

# May 2020

## COVID-19 update #4



### Medical transportation

- NIHB continues to support clients who need transportation to access medically necessary appointments and services not available in their community
- Health and benefit providers may resume some services that were cancelled or postponed, however re-opening plans are determined by provincial or territorial authorities
- Contact your provider to find out what services are offered, and if appointments can be made or re-scheduled
- Some First Nations and Inuit communities have restrictions on re-entry into the community after travelling, so you should check with your community health centre or health manager about any restrictions
- If you are vulnerable due to age or health condition, talk to your health care provider for advice on travel to medical services. NIHB can cover private modes of transportation and accommodation, such as hotel, where necessary, and may be able to assist with temporary relocation to an urban centre for clients who have an ongoing need to attend essential medical appointments
- Communities that deliver medical transportation services, such as medical vans, have been advised that expenses for increased cleaning and sanitization are eligible under their funding agreements with NIHB. This includes the costs associated with installation of plexi-glass shields between the drivers and passengers seats
- Boarding homes have also been advised to take measures to support social distancing and increased infection-control practices
- If you are staying in a hotel while on medical travel and food services are not available, NIHB will provide additional coverage for meal delivery charges of \$7.00 per meal or \$21.00 per day, per family or group of travellers

### Pharmacy Benefit information

#### New pharmacy benefit listings

- NIHB now covers the Trelegy Ellipta inhaler (fluticasone furoate/umeclidinium/vilanterol) as a limited use benefit for the treatment of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). This is the first triple drug inhaler for treatment of COPD available in Canada

- NIHB added open benefit coverage for Soliqua (lixisenatide + insulin glargine) and Adlyxine (lixisenatide) for treatment of type 2 diabetes. These injectable medications come in a pre-filled pen
- Internalized Normalized Ratio (INR) monitors and supplies are now listed as limited use pharmacy benefits. INR monitors are used by patients who take warfarin (a medication used to thin the blood), to measure how quickly blood clots in their circulatory system

## **Medical Supplies and Equipment (MS&E) information**

### **Increased coverage for feeding supplies**

NIHB has increased coverage for the following items to 1 per day:

- disposable feeding syringes
- feeding pumps bag
- gravity feeding bag
- feeding delivery set

### **Changes to audiology benefit coverage**

- Invisible-in-canal hearing aids are now listed as limited use benefits (prior approval is required).
- NIHB has expanded coverage of FM systems (a type of assistive hearing device) to include the following conditions:
  - permanent hearing loss in one ear
  - auditory neuropathy (where the ear does not transmit sound to the brain)
  - difficulty processing auditory information
- Coverage for disposable batteries used in certain hearing devices has increased:
  - cochlear implant processors: 7 batteries per week
  - bone anchored hearing system processors: 3 batteries per week
- NIHB now covers rechargeable batteries and chargers for hearing aids:
  - rechargeable batteries for hearing aids are covered once every 3 years
  - rechargeable batteries for cochlear implant processors are covered once per year
  - battery chargers are covered every 5 years

### **Coverage for laryngectomy and voice restoration products**

- Coverage for speaking valves (post-tracheostomy) has increased to 4 valves per year
- Hands-free speaking valves (post-laryngectomy) are now listed as limited use benefits, with coverage for 1 box (set of 3 valves) per year
- Cleaning supplies for these items are also covered

Please check the [MS&E guide and benefit lists](#) for more information and coverage criteria.

## **Reminder of prescription requirements for custom-made foot orthotics**

- A prescription from a health care provider is needed for coverage of custom-made foot orthotics. You should have the prescription before you visit an enrolled provider to be fitted for the item
- A prescriber of custom-made foot orthotics could be a doctor, nurse practitioner or podiatrist
- NIHB now accepts prescriptions from chiropodists for custom-made foot orthotics in provinces where this profession is regulated:
  - Ontario
  - Saskatchewan
  - New Brunswick