhere safe. The personal capacity assessment can be applied as often as the Jobcentre Plus feel is necessary. Thus - even if you pass it this time, you are likely to be sent the form again in the future, so you should also keep this information pack for future use.

General Sections of the Form

The first part of the form asks for general information and must be completed by all claimants, whatever their illness may be.

The end of the form also applies to everyone.

This section is about these two parts.

The first part of the form:

About You

Page 1

This is straightforward but remember to use BLOCK CAPITALS.

Page 2 - 4

Give the name of your doctor and of your hospital consultant. If you have more than one consultant, list them all.

About your illness or disability:

Include ALL of your illnesses or disabilities, not just the one which you think makes you unfit for work. They may not seem relevant to you but it is the overall picture which counts so make sure you put everything down.

Medication:

List ALL of your medicines and also any other treatment you have (e.g. physiotherapy). If any of your medicines or treatment cause side effects, put that down as well. If you are unable to take stronger medication because of side effects, explain why.

How to fill in the rest of this form

Page 5

Read this carefully before you fill in the rest of the form. Note that it tells you to start with the top statement for each activity and only tick the first one that applies to you as you go down the list.

The last part of the form:

Other information

Page 17

Use the first box to give any extra facts which might help – for example if you get any other benefits such as Disability Living Allowance or Industrial Injury Benefit or if you have a disabled parking badge.

The second and third boxes are about arrangements for the medical examination if you are asked to attend one. If you are asked, you must go, so if there are going to be any problems getting there, make them clear here.

This page reminds you about getting the Med 4 certificate from your doctor and also gives you very useful space to add extra background information.

For example:

- What was your previous work? Why did you have to stop?
- What hobbies did you have? Can you still do them?
- How has your daily routine changed to cope with your condition?
- Can you still manage your home, e.g. shopping, cooking, washing & dealing with paperwork?
- How has your illness affected your personal and family life?
- Can you still safely drive a car?

Try and give a picture of your daily life now and how it compares with before you became unfit for work.

If you have to go for a medical examination, you will be asked about this.

- ◆ SITTING IN A CHAIR
- ◆ GETTING UP FROM A CHAIR
- ◆ BENDING AND KNEELING

Pages 6 and 7 cover these three activities which are grouped together because they involve using similar parts of the body.

Sitting in a chair

Page 6

The type of chair they mean is an upright chair with no arms, such as a kitchen or dining room chair.

- Explain exactly how sitting on this type of chair can affect you – where does it hurt?
- Say when you would need to stand up and why
- Do you normally eat meals sitting in this type of chair? If so, how long does it take? If not, why not?
- If you do sit up at a table, do you rest your arms on the table to help?

Getting up from a chair

Page 6

The question here is whether you need to hold on to something (not someone) to get up from the chair. Note that it is the same type of chair as for the sitting question.

- Explain how you get up. Do you
 - push up with your hands on the seat?
 - need to hold on to the table or other furniture?
 - need sticks or a frame to help you?
- How does getting up affect you?
 - do you feel dizzy?
 - do you lose your balance?

If holding on to something is not enough and you do need to hold on to someone, say so.

Bending and Kneeling

Page 7

They are asking if you can bend, kneel or crouch from a standing position, not from sitting.

The test is whether you can bend, kneel or crouch down to pick up a piece of paper from the floor and straighten up again without needing to hold on to something.

- Explain why you cannot do this
 - does it hurt?
 - do you overbalance?
 - do you feel dizzy when you straighten up?
 - do you need to hold on to something?
 - would you have difficulty doing it more than once?

- Give some examples
 - do you have problems with putting on shoes?
 - can you use your oven and washing machine?
 - do you have difficulty getting things out of low cupboards?

- ◆ **STANDING**
- ◆ **WALKING**
- ◆ **WALKING UP AND DOWN STAIRS**

Pages 8 and 9 cover these three linked activities.

Standing

Page 8

This is asking about standing by yourself, without holding on to another person or to anything other than a walking stick if you usually use one.

You should note that there are in fact two separate questions.

1. How long can you stand before you need to move around?
2. How long before you need to sit down?

Be very careful to tick the right box to describe the situation.

- Explain why you cannot stand for long
 - How do you feel? Does it hurt? Where? Do you get dizzy?
- Give examples
 - Can you queue at a supermarket till (without leaning on a trolley)?
 - Do you stand to cook a meal, or do ironing?

Walking

Page 8

What is meant here is walking on reasonably level ground, with the help of a stick if you use one. The distance you should tick is the distance you can walk before it becomes so uncomfortable you would want to stop.

- Explain how you feel while walking – do you have pain, problems breathing, get very tired?
- How do you feel after walking? Do you need to rest?
- Give some idea of how much walking you regularly do.

Walking up and down stairs

Page 9

Can you walk (not crawl or bottom shuffle) both up and down stairs and do you need to hold on to something and/or rest half way?

- Do you always hold on to the handrail? Tell them if you have had an extra rail fitted
- Do you stop on the way up or down? Why?
- How often do you have to use the stairs?
- Would you have difficulty repeating the activity in a short space of time?

- ◆ **USING YOUR HANDS**
- ◆ **REACHING WITH YOUR ARMS**
- ◆ **LIFTING AND CARRYING**

Pages 10 and 11 cover these related activities involving the use of the upper part of the body.

Using your hands

Page 10

The use of each hand is considered, so make it clear if you have a problem with only one or with both and if only one, which one. Remember to take into account pain and whether you can do things safely and regularly.

- Do you have problems with:
 - co-ordination?
 - numbness?
 - shaking?
 - lack of grip?
 - clumsiness?
- Do you have difficulty in:
 - using a pen or knife and fork?
 - writing letters?
 - doing up buttons?

Reaching with your arms

Page 10

Again, each arm is dealt with separately so you need to explain whether both are involved or only one. Explain how high you can raise your arms and make it clear exactly what stops you getting them any higher.

- Do you have difficulty in:
 - dressing/undressing?
 - brushing and washing hair?
 - hanging out washing?
 - getting things off high shelves?
- Do you feel any after-effects following reaching, e.g. pain, tiredness, weakness?

Lifting and Carrying

Page 11

This question is not about bending to pick something up or carrying things for any distance (e.g. walking home with your shopping). It is looking at your ability to lift an object from table top height and carry it from there. Note also that the things listed are quite low weights, the heaviest being a 5½lb pack of potatoes.

Explain if the problem is with both hands or only one and make it clear exactly what stops you from lifting things.

- Do you feel pain or numbness in arms, hands, fingers or neck?
- What effect does lifting have on you? Could you repeat the activity?
- Give examples – can you safely lift a kettle or saucepan?

- ◆ **SEEING**
- ◆ **SPEAKING**
- ◆ **HEARING**

These three senses are covered in pages 12-13 of the form. If you have difficulties with any of them, you should mention it even if you don't feel it affects your ability to work.

Seeing

Page 12

What is being asked about is your ability to see in a normal light, with glasses or contact lenses if you usually wear them. If you do, you should give details of what has been prescribed. You should also tell them if you have ever seen an eye specialist.

- The question about reading large print is about seeing the print clearly, not about being able to read. If reading very quickly gives you headaches, dizziness or blurred vision etc., make sure you tell them. How long would it be before you could look at print again?
- When answering the question about recognising friends at a distance, think about whether you can actually see their faces clearly enough to know them.
- Give examples of problems. Can you drive or does your eyesight prevent this?

Speaking

Page 12

The question here is whether your communication with other people is affected by a speech impediment, illness or disability. It will not count if the problem is due to language difficulties.

- Do you stumble over, mispronounce or muddle words?
- Do you have difficulty finding the right words?
- Do you stammer or stutter?
- Give examples, e.g. problems in shops.

Hearing

Page 13

This is about what you are able to hear with a hearing aid if you normally use one. If you can understand family/friends, but not strangers, say so.

- Do you get confused during conversations because you mis-hear?
- Do you often need people to repeat things?
- Do you have problems following a conversation if there is background noise?
- Do you get tinnitus or your ears "popping"?

NB: Although this question says that dizzy spells, vertigo, giddiness and fainting do not count, they can count if they are severe enough to alter your consciousness so that you are not aware of your surroundings. Fainting, for example, could involve an actual loss of consciousness. So mention anything like this on the form and explain how you are affected. You will need to have medical evidence to show that you have a condition which causes the blackouts, fits or other similar attacks.

- Try and give dates of any episodes over the past six months.
- Try to describe exactly how you feel before, during and after an attack.
- Where do they happen?
- Can you tell when you are about to have one?
- Have you hurt yourself during an attack?

Because this is an area which causes some people embarrassment, you may not want to fill in this page even though it applies to you. Indeed, you may even not have mentioned the problem to your doctor.

If you do experience any difficulties with your bladder and/or your bowels, you should fill in this page.

What they are asking about is whether you ever lose control. However, if you need to go very often and very urgently this can be seen as lacking control. If you take medication which affects your bladder or bowels, you should mention this.

- Explain exactly what difficulties you have.
- It is important to give details of how often you have problems as this affects the “score”.
- Give examples of any incidents.
- Remember to mention if you use pads or anything else to help deal with the problem.

NB: Please don't feel embarrassed. Many people will have similar problems and it is important that you give the Jobcentre Plus an accurate picture of all your symptoms.

Information about anxiety, depression and other mental health problems

Page 16

There is a separate part of the test covering mental illnesses. This is the only page that gives you space to give information about this. It is important to give as much detail as possible to make sure that the right questions get asked at the medical examination which you will be asked to attend.

Many people have both physical and mental conditions. For example, it is not unusual for people with long term physical illnesses to also suffer from depression.

If you are taking medication or having any other kind of treatment (e.g. counselling) for anxiety, depression or any other mental illness, make sure your doctor includes it in the Med 4 certificate you get from her/him and complete this page.

Use the space to give as much information as you can about how your mental health affects your daily life. When you go to the examination, the doctor will be asking you about four areas:

1. Completion of tasks

Looking at whether your illness has affected your concentration and your ability to carry out the routine activities of everyday life.

- Try and explain how your illness has affected you.
- Can you still manage your home – cook, clean, deal with paperwork, cope with telephone calls etc?
- Have you had to give up any of your hobbies or other social activities? Do you read, watch television? Do you have the television on but are unable to take it in?
- Tell them what you could do before you became ill and what you can do now so they get a clear picture.

2. Daily Living

Looking at how well you care for yourself

- Are you sleeping well at night or do you sleep during the day?
- Do you get up, wash and dress every day?
- Do you find you get upset during the day?

3. Coping with pressure

Looking at how your illness affected your stopping work and how it affects you now.

- Can you cope with a regular daily routine or do you feel too tired or depressed?
- Was mental health (stress, depression etc.) a factor in leaving your job?
- Are you worried by anything unexpected happening? (This could even be someone you know turning up at your door unexpectedly).

4. Interaction with other people

Looking at whether your illness has affected your relationships with other people.

- Do you live alone? If so, do you like to see other people or does that worry you?
- If you live with other people, how do you get on with them now?

NB: Remember that the more information you can give them, the better. If you have a Social Worker or a Community Psychiatric Nurse, ask them to write as well.

HOW TO COPE WITH THE MEDICAL EXAMINATION

Most people will be called for a medical examination after they have sent in their IB50 questionnaire. If this happens to you, **DON'T PANIC!**

Here are some suggestions to help you:

- Read through your copy of the IB50 before you go. Make some notes of things you want to mention – it is easy to forget on the day.
- Take with you all of the medication which your GP is prescribing for you. Make sure they are recent prescriptions. If you bring out-of-date medication, it might look as if you are no longer needing it. Also take any hospital appointment records and details of any treatments (e.g. physiotherapy). Remember to tell the doctor if you are waiting to have an operation or any other treatment.
- Check you know where to go and how to get there. You can take a relative or friend if you wish. You are entitled to claim your travel expenses for getting to the examination. However, these are now paid after the examination and directly into your bank account. If your only account is a Post Office card account, the Medical Services will not be able to make the payment into it. They should offer to send you a giro cheque instead which you can then pay in to the account.

NB: If you are too ill to get to them, they can come to you!

- Note that the examination starts when the doctor first meets you. S/he will watch how you get out of the chair in the waiting room and walk along to the examination room.
- The examination can take up to 45 minutes, most of which will be spent asking you questions. During this time the doctor will assess your level of disability and choose the appropriate descriptor for each activity. Make a note of the exact time your examination starts and finishes.
- The doctor has to record evidence of your incapacity under the following headings:
 - variability and severity of the disability
 - history of the activities of daily living
 - behaviour observed during assessment
 - the medical assessment
- Tell the doctor how your symptoms (pain, stiffness, fatigue, breathlessness etc) affect you in carrying out the activities listed. The doctor should look at how your illness affects you over time, not just on the day of the examination. Tell her/him if your condition varies and whether you can predict the good and bad days.

- If you are asked to describe a typical or average day it is not helpful to say there's no such thing. Try and give examples of what you would do on both good and bad days. It might be useful to keep a diary for a few days and take this with you.
- When you are actually being examined, remember to tell the doctor if you find it difficult or painful to do what s/he asks you to do.
- If, after the examination, you are not happy with the way it was conducted, write to the Jobcentre Plus explaining exactly why. Don't wait until they have made the decision.

What if I cannot attend the Medical examination?

If you fail to attend a medical examination without a good reason, you will be treated as if you have decided to withdraw your claim – as if you now think you are fit for work. It is very important therefore that you contact the medical examination centre as soon as possible, giving your reasons for not being able to attend and asking for a new appointment.

You should, then write to the Jobcentre Plus confirming your reasons afterwards.

Make sure that your benefit has not been stopped. If it has (i.e. they do not accept your reason for not attending) you should:

- appeal against that decision, and
- make a new claim at once.

FINALLY

If, despite all this advice, you are taken off benefit, remember you can challenge the decision.

Contact your local advice centre or support worker at once for advice on how to do this.

You only have one month from the date on the decision letter to register your appeal. The following can help you with your appeal form:

Rugby Citizens Advice Bureau

1st Floor, Chestnut House
North Street
Rugby, CV21 2AQ
Tel: 0844 855 2327

North Warwickshire CAB

The Parish Rooms
Welcome Street
Atherstone, CV9 1DU
Tel: 0844 499 4192

Bedworth & District CAB

(Covers Nuneaton & Bedworth)
25 Congreve Walk
Bedworth, CV12 8LX
Tel: 0844 855 2322

To book an appointment in
Nuneaton call 024 7635 1049

Warwick District CAB

10 Hamilton Terrace
Leamington Spa, CV32 4LY
Tel: 01926 457900

Stratford-upon-Avon CAB

25 Meer Street
Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6QB
Tel: 01789 293299 for advice or
01789 261966 to book appointment

For Disabled people.....

D.I.A.L.

(Nuneaton & Bedworth only)
New Ramsden Centre
School Walk
Attleborough
Nuneaton, CV11 4PJ
Tel: 024 7634 9954

The Rowan Organisation

(Whole County)
Eliot Park Innovation Centre
Barling Way
Nuneaton
CV10 7RH
Tel: 0800 783 1755

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