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COVID-19 UPDATE

Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) Program | COVID-19 Questions and Answers

Question		Answer
1.	During the COVID-19 pandemic, can I still access Non-Insured Health Benefits?	<p>Yes, the NIHB Program continues to provide benefits and services.</p> <p>The NIHB Drug Exception Centre, Dental Pre-Determination Centre and NIHB regional call centres continue to operate and receive calls, faxes and emails from clients and providers. Claims processing services continue as usual.</p>
2.	Should I travel to my medical appointment?	<p>NIHB clients are encouraged to consult with their health professional to confirm their appointments. If the health professional determines the appointment should be attended, NIHB staff will work with the client to facilitate travel.</p> <p>Clients are encouraged to review local public health orders/guidance prior to travelling, and take all necessary precautions to reduce the risk of infection.</p> <p>Some First Nation communities may have restrictions regarding re-entry into the community after travelling out, so travellers should discuss with their community Health Director or health centre before travelling, to ensure they are aware of any restrictions.</p>
3.	Does NIHB cover medical transportation to get the COVID-19 vaccine or booster?	<p>Vaccination is being provided to all residents through the provincial or territorial health system.</p> <p>In some cases, the COVID-19 vaccine is being transported into Indigenous communities to vaccinate residents. In the event NIHB clients need to travel out of their community of residence to get to their vaccination appointment, the travel is eligible under NIHB. When your appointment has been booked, contact your NIHB regional office or your community's medical transportation coordinator to arrange your travel.</p>
4.	Will NIHB cover the cost of transportation to be tested for COVID-19?	<p>COVID-19 testing may be available in your community. If your health care provider or public health authority has advised you to get tested and COVID-19 testing is not available locally, medical transportation coverage may be provided to access publicly-funded COVID-19 testing.</p>

5.	Will NIHB cover the cost of a COVID-19 test?	<p>COVID-19 testing may be available in your community, or is otherwise covered by provincial and territorial health services when recommended by a health care provider or public health authorities. Check with your local health or public health services if you think you may need a COVID-19 test.</p> <p>If you require a test for personal reasons (e.g. leisure travel or activities), this is not covered by the NIHB Program.</p>
6.	I am vulnerable due to my health condition. Will NIHB provide coverage for me to relocate temporarily, for example to a hotel, so I can be away from others that I live with?	<p>If you do not have medical appointments, but a health professional or public health officials have advised you to stay in a location other than your home because of an underlying health condition, to reduce the risk of COVID-19, contact your community health centre or Health Director to determine what supports are available in your community.</p> <p>The NIHB Program can provide you with support to travel to a designated isolation site if you have been accepted for admission.</p>
7.	What is the vaccination requirement for travelling?	<p>Effective October 30, 2021, travellers departing from Canadian airports, and travellers on VIA Rail, are required to be fully vaccinated, with very limited exceptions.</p> <p>This vaccination mandate includes measures to recognize the unique needs of travellers from small, remote communities (some of which are not accessible by road) to ensure they will be able to travel to obtain essential services in support of their medical, health, or social well-being, and return safely to their homes.</p> <p>Travellers can use a proof of vaccination credential issued by their province or territory. For more information, see: https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/vaccines/life-after-vaccination/vaccine-proof.html.</p> <p>NIHB encourages clients/travellers to obtain copies of their proof of COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible, and to keep a digital copy (or code) on their smart phone OR keep a paper copy in their wallet/in a safe place.</p> <p>There will be very limited, and strictly enforced, exemptions to these vaccination requirements. Please refer to the Government of Canada website (https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/travel-restrictions/domestic-travel) for the most up-to-date information on travel vaccination requirements and exemptions.</p> <p>There is also specific guidance for Indigenous people and remote communities (https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1635354950168/1635354976951). It is recommended that you contact your transportation provider prior to travel to confirm their requirements.</p>

8.	<p>I am vulnerable due to my health condition but I need to travel to a medical appointment. How can NIHB support me?</p>	<p>NIHB clients are encouraged to consult with their health professional to confirm their appointments . Where there is a medical need, vulnerable clients will be supported to use private modes of transportation where necessary.</p> <p>Additional information regarding infection prevention/control measures was shared with transportation service providers for their information.</p> <p>NIHB has advised partners that additional expenses for increased cleaning and sanitization measures are eligible administrative expenses under Contribution Agreements.</p> <p>Boarding homes have been advised to take measures to support social-distancing and self-isolation, and that vulnerable people at higher risk for severe disease can be placed in facilities outside the boarding home, such as hotels, to limit exposure.</p> <p>For vulnerable clients who have an ongoing need to attend essential or urgent medical appointments, NIHB will continue to provide coverage of your medical transportation, accommodation and meals. You may be eligible for temporary relocation to reduce your need to travel.</p>
9.	<p>I am currently out of the community and my return trip is delayed due to COVID-19 travel or isolation requirements.</p> <p>Will NIHB pay for extended accommodation and meals for me until I am cleared to travel home?</p>	<p>If you were out of your community on NIHB eligible medical travel, NIHB can extend your meals and accommodation coverage for up to 10 days or as advised by local public health authorities, to enable you to self-isolate for that period before returning to your community.</p> <p>If you were on medical travel and must wait for a COVID-19 test result before travelling home, you must get tested as soon as possible, taking into account the availability of testing appointments and the time required to received test results.</p> <p>If you were out of your community for any other reason (e.g. work-related travel, meetings, vacation), contact your community leadership, health centre or Health Director to confirm what actions you should take prior to returning home and what supports may be available to you.</p>
10.	<p>The restaurant has closed in the hotel that I am staying at and meals are only available through delivery by other restaurants - is the cost of meal delivery eligible?</p>	<p>In addition to NIHB meal allowance rates, NIHB will also provide coverage up to an additional \$7.00 per meal, or \$21.00 per day, for meal delivery charges, per family/group of travellers.</p>
11.	<p>How can I continue with my mental health counselling?</p>	<p>In addition to in-person counselling, NIHB supports the delivery of mental health counselling by telephone or video. Contact your mental health counsellor to see if this is an option.</p>
12.	<p>Should I attend my dental appointment?</p>	<p>Dental professional organizations across Canada are monitoring provincial/territorial public health directives in regards to COVID-19 and will advise of any restrictions placed on provision of oral health services. Prior to attending a dental appointment, you are encouraged to contact your dental office to confirm that your appointment is taking place, and to discuss what to expect.</p>

13.	Does NIHB cover fever and pain medication? What about thermometers?	<p>NIHB covers a range of over-the-counter fever and pain medications for adults and children. These are open benefits and can be covered with a prescription from a doctor or nurse practitioner, or a written recommendation from a pharmacist.</p> <p>For the duration of the pandemic, oral digital thermometers are covered so individuals can monitor their temperature as required. These are open benefits and can be covered with a prescription from a doctor or nurse practitioner, or a written recommendation from a registered nurse or pharmacist.</p>
14.	I am hearing about potential drug shortages. Should I be concerned?	<p>NIHB works closely with federal and provincial partners as well as distributors to monitor drug shortages. If a shortage occurs, NIHB can make quick policy changes to ensure other drugs are made eligible. This may take place by removing the prior approval requirements from alternative drugs or reimbursing compounded therapies.</p>
15.	What plans are in place to support people who need access to treatment for opioid addiction?	<p>In jurisdictions where regulatory bodies have permitted extra carries of methadone for certain clients, when deemed to be safe, NIHB has made the necessary system changes to allow larger quantities to be reimbursed.</p> <p>Prior approval is now not required for methadone and Suboxone for the treatment of opioid dependence. Clients will continue to be enrolled into the NIHB Client Safety Program.</p>
16.	How do I obtain oxygen benefits?	<p>The requirement for testing (ABG and oximetry) has been removed during the pandemic for clients applying for 9 month, 1 year or annual renewal for coverage of home supplemental oxygen (systems such as concentrators, portable cylinders, home fill systems, portable oxygen concentrators).</p> <p>Note that initial requests for supplemental home oxygen continue to require testing results. The requirement for an ABG test is waived. Either oximetry or ABG testing is accepted. The Program may waive this requirement depending on the provincial/territorial criteria in place to respond to the pandemic.</p>

17.	I need to replace my medical equipment or supply. What do I do?	<p>If you are unable to get a new prescription for the replacement of equipment or supplies and your medical status has not changed, your Medical Supply and Equipment provider may use the existing prescription on file for the replacement of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limb and body orthotics • Custom made shoes • Medical grade compression stockings • Mobility equipment • Incontinence and ostomy supplies • Laryngectomy and tracheostomy supplies • Self-care benefits such as lifts, transfer equipment, dressing and feeding aids, and bathing and toileting aids. <p>The existing prescription must not be older than three years. Quantities above the current recommended replacement guidelines may be requested for certain supplies without medical justification, if required due to circumstances caused by the pandemic.</p>
18.	Are there any special considerations for individuals who have COVID-19 and use Positive Airway Pressure (PAP) therapy?	<p>Individuals who become infected with COVID-19 and continue PAP therapy when infected should obtain a new mask and tubing once they have recovered. Clients should ask their provider to submit a prior approval request to NIHB for new PAP supplies.</p>
19.	I need to access audiology benefits, but am unable to visit the audiology provider in person (e.g. due to vulnerable health status, community travel restrictions, etc.) What are my options?	<p>Individuals who are unable to go to an audiology clinic may obtain certain audiology services through tele-audiology from audiology clinics that are set up to provide these services remotely.</p> <p>The services that can be provided remotely include a hearing aid performance check and readjustment, and the fitting and dispensing of certain hearing devices such as hearing aids, bone-anchored hearing systems (BAHS) processor and replacement of cochlear implant processors. These hearing devices will be shipped directly to the client. The client must then make arrangements to schedule a virtual appointment for the first-fit.</p>
20.	Can I have my eye glasses shipped to me?	<p>As a temporary measure, vision care providers can bill NIHB for the cost of shipping eligible eyewear to clients who are unable or prefer not to visit the retail location. Let your eyewear provider know if you would like the item shipped to you so they can include the shipping cost in the prior approval request to NIHB.</p>
21.	Am I still eligible for NIHB benefits even though my Indian Status card has expired?	<p>NIHB clients should not be denied services because their Indian Status cards have expired.</p> <p>Health services providers and vendors require client identity information to bill NIHB for services provided to you. If you are a registered First Nations person, providers may ask to see your Indian status card because your Indian status registration number is also your NIHB client identification number. <i>The number remains valid even if the card has expired.</i></p> <p>Services providers/vendors can call Express Scripts Canada to verify client eligibility. For Medical Transportation benefits, contact the NIHB regional office (see contact information below).</p>

22.	Do unregistered infants have coverage under NIHB?	<p>Yes. In order to allow time for parents to register their infant children for First Nation status, NIHB provides coverage for unregistered infants with at least one NIHB-eligible parent.</p> <p>During the COVID-19 pandemic, there may be delays in registration. Therefore, NIHB has extended coverage of unregistered infants up to 24 months of age until further notice (extended from 18 months, previously). Infants up to 18 months of age may already access most types of NIHB benefits under the identification number of their parent or guardian who is NIHB eligible.</p> <p>Starting at 18 months of age, a child needs his or her own status or N number to process NIHB benefits. If your child has reached the age of 18 months and is not registered, please call your NIHB Regional Office, or the Drug Exception Centre if your request is related to pharmacy benefits/medication, or the Dental Predetermination Centre if related to dental benefits (see contact information below). You will be provided with a temporary NIHB client number that is valid until your child reaches 24 months of age.</p>
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NIHB Contact Information:

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)

For other benefit areas, contact your NIHB regional office. Contact information can be found at online at: Canada.ca/nihb-contacts

NIHB Other Important Contacts:

Ontario Region Client Information Line

1-800-640-0642

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Express Scripts Canada:

NIHB Client Call Centre 1-888-441-4777

For assistance with services provided by Express Scripts Canada, including NIHB client web accounts and submission of client reimbursement requests for pharmacy, dental, MS&E, vision care and mental health counselling benefits