



## NON-INSURED HEALTH BENEFITS (NIHB) AND COVID-19

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is providing the following information on the Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) program response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The NIHB program is continuing to provide benefits and services while following the current and evolving public health guidance from health professionals. The following information has been collected from the NIHB program website. For the most relevant information visit the NIHB program updates page here: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1578079214611/1578079236012>

### What should I know?

#### Pharmacy

- The NIHB Drug Exception Centre and regional call centers continue to operate and receive calls from clients and providers.
- Prior approvals for many medications covered under NIHB have been temporarily lifted, and duration of approvals for some medications has been extended.
- The NIHB program normally covers up to a 100-day supply of chronic medications. In determining the quantity to refill for clients, pharmacists will consider advice from professional associations and regulatory bodies, as well as patient-specific factors. NIHB has asked pharmacists to consider the unique living circumstances of some NIHB clients (for example, the need to travel long distances to a pharmacy).

#### Mental Health Counselling

- NIHB covers mental health counselling through telephone or video conferencing. Contact your mental health service provider to confirm whether they can provide counselling services through tele-health.
- To find an enrolled mental health counsellor in your area, please contact your NIHB regional office here: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1579274812116/1579708265237>

#### Medical Transportation

- NIHB is continuing to support clients who need medical transportation benefits to access urgent and essential medical services.
- Vulnerable clients will be supported by prioritizing private modes of transportation, such as use of their own vehicle or having a family member drive them.
- Check with your health or benefit service provider to confirm whether routine, non-urgent appointments should be postponed.

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

- The regional offices continue to operate and receive calls from clients and providers.
- Those with serious medical conditions, compromised immune systems, and adults of 70 years or over will have their MS&E benefit requests reviewed as a priority.
- If you are unable to see your prescriber to get a new prescription for the replacement of equipment or supplies, your provider may use the existing prescription on file for the replacement of:
  - › limb and body orthotics,
  - › custom shoes and orthotics,
  - › medical grade compression stockings,
  - › mobility equipment,
  - › incontinence and ostomy supplies,
  - › self-care benefits.
- If you are unable to see your physician, testing requirements (ABG and oximetry testing) are being waived for clients applying for 9 month, 1 year and yearly renewal coverage for home supplemental oxygen.
- For circumstances caused by the current COVID-19 pandemic, higher quantities of supplies can be requested without medical justification.
- Please contact your regional office if you have questions about MS&E benefits.

#### Dental and Vision

- Non-emergency services should be postponed. Call your provider's office to see if any scheduled appointments have been cancelled or postponed.

#### Updates and resources:

##### Government of Canada COVID-19 updates:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/coronavirus-disease-covid-19.html>

**Outbreak Update:** <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection.html>

**Regional Office Contacts:** <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1579274812116/1579708265237>

