



# COVID-19 UPDATE

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

Question	Answer
<p>1. <b>During the COVID-19 pandemic, can I still access Non-Insured Health Benefits?</b></p>	<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 vendors.</p>
<p>2. <b>Should I travel to my non-urgent medical appointment?</b></p>	<p>NIHB clients are encouraged to consult with their health professional to confirm whether routine, non-urgent appointment should be postponed. <b>NIHB will only cancel travel arrangements at the request of the health professional or the client.</b> If the health professional determines the appointment must be attended NIHB staff will work with the health professional to determine the most appropriate mode of travel.</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 before travelling, to ensure they are aware of any restrictions.</p>
<p>3. <b>Will NIHB cover my medical transportation expenses to attend my urgent or essential medical appointment, for example dialysis?</b></p>	<p>Yes, NIHB continues to support clients who need medical transportation to access urgent or essential medical appointments. Where there is a medical need, vulnerable clients will be supported by covering private modes of transportation where necessary.</p>
<p>4. <b>I do not have symptoms of COVID-19 but I want to self-isolate outside my home community. Will NIHB pay for a hotel and meals for two (2) weeks?</b></p>	<p>No. The Public Health Agency of Canada advises that self-isolation means stay at home, monitor your symptoms and avoid contact with others. If you develop symptoms, contact a health care professional as soon as possible. If you have questions about self-isolating in your community, contact your community leadership and/or Health Director.</p>

<p>5.</p>	<p><b>How do I self-isolate at home if I think I have/or have been diagnosed with COVID-19?</b></p>	<p>Isolation means staying at home when you have a symptom of COVID-19 and it is possible that you have been exposed to the virus. By avoiding contact with other people, you help prevent the spread of disease to others in your home and your community.</p> <p>Details on <a href="#"><u>How To Isolate at Home When You May Have COVID-19</u></a> are available to review and download.</p> <p>Key recommendations include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor your symptoms as directed by your healthcare provider</li> <li>• Limit contact with others</li> <li>• Keep your hands clean</li> <li>• Avoid contaminating common items and surfaces</li> <li>• Recommended supplies to have at home when isolating</li> </ul>
<p>6.</p>	<p><b>I am vulnerable due to my health condition. Will NIHB provide coverage for me to self-isolate in a hotel so I can be away from others that I live with?</b></p>	<p>If a health professional or public health officials have advised you to self-isolate in a location other than your home, contact community leadership or your community Health Director to determine what supports are available in your community.</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.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p><b>I am vulnerable due to my health condition and cannot travel with, or be around, others. How can NIHB support me?</b></p>	<p>NIHB clients are encouraged to consult with their health professional to confirm whether routine, non-urgent appointments should be postponed. <b>Where there is a medical need, vulnerable clients will be supported to use private modes of transportation where necessary.</b></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>8.</p>	<p><b>My community is locked down and nobody is allowed in or out to prevent the spread of the virus. I am currently out of the community and cannot get home. Will NIHB pay for accommodation and meals for me to self-isolate for two (2) weeks?</b></p>	<p>If you were out of your community for medical reasons NIHB can extend your meals and accommodation coverage for an additional 2 weeks to enable you to self-isolate for that period before returning to your community.</p> <p>If you were out of your community for non-medical reasons (e.g. work-related travel, meetings, vacation) when the community went into lock-down, contact your community leadership and/or Health Director to confirm what actions you should take to self-isolate prior to returning home.</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p><b>I have a suspected/diagnosed case of COVID-19 according to a health professional. Can NIHB provide coverage for a hotel and meals for two (2) weeks, to isolate me?</b></p>	<p>The Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) advises that if you have symptoms, have been diagnosed with COVID-19, are waiting for laboratory test results or have been advised to do so by Public Health you need to be isolated, which means to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>stay home</i> until the local public health authority says you are no longer at risk of spreading the virus</li> <li>• avoid contact with others</li> <li>• If your symptoms get worse, immediately contact your healthcare provider and follow their instructions</li> </ul> <p>In order to reduce your contact with others, The Public Health Agency of Canada advises that you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>isolate yourself at home for 14 days</i> to avoid spreading it to others</li> <li>• if you live with others, stay in a separate room or keep a 2-metre distance</li> <li>• If you need to see your healthcare provider, call ahead to tell them your symptoms and follow their instructions</li> </ul> <p>If you have been advised by a health professional to isolate somewhere <i>other than your home</i>, please contact your community leadership or Health Director to confirm what supports are available in your community.</p> <p>If you have been advised by a health professional to remain in an urban centre/close to a hospital during your period of isolation or self-isolation, please contact the NIHB regional office to determine what supports may be available to you.</p>

10.	<b>Am I eligible for NIHB medical transportation support when I am in mandatory quarantine/isolation?</b>	<p>Medical transportation supports will be available for a client who is in mandatory quarantine/isolation away from home, based on the advice of public health officials, to maintain isolation of the patient and limit spread of the illness.</p> <p>Individuals who must attend repeated, essential medical appointments, or who must remain close to hospital during their quarantine/isolation period may be eligible to receive support for temporary relocation to the urban centre where the appointments will take place.</p>
11.	<b>The restaurant has closed in the hotel that I am staying at - what do I do for meals?</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>
12.	<b>How can I continue with my mental health counselling?</b>	<p>NIHB supports the delivery of mental health counselling by telephone. Contact your mental health counsellor to see if this is an option.</p>
13.	<b>Should I attend my dental appointment?</b>	<p>Dental professional organizations across Canada have advised that non-emergency services should be postponed. Contact your dental office to confirm.</p>
14.	<b>Can I get a longer supply of my prescription medication?</b>	<p>The NIHB Program normally covers up to a 100-day supply of chronic medications. However, in most provinces and territories, pharmacists have now been instructed by P/T health ministries or professional bodies to give a <a href="#">maximum of 30 days supply</a> in order to help prevent drug shortages. The decision to provide a longer refill will be made by the individual dispensing pharmacist.</p> <p>The NIHB Program has asked pharmacists to consider the unique living circumstances of some NIHB clients. Access to a pharmacy may be affected by weather (e.g. winter road access, delayed flights to remote communities) as well as the need to travel long distances, among other factors.</p> <p>However, dispensing quantity/frequency is ultimately up to the pharmacist's judgement, and in light of directives they have received from provincial health ministries or professional bodies. To ensure flexibility, NIHB will reimburse pharmacies for early refills as well as full dispensing fees when smaller supplies of chronic medications are provided.</p>

15.	<b>Does NIHB cover fever and pain medication?</b>	NIHB covers a range of over-the-counter fever and pain medications for adults and children with a pharmacist's recommendation. No prescription is required from a doctor.
16.	<b>I am hearing about potential drug shortages. Should I be concerned?</b>	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.
17.	<b>My approval for medication is expiring soon. What do I do to ensure I continue to get my medications?</b>	NIHB is proactively extending prior approvals that are due to expire between April and June 2020. Drugs included at this time are biologics, oral chemotherapy, OFEV and Esbriet.
18.	<b>What plans are in place to support people who need access to treatment for opioid addiction?</b>	In some jurisdictions such as Alberta and Ontario, regulatory bodies have permitted extra carries of methadone and Suboxone for certain clients, when deemed to be safe. NIHB has made the necessary system changes to allow larger quantities to be reimbursed.
19.	<b>How do I obtain oxygen benefits?</b>	<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 acceptable.</p>
20.	<b>I need to replace a piece of my medical equipment. What do I do?</b>	<p>If you are unable to see your prescriber to get a new prescription for the replacement of equipment or supplies 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 and orthotics</li> <li>• Medical grade compression stockings</li> <li>• Mobility equipment</li> <li>• Incontinence and ostomy supplies</li> <li>• Self-care benefits such as lifts, transfer equipment, dressing and feeding aids, and bathing and toileting aids.</li> </ul> <p>Quantities above the current recommend replacement guidelines may be requested without medical justification, if required due to circumstances caused by the pandemic.</p>

<p><b>21.</b></p>	<p><b>Am I still eligible for NIHBs even though my Indian Status card has expired?</b></p>	<p>Health services providers and vendors require NIHB client identification numbers 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.</p> <p>NIHB clients should not be denied services because their Indian Status cards have expired.</p> <p>Services providers/vendors can call Express Scripts Canada to verify client eligibility for drugs, dental and medical supplies and equipment. For all other benefits, contact the NIHB regional office.</p>
<p><b>22.</b></p>	<p><b>Do unregistered infants have coverage under NIHB?</b></p>	<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).</p> <p>Infants up to 12 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>After their first birthday, a child needs his or her own status or N number to process NIHB benefits. If your child has reached the age of 1 and is not registered, please call your NIHB Regional Office, or the Drug Exception Centre. You will be provided with a temporary NIHB client number that is valid until your child reaches 24 months of age.</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 ext. #2 (Dental Services)  
1-866-227-0943 ext. #2 (Orthodontic Services)

**Ontario Region NIHB Prior Approval Centre (Service Providers Only)**

1-800-881-3921

**Ontario Region Client Information Line**

1-800-640-0642

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**Sioux Lookout and Thunder Bay Medical Transportation**

Weekends and Holidays 8:00 am to 4:00 pm (CST)

807-737-0828

**Thunder Bay Medical Transportation - Discharges**

Wequedong Lodge

807-625-6039

**All Other Sioux Lookout Areas Transportation Discharges**

807-737-5080

**Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority Afterhours**

Monday to Sunday after 4:00 pm (CST)

833-633-8728