



March 30 2020

Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program: COVID-19 Pandemic Updates

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Pharmacy Benefit Information

Change to Prior Approval for Certain Medications

The NIHB Program has temporarily lifted the prior approval requirement for many limited use medications. Pharmacists have been advised of this change, and asked to submit all NIHB client prescriptions electronically to see if the medication is covered as open benefit.

The NIHB Drug Exception Centre (DEC) continues to process requests for prior approval, and can be reached at 1-800-580-0950.

Pharmacist Recommendation for Fever and Pain Medications

NIHB covers a range of over-the-counter fever and pain medications for adults and children. Up to 100 tablets for adults and youth, and one package of a children’s product (chewable or liquid), are covered with a pharmacist’s recommendation, so you don’t need a prescription from a doctor.

Medical Supplies and Equipment (MS&E) Information

General Information on Temporary Changes to Medical Supplies and Equipment Coverage

To support clients during the COVID-19 pandemic, the NIHB Program has made some temporary changes to its policies for coverage of medical supplies and equipment.

Please keep in mind that health care providers are not employees of the NIHB Program, and they determine how to prioritize services to their patients. During this pandemic, health services may be cancelling assessments to protect their staff, or because health professionals are urgently required in other areas.

Clients are encouraged to contact their MS&E provider to confirm store hours, benefit availability and make arrangements for delivery.

Temporary Changes for Replacement of Select (MS&E) Benefits

If you are unable to see your prescriber to get a new prescription for the replacement of equipment or supplies, your MS&E provider may use the existing prescription on file for the replacement of:

- limb and body orthotics
- custom made shoes and orthotics
- medical grade compression stocking
- mobility equipment
- incontinence and ostomy supplies
- self-care benefits (e.g. lift, transfer equipment, urinal)

Quantities above the current recommended replacement guidelines may be requested without medical justification, if required due to circumstances caused by the pandemic.

Oxygen benefits

For clients applying for 9 month, 1 year or yearly renewal for coverage of home supplemental oxygen (systems such as concentrators, portable cylinders, homefill systems, portable oxygen concentrators), the requirement for testing (ABG and oximetry testing) is not required during the pandemic.

Your provider may contact you by telephone to obtain an update of your condition and the respiratory equipment in the home.

Please note that initial requests for supplemental home oxygen continue to require testing results. This testing can be either an oximetry **or** an ABG, however the requirement for an ABG test is waived.

Respiratory benefits

For CPAP and BPAP benefits, purchase will be approved without a trial in situations where a prescription and diagnostic testing with physician interpretation are provided. Your provider will inform you if you are eligible.

Communication Benefits

Communication benefits include items such as voice prosthesis, speaking valve, laryngectomy supplies.

No prescription will be required for renewal requests if the provider has a prescription on file. Additional items can be approved without medical justification if you require greater access to these supplies due to a change in your condition (for example, due to respiratory infection).

Both Atos Medical (833-514-2867) and Auto Control Medical (800-461-0991) are providers of this equipment and will accept orders and ship products as requested. Orders can be made online (Atos: www.atosmedical.com and Auto Control Medical: <https://autocontrol.com>) for those who are having difficulty speaking and can't use the phone.

Please contact your regional office if you have questions about MS&E benefits.

General Program Information

Service Standards and Processing Times

The NIHB Program continues to provide benefits and services during the COVID-19 pandemic, and is making every effort to serve clients and providers in a timely manner. However, some services may take longer than usual.

Until further notice, usual Program service standards no longer apply for processing of dental predetermination and appeals. Adjudication of prior approval requests for other benefits may take longer than usual. Wait times at the NIHB Drug Exception Centre, Dental Predetermination Centre, and NIHB regional call centres may be longer than usual.

We apologize for the inconvenience, and thank NIHB clients for their patience during this challenging time.

Renewal of Indian Status Card and NIHB Client Eligibility

In order to submit benefit claims to NIHB, service providers require your NIHB client identification number. If you are a registered First Nations person, providers may ask to see your Indian status card because your Indian status registration number also serves as your NIHB client identification number.

Some First Nations clients may experience challenges or delays in renewing their status cards at the present time. For example, if status card renewals are normally processed at your First Nation band office, this service may be temporarily unavailable.

Please be assured that eligible NIHB clients should not be denied services because their status card has expired. Service providers can still use your status number to verify your eligibility when submitting NIHB claims. Providers can call Express Scripts Canada to verify client eligibility for dental, pharmacy and MS&E benefits. For all other benefits, contact the NIHB regional office to verify client eligibility.

Clients are reminded of the option to apply for a Secure Certificate of Indian Status through Indigenous Services Canada. More information is available on the [Government of Canada website](#) or by calling 1-800-567-9604.

NIHB Client Inquiries

Email	sac.nihb-ssna.isc@canada.ca
Alberta	1-800-232-7301 Medical Transportation: 1-800-514-7106
Atlantic	1-800-565-3294 Email: sac.nihb-atlnihb.isc@canada.ca
British Columbia	First Nations Health Authority (FNHA)* 1-855-550-5454
Manitoba	1-800-665-8507 Medical Transportation: 1-877-983-0911
Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Yukon	1-888-332-9222

Ontario

1-800-640-0642

Email for claim submissions and enquiries:

Nihbontarioinvoices@hc-sc.gc.ca

Quebec

1-514-283-1575

1-877-483-1575

Mental Health Counselling: 1-877-583-2965

Saskatchewan

1-866-885-3933

Email: sac.sasknihb_inquiries.isc@canada.ca

**Inuit clients residing in British Columbia* 1-800-232-7301

Pharmacy Benefits

NIHB Drug Exception Centre

1-800-580-0950 ext. #3

Dental and Orthodontic Services

NIHB Dental Predetermination Centre

1-855-618-6291 (Dental Services)

1-866-227-0943 (Orthodontic Services)