

Sickness Benefit

For people who are temporarily off work because of sickness, injury, pregnancy or disability



Work and Income
Te Hiranga Tangata

A service of the Ministry of Social Development

Our aim at Work and Income is to help people become as independent as possible by providing income, work and training services that suit their situation. For people who are sick, injured or disabled this means making sure they are receiving the correct benefit and not missing out on training and job seeking opportunities.

If you are temporarily off work or working at a reduced level because of sickness, injury, pregnancy or disability, we may be able to help by providing the Sickness Benefit.

Can I get the Sickness Benefit?

We can grant you financial assistance from the date you first contact us, if you complete your application within 20 working days of that date.

To get the Sickness Benefit you need to be:

- aged 18 years or over *or*
- aged 16-17 years and living with a partner and children you support.

You must be:

- in a job now but have had to stop working or reduce your hours and income because of a sickness, injury, pregnancy, or disability *or*
- unemployed or working part time, and find it hard to look for work and do full time work because of sickness, injury, pregnancy, or disability.

You also need to be:

- a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident who normally lives here *and*
- you'll usually need to have been here for at least two years at any one time since becoming a New Zealand citizen or permanent resident.

Your (and your partner's) income must be under a certain level.

When you apply you will need a medical certificate from your doctor or dentist.

A registered practicing midwife can fill this in if you are pregnant. We'll give you a form or you can get one from your doctor, dentist or midwife.

If you are aged 16-17 years and single

If you are aged 16-17 years and single you may qualify if you are pregnant or having treatment in an approved rehabilitation programme.

If you are pregnant

If you are pregnant you may be able to get the Sickness Benefit from your 27th week, or earlier if you have complications. Your payments can continue for up to 13 weeks after the birth if you are caring for the child.

Other help

If you can't work because of a more permanent sickness, injury or disability you may qualify for the **Invalid's Benefit**. We also have the **Disability Allowance** or the **Child Disability Allowance**. Please ask for this information.

Planning and work obligations

You may need to take part in a planning process to help you set goals for your future, including coming to planning meetings with us and preparing an employment plan that covers your goals to help you move towards employment.

From 2 May 2011, we can use information on your medical certificate to help us decide if you can work part-time (at least 15 hours per week) while you receive the Sickness Benefit. If you can work part-time, you may have work obligations.

If you have a partner

Your partner may be included in your Sickness Benefit. They may also need to:

- look for full-time work (30 hours or more per week) if you have no children at home or your youngest child is aged 18 years or over
- look for part-time work (at least 15 hours per week) if your youngest child is aged 6-17 years *or*
- work with us to plan for their future if your youngest child is aged under 6 years.

Payments

How much you can get depends on your personal situation. The guide below shows what you may be able to get a week after tax.

Payments are made direct to your bank account each week. It usually takes 2-3 weeks for your payments to start.

You may have to wait longer if you have been working and you:

- got holiday pay or some other payment at the end of your job *or*
- are getting sick pay from your employer.

If you are...	Weekly payments (after tax)
Single aged under 20 years at home	\$134.26
Single aged under 20 years away from home	\$167.83
Single aged 20-24 years	\$167.83
Single aged 25 years and over	\$201.40
Married, civil union or de facto couple with or without children each	\$167.83
Sole parent	\$288.47
<i>You may get less if you have other income. If you have children you may also be able to get family tax credit or extra allowances as well. Tax deducted is at the M rate.</i>	

Rates as at 1 April 2011

If you have any questions, please ask your case manager.

Other income

You and your partner can have other income of up to \$80 a week (before tax) between you before your Sickness Benefit is affected. We take 70c off your benefit for each dollar of income you have over this \$80 limit.

Please note that any income you have may affect any extra allowances you get from us, even if it's under the \$80 limit. How this income affects your allowances can vary, so please ask us for more details about this.

You need to tell us about any other income you get, including benefits you might have from other countries.

The Sickness Benefit is reviewed

We may regularly review the Sickness Benefit. You may need a medical check from your doctor, dentist or midwife. We may also contact you for information to make sure you are receiving all the financial and other help available to you.

It is important that you provide this information when asked or your payments may be affected.

Tell us about changes

It is important you tell us about any changes that may affect your Sickness Benefit. See our *How can we help you?* brochure for a list of the kinds of things we need to know about.

Important

Make sure you bring everything you need to your meeting. There is a list of all the basic things you need to bring in our *How can we help you?* brochure, and on the front page of the application form.

Remember, if you don't think you qualify for this benefit, there may be some other way we can help, so please ask us.



If you have any questions,
call us on **0800 559 009** from
7am to 6pm Monday to Friday
and Saturday 8am to 1pm or
contact your Case Manager at
your nearest Service Centre.

**If you are deaf or find it hard to
communicate by phone,** you can
send a message to our Deaf Link
free-fax on **0800 621 621** or email
MSD_Deaf_Services@msd.govt.nz

For more information visit:
Work and Income website
www.workandincome.govt.nz