



March 9, 2021

COVID-19 - INFORMATION FOR MEDICAL SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT (MS&E) PROVIDERS

Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program: MS&E Coverage

To support clients throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, several temporary changes to medical supplies and equipment (MS&E) policies have been implemented. This bulletin summarises these interim measures and supersedes all previously published bulletins.

These temporary measures are extended until June 30, 2021. Any continuation of these measures beyond this date will be communicated to providers.

Priority in the Review of Benefit Requests

Requests for items in the categories listed below may be submitted as an urgent request:

- required for palliative care or imminent hospital discharge
- oxygen/ventilator/apnea monitor
- a new ostomy or the first request for wound care

Providers are asked to follow these priority guidelines when identifying requests as urgent. Please indicate the reason for the urgency on the prior approval form. The Program will process all other requests as soon as possible.

Prior Approval for Delivery

In cases where delivery of an item is not usually a benefit, coverage of delivery charges will be provided on a case-by-case basis during the pandemic where the current situation impacts client access. For payment, a waybill or signed delivery receipt must be attached to the claim. If multiple items are being delivered together in a single shipment, only one delivery charge is eligible.

When requesting approval for delivery due to COVID-19, please write “COVID-19” on the prior approval form and use the following benefit codes:

Benefit Code	Benefit Name
99401260	Delivery Audiology
99401261	Delivery Limb Body Orthotics
99401262	Delivery Footwear
99401263	Delivery Pressure Devices



Benefit Code	Benefit Name
99401264	Delivery Prosthetics
99401265	Delivery Respiratory
99401266	Delivery Self Care
99401267	Delivery Low Vision
99401268	Delivery Communication
99401269	Delivery Medical Surgical
99400262	Delivery Oxygen
9400819	Delivery Mobility
99400820	Delivery Incontinence Item

Limb and Body Orthotics Benefits

The most current prescription on file can be used for the replacement of limb and body orthotics benefits for clients with a chronic condition if there is no change in the medical and functional status, and if the same item and quantity are being requested. The prescription must not be older than 3 years.

Other requirements for coverage continue to apply.

Footwear Benefits

The most current prescription on file can be used for the replacement of custom made footwear and modification to stock footwear for clients with a chronic condition if there is no change in the medical and functional status, and if the same item and quantity are being requested. The prescription must not be older than 3 years.

The Program may approve refurbishing of custom-made foot orthotics (e.g. replace the cover, replace top paddings with cover, renew bottom post, or renew bottom arch fill) in the six months before the replacement period. Please note that once custom-made foot orthotics are refurbished, a new item cannot be claimed within a year.

Pressure Device Benefits

The most current prescription on file can be used to request renewal of medical-grade compression garments (i.e. compression of 20-30 mmHg or higher) for clients with a chronic condition. The prescription can be used when the request is for the same compression level and the same quantity when there is no change in the medical and functional status of the client. The prescription must not be older than 3 years. Initial requests without a prescription will be denied and other requirements for coverage continue to apply.



Prosthesis benefits

A board-certified ocularist (BCO) can recommend the replacement of eye prosthesis.

Respiratory Benefits

For CPAP and BPAP benefits, a request can be submitted for approval of purchase rather than rental with:

- a prescription, and
- diagnostic test with physician interpretation, and
- treatment testing (a level 1, or level 3, or adherence download) that demonstrate an improvement in the client's condition

The Program recognizes Canadian Thoracic Society (CTS) guidelines which state that the sale of new equipment is preferred (<https://cts-sct.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/FINAL-Updated-recommendations-for-resumption-of-sleep-.pdf>). Otherwise, equipment rental will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

For clients who are currently being provided coverage for CPAP and BPAP rental through the NIHB Program, the rental period can be extended by up to 3 months if required. The rental costs continue to be deducted from the purchase price of the device. Please indicate COVID-19 on the prior approval form.

Providers should advise their clients of the procedure for cleaning PAP devices

as per the established process and/or manufacturer's recommendations. Clients who continue PAP therapy when infected may request a new mask and tubing once they have recovered from COVID-19.

Self-Care Benefits

The most current prescription on file can be used for the replacement of toileting supplies (i.e. bedpan, urinal), cushion and protective aids, dressing aids, and feeding aids for clients with a chronic condition when there is no change in the medical and functional status of the client, and if the same item and quantity are being requested. The prescription must not be older than 3 years.

The most current prescription on file can be used for the replacement of durable self-care items such as lift and transfer equipment and bathing equipment for clients with chronic medical conditions if the medical and functional status of the client has not changed, and if the same item and quantity are being requested. The prescription must not be older than 3 years.

The purchase of an electric breast pump will be covered instead of a rental. The item provided must be a double electric breast pump. Eligibility criteria for electric breast pumps continue to apply. The Breast Pump Prescription Recommendation Form



(available on the ESC website) can be used to recommend or prescribe electric breast pumps.

Communication Benefits

The most current prescription on file can be used for the replacement of laryngectomy and tracheostomy supplies if the same item and quantity are being requested. The prescription must not be older than 3 years.

Additional quantities may be requested for certain supplies (i.e. HME, laryngectomy tube and tube holder) without further medical justification when a patient has become infected with COVID-19, by indicating “COVID-19” on the prior approval form.

Mobility Benefits

The most current prescription on file can be used for the replacement of mobility benefits such as wheelchair, positioning seat, standing frame and medical stroller if the medical and functional status of the client has not changed, and if the same item and quantity are being requested. The prescription must not be older than 3 years.

In addition to following manufacturer instructions for the cleaning and disinfection of new or rental equipment, providers are asked to inform clients of the proper cleaning techniques for the equipment.

Medical-Surgical Benefits

As of December 17, 2020, a new *Wound Care Assessment Form* is available on the Express Scripts Canada (ESC) website (nihb.express-scripts.ca) to support the need for wound care supplies.

The most current prescription on file can be used for the replacement request of incontinence and ostomy supplies if the medical and functional status of the client has not changed, and if the same item and quantity are being requested. The prescription must not be older than 3 years.

Quantities above the current recommended replacement guidelines may be requested without medical justification if required due to the pandemic. COVID-19 should be indicated on the prior approval form.

A Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN)/Registered Practical Nurse (RPN) may order dressings when this is part of a treatment plan completed by a Registered Nurse.

Oral digital thermometers (code 99401270) are covered temporarily so individuals can monitor their temperature as required by the local/provincial public health agencies.



Audiology Benefits

The following services may be considered for coverage through tele-audiology during the pandemic:

- fitting and dispensing (99401224 and 99401225)
- hearing aid performance check and readjustment (99400640 and 99400641)

Providers must indicate in the prior approval request that services will be provided remotely. Services provided through tele-audiology will be reimbursed at the current Program rate.

Providers who deliver fitting and support through tele-audiology are responsible to ship the hearing device (including hearing aids, bone-anchored hearing systems (BAHS) processor and replacement of cochlear implant (CI) processors, and FM systems) directly to the client. Please inform the client to make arrangements to schedule a virtual appointment for the first-fit.

Please note that return privileges to the manufacturer have been extended to 180 days until further notice.

Oxygen Benefits

Testing requirements are waived (ABG or oximetry) for clients applying for 9 months, 1 year and yearly renewal coverage for home supplemental oxygen (e.g. systems such as concentrators, portable cylinders, homefill systems, portable oxygen concentrators, etc.).

Provider assessments for the renewal of oxygen can be completed by telephone rather than in person. Providers should contact clients to obtain an update on their condition and the respiratory equipment in the home. Providers can use their assessment forms with a note stating that the assessment was done “by telephone”.

To request a change in equipment or cylinder quantity from the previous coverage period, the RRT or RN must provide a written explanation for the change.

Please note that initial requests for supplemental home oxygen will continue to require testing results. This testing can either be oximetry or an arterial blood gas (ABG). Approval is for 3 months for an initial request. The Program may waive this requirement depending on the provincial/territorial criteria in place to respond to the pandemic.