

Health Supplements for People with Disabilities[©]

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If you have a disability, you may be able to access a range of medical services and supplies provided by the Ministry of Employment and Income Assistance (MEIA). The BC Coalition of People with Disabilities has prepared this Help Sheet about health supplements to help you understand what services and supplies you may be eligible for from the MEIA.

You should talk to an Employment and Assistance Worker (EAW) about any of the services and supplies listed here. They will be able to explain how you apply for them.

It is important to understand that the MEIA will not reimburse you for any of these services and supplies. Please note that the Ministry must provide authorization for most of the supplements listed in this Help Sheet before you may access them. As well, you may be asked if you can afford to pay for them yourself before they are provided to you.

Who is eligible

You may be eligible for a range of health supplements from the MEIA if any of the following describes your situation:

- You are receiving the Persons with Disabilities (PWD) benefit
- You are a dependent of a person receiving PWD
- You are a single person receiving the Persons with Persistent and Multiple Barriers to employment (PPMB) benefit and are not receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) or a federal Spouse's Allowance (SA)
- You are living in a household where one or more adults receive PPMB and none receive either the GIS or SA
- You live in a special care facility, or if you have been admitted to hospital for extended care
- You are the dependant of a person in special care

If you are still not sure whether you are eligible for health supplements from the MEIA, contact an EAW to find out.

Medical Services Only (MSO): You may also be eligible for health supplements from the MEIA if any of the following describes your situation:

- You were receiving Disability Benefits II (DBII) benefits or PWD but are now employed
- You were receiving DBII or PWD but have turned 65 years of age
- You were receiving DBII or PWD but are now receiving Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefits
- You were receiving PPMB, but have turned 65 years of age

However, you will **not** be able to access:

- diet supplement
- monthly nutritional supplement
- short term nutritional supplement
- natal allowance, or
- medical transportation

Life-threatening Health Need

MEIA can grant any health benefit listed in the health supplement section of the Regulations, even if you do not normally qualify for health coverage when the following conditions apply:

- you or a family member has a life-threatening health need and you have no resources to meet that need, and
- MEIA agrees that the health supplement is necessary to meet that need.

Health Supplements: what you may be able to obtain

There are different kinds of health supplements. Some require no pre-approval from the MEIA. These are:

- Medical Service Plan (MSP)*
- Prescription drugs covered by Pharmacare*
- Eye glasses every 3 years for adults, with a prescription, or every year for dependent children*

*Everyone on income and disability assistance is entitled to this coverage.

Dental supplements

You will also be eligible for some dental supplements, or supplies and services. Talk to an EAW as you may need to get MEIA approval first for some of these.

If you are receiving PWD you will be eligible for:

- Dental care coverage of up to \$1,000 every 2 years. This continues after you turn 65 years of age.
- Your spouse will receive \$1,000 of dental care coverage every 2 years.

If you are receiving PPMB you will be eligible for:

- Dental care coverage of up to \$1,000 every 2 years. This continues after you turn 65 years of age.

Dependant children of people receiving basic income assistance, PWD and PPMB are eligible for \$700 per year dental coverage.

PWD and PPMB recipients may be eligible for crown and bridgework if their dental condition cannot be corrected by basic dental services and a removable prosthetic cannot be used for health reasons. This coverage continues after the age of 65.

- Dentures:
 - complete or partial (extractions must have taken place within 6 months of applying)
 - denture relinement or rebaseing (every 2 years)
 - replacement dentures every 5 years (you must have been on income assistance or disability benefits for at least 2 years)
- Emergency dental services for the immediate relief of pain
- Orthodontic services (must be requested by your dental practitioner and authorized by the MEIA)

Other health supplements

You should talk to an EAW about the supplements listed below. To qualify for them you may be required to supply medical information. Some of them also require you to provide financial information.

Optical

- The MEIA pays up to \$44.83 for an optometrist's exam and \$48.90 for an ophthalmologist's exam, every 2 years. To obtain an eye exam, you will need to provide your optometrist or ophthalmologist with your Care Card. The MSP may pay the full cost for an exam if you have a particular medical condition. As well, you may be able to get an exam more often than every 2 years. Check with your ophthalmologist or optometrist to see if you qualify.
- Eye glass lenses more frequently than every 3 years. Your physician must confirm that you have a specific medical condition such as, for example, diabetes and your ophthalmologist or optometrist must confirm that you need a new prescription.
- Eye glass repairs.
- Eyewear (specialized) if basic eyewear does not meet your needs. The need for the eyewear must be confirmed by your ophthalmologist or optometrist.

Medical supplies

- Disposable medical and surgical supplies such as bandages and syringes. Supplies must be prescribed by a doctor, used in medical treatment and necessary to avoid a substantial danger to health.

Medical equipment

- Mobility devices necessary for your basic mobility. The device must be prescribed by your physician and an occupational or physical therapist must confirm that you need it.
- Orthotics or bracing devices. The MEIA must determine that the devices are necessary to prevent your muscles or bones from deteriorating, that they will assist your basic mobility,

that they will help your neuro-musculo-skeletal condition and that they will prevent you from having surgery, or that you need them after surgery.

- Positioning devices such as grab bars or a hospital bed. The device must be prescribed by your physician, and an occupational or physical therapist must confirm that you need it.
- Breathing devices such as ventilators. The device must be prescribed by a physician, and a respiratory therapist must confirm that you need it.
- Hearing aids. An audiologist must confirm that you need hearing aids, and they must be prescribed by a physician.

Extended therapy

- Chiropractic, massage, physiotherapy or podiatry services. A physician must confirm that you have an acute need for the service.

Medical transportation

- Transportation allowance to and from your medical appointments.
- Transportation allowance to and from residential alcohol and drug treatment facilities.

Monthly diet supplements

High protein diet

You may be eligible for a monthly high protein diet supplement of \$40 a month. In order to qualify, your physician must say that you have 1 or more of the following conditions:

- Cancer (if you are receiving therapy or medical treatment)
- Chronic bacterial infection
- Chronic inflammatory bowel disease
- Crohn's disease
- Hepatitis B or C
- HIV/AIDS
- Hyperthyroidism
- Osteoporosis
- Tuberculosis
- Ulcerative colitis

For other medical conditions

You may also qualify for a supplement if your physician, dietician, or nutritionist state that you need a:

- Gluten free diet (\$40 per month)
- Low sodium diet (\$10 per month)

Or if you have:

- Cystic fibrosis (\$50 per month)
- Diabetes (\$35 per month)

- Dysphagia (\$40 per month)
- Kidney dialysis (\$30 per month)

There is no special application form for these monthly diet supplements. To qualify, your doctor must state your medical condition in writing, the kind of diet you require and how long you need it. An EAW can ask you to renew the request every 12 months or 24 months. As the MEIA will only pay for one diet supplement at a time, apply for the highest diet allowance you think you are eligible for.

Monthly Nutritional Supplement (MNS)

You may be eligible for a monthly nutritional supplement of up to \$225 a month, if you are receiving PWD—people receiving PPMB are not eligible. The nutritional supplement is divided into 3 parts for a total of \$225 a month:

1. Nutritional items: \$165. This part of the benefit will only be provided if you need to supplement your regular diet. You may not receive this and a diet supplement (high protein diet etc.).
2. Bottled water: \$20. For people with suppressed immune systems.
3. Vitamin or mineral supplementation: \$40.

To receive the nutritional allowance you must have a chronic and progressive deteriorating condition causing at least 1 of the following symptoms:

- Bone density loss
- Immune suppression (moderate to severe)
- Malnutrition, underweight status, or significant weight change
- Muscle mass loss
- Neurological degeneration

To qualify for the nutritional items, bottled water, or the vitamin/mineral supplementation, your doctor must state that you need them to prevent an imminent danger to your life. This means your health will deteriorate significantly without the nutritional supplement. Contact an EAW and ask her or him for a Monthly Nutritional Supplement application form. Ask your doctor to complete the form, and return it to the worker.

Short term nutritional supplement

You may also receive nutritional supplementation products like *Ensure* or *Boost* for a 3 month period. Your doctor must confirm an acute short-term need for a caloric (nutritional) supplement to prevent critical weight loss resulting from 1 of the following:

- Disease (serious)
- Injury (severe)
- Surgery
- Treatment side effects

Natal allowances

If you are pregnant, you will be eligible for a natal allowance during your pregnancy and until your child reaches 7 months of age. To qualify for this allowance, you must provide documentation from a medical practitioner or a midwife registered with the College of Midwives. You will receive:

- \$45 a month if you are pregnant with one child
- \$90 a month if you are pregnant with more than one child

Right to Appeal

If your application for any of these health goods and services is denied you have the right to appeal. Contact an EAW immediately after you receive your denial. You may want to ask an advocate to help you with your appeal.



Prepared by Advocacy Access, a program of BC Coalition of People with Disabilities

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