



For more information:  
[Canada.ca/coronavirus](https://Canada.ca/coronavirus)

Information for Indigenous communities:  
[Canada.ca/coronavirus-info-indigenous](https://Canada.ca/coronavirus-info-indigenous)

# COVID-19 UPDATE

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

Question		Answer
1.	<b>During the COVID-19 pandemic, can I still access Non-Insured Health Benefits?</b>	<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.	<b>Should I travel to my health care appointment?</b>	<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 in person, 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 ensure they are aware of any restrictions before travelling.</p>
3.	<b>Does NIHB cover medical transportation to get the COVID-19 vaccine or booster?</b>	<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.	<b>Will NIHB cover the cost of a COVID-19 test?</b>	<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>

5.	<b>Is there a vaccination requirement for travelling?</b>	<p>As of June 20, 2022 vaccination is no longer required to board a plane or train in Canada. Travellers on federally regulated planes and trains are still required to wear a mask throughout their journey except for brief periods (e.g. eating or drinking). For more information see:</p> <p><a href="https://www.canada.ca/en/transport-canada/news/2022/06/suspension-of-the-mandatory-vaccination-requirement-for-domestic-travellers-and-federally-regulated-transportation-workers.html">https://www.canada.ca/en/transport-canada/news/2022/06/suspension-of-the-mandatory-vaccination-requirement-for-domestic-travellers-and-federally-regulated-transportation-workers.html</a></p>
6.	<b>I am vulnerable due to my health condition but I need to travel to a medical appointment. How can NIHB support me?</b>	<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>
7.	<p><b>I am currently out of the community and my return trip is delayed due to COVID-19 travel or isolation requirements.</b></p> <p><b>Will NIHB pay for extended accommodation and meals for me until I am cleared to travel home?</b></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 out of your community for any other reason (e.g. work-related travel, meetings, vacation), contact your community to confirm what actions you should take prior to returning home and what supports may be available to you.</p>
8.	<b>Is the cost of meal delivery eligible?</b>	<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>
9.	<b>How can I continue with my mental health counselling?</b>	<p>In addition to in-person counselling, NIHB covers mental health counselling by telephone or video. Contact your mental health counsellor to see if this is an option.</p>

10.	<b>Does NIHB cover fever and pain medication? What about thermometers?</b>	<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>Oral digital thermometers are covered. as open benefits (up to \$16, every 5 years) and can be covered with a prescription from a doctor or nurse practitioner, or a written recommendation from a registered nurse or licensed practical nurse.</p>
11.	<b>I am hearing about potential drug shortages. Should I be concerned?</b>	<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>
12.	<b>What benefits are covered for treatment for opioid dependence?</b>	<p>NIHB covers methadone, Suboxone and Sublocade for the treatment of opioid dependence, without prior approval. Clients will continue to be enrolled into the NIHB Client Safety Program.</p> <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>NIHB also covers mental health counselling, including by telephone or video.</p>
13.	<b>How do I obtain oxygen benefits?</b>	<p>As of July 1st, 2022, all requests for supplemental home oxygen (initial or renewal) require testing results. Testing can be either an arterial blood gas (ABG) or an oximetry for all coverage periods (initial 3 months, renewal 9 months or renewal 12 months).</p>
14.	<b>I need to replace my medical equipment or supply. What do I do?</b>	<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"> <li>• Limb and body orthotics</li> <li>• Custom made shoes</li> <li>• Medical grade compression stockings</li> <li>• Mobility equipment</li> <li>• Incontinence and ostomy supplies</li> <li>• Laryngectomy and tracheostomy supplies</li> <li>• Self-care benefits such as lifts, transfer equipment, dressing and feeding aids, and bathing and toileting aids.</li> </ul> <p>The existing prescription must not be older than one year and be available from your provider. All other prescription requirements for MS&amp;E benefits apply, and can be found in <a href="#">section 1.6 of the NIHB Mental Supplies and Equipment Guide and Benefit Lists</a>.</p>

15.	<b>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?</b>	<p>Individuals who live in a remote area 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>
16.	<b>Can I have my eye glasses shipped to me?</b>	<p>Vision care providers can bill NIHB for the cost of shipping eligible eyewear to clients who are unable 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>
17.	<b>Am I still eligible for NIHB benefits even though my Indian Status card has expired?</b>	<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. <b>The number remains valid even if the card has expired.</b></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>
18.	<b>Do unregistered infants have coverage under NIHB?</b>	<p>Yes. In order to allow time for parents to register their infant children for First Nation status or with their Inuit land claim organization, NIHB provides coverage for unregistered infants with at least one NIHB-eligible parent.</p> <p>NIHB permanently extended coverage of unregistered infants up to 24 months of age (extended from 18 months, previously) if they have a parent or guardian who is NIHB eligible.</p> <p>Some types of benefits may require unregistered infants to have a temporary client ID number. If your unregistered infant requires access to benefits, please contact the NIHB program (see contact information below).</p> <p>It is important that parents or guardians begin the application process for First Nation status or recognition by an Inuit land claim organization as soon as possible and well in advance of their child's second birthday. Applications for First Nation status take 6-8 months to process (on average), and may take longer in some cases.</p> <p>For more information on First Nation registration, visit Indian status [<a href="https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1100100032374/1572457769548">https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1100100032374/1572457769548</a>] or visit <a href="http://www.canada.ca">www.canada.ca</a>, and search for 'Indian status'.</p>

## **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](https://Canada.ca/nihb-contacts)**

## **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.