



---

# Health Supplements for People with Disabilities

---

This Help Sheet is funded by the Health Sciences Association of BC and the Law Foundation of BC.

---

If you have a disability, you may be able to access a range of medical services and supplies provided by the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction (MSDPR). Disability Alliance BC has prepared this Help Sheet about health supplements to help you understand what services and supplies you may be eligible for from MSDPR.

You should talk to MSDPR about any of the services and supplies listed here. They can explain how you apply for them. When you submit documents to the Ministry, be sure to get a date stamped copy or keep the fax confirmation sheet for your records.

It is important to understand that MSDPR will not reimburse you for any of these services and supplies. The Ministry must provide authorization for most of the supplements listed in this Help Sheet, before you may access them. Also, 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 MSDPR 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
- You are living in a household where one or more adults receive PPMB



- 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.

## Medical Services Only (MSO)

You will be eligible for health supplements from MSDPR, if you fit into any of the following categories:

- you went off PWD benefits for employment and you are eligible for Medical Services Plan (MSP) Premium Assistance
- you were receiving PWD or PPMB benefits and have turned 65, and you are eligible to receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement or federal Spouse's Allowance
- you were receiving PWD benefits, but left the program because your CPP disability benefits are higher than the PWD rate
- you were receiving PWD benefits but left the program because your family maintenance income or financial assistance under MCFD's Agreements with Young Adults are higher than the PWD rate
- you were receiving MSO benefits prior to 2002.

Please note that MSDPR may ask applicants to demonstrate financial need when they apply for a health supplement.

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

- the diet supplement
- the Monthly Nutritional Supplement
- the natal supplement.

## Direct and imminent life-threatening health need

MSDPR may grant certain health supplements—medical supplies, medical equipment and devices, medical transportation—even if you do not normally qualify for health coverage, when the following conditions apply:

- you are facing a direct and imminent life-threatening need
- you have no other resources to meet that need
- you are receiving MSP Premium Assistance, and
- you meet all the regulatory requirements for the medical supplies, medical equipment or medical transportation.

If you are still not sure whether you are eligible for health supplements from MSDPR, contact MSDPR or an advocate.



## Health supplements you may be able to obtain

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

- Medical Service Plan (MSP)\*
- Prescription drugs covered by Pharmacare\*
- Eye glasses every three 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

### Basic dental services

These services are provided based on a Schedule of Fee Allowances and are administered by Pacific Blue Cross. MSDPR pays only for the services listed in this schedule, at the amount listed. Dentists may charge an extra fee, if they think the MSDPR rate is not sufficient.

- Adults are entitled to basic dental coverage of \$1,000 over a two-year period
- Dependent children receive \$2,000 basic dental coverage over a two-year period.

### Other dental supplements

- Crown and bridgework supplement: may be provided if your dental condition cannot be corrected by basic dental services and it has been confirmed that you are unable to use a removable denture for major health reasons.
- Dentures: full and partial dentures may be provided or replaced if certain conditions are met. These conditions include whether you have had extractions in the past six months or whether you have been on assistance for at least two years. MSDPR can pay more than the basic dental coverage limit of \$1,000 for dentures, in some cases. Generally, MSDPR will not pay for replacement dentures more than every five years. However, Health Assistance Branch may approve an exception to the five-year rule, if loss or damage was beyond your control and new dentures are necessary to avoid health problems.
- Emergency dental and denture services for immediate relief of pain, or to control infection or bleeding or other serious health problems may be provided.
- General anaesthetic or intravenous sedation provided in a dentist's office may be authorized in special circumstances.
- Orthodontic services may be covered when strict eligibility requirements are confirmed by an orthodontist.



## Other health supplements

You should talk to MSDPR 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

#### Eye Exams

- MSDPR pays up to \$44.83 for an optometrist's exam and \$48.90 for an ophthalmologist's exam, every two 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 two years. Check with your ophthalmologist or optometrist to see if you qualify.

#### Basic Eyewear

- MSDPR may provide single vision or bi-focal lenses and frames every three years for adults, or once a year for children, with a valid prescription.
- Eyeglass lenses more frequently than every three 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.
- Eyeglass repairs.
- Specialized eyewear, such as tinted lenses or contact lenses, if basic eyewear does not meet your needs. The need for the eyewear must be confirmed by your ophthalmologist or optometrist and pre-authorized by Health Assistance Branch.

### Medical supplies

MSDPR may pay for medical or surgical supplies, if they are required for any of the following purposes:

- wound care
- ongoing bowel care
- catheterization
- incontinence
- skin parasite care
- limb circulation care.

Medical supplies also include lancets, needles and syringes, ventilator supplies and tracheostomy supplies.



These supplies must be prescribed by a doctor or nurse practitioner, be the least expensive appropriate supplies, and be necessary to avoid an imminent and substantial danger to health. And, there must be no other resources available to you. MSDPR does not consider nutritional items or prescription drugs medical supplies.

### **Medical equipment and devices**

MSDPR can pay for certain medical equipment or devices, if the following conditions are met:

- payment is approved in advance by the Ministry
- there are no other resources available
- the equipment is the least expensive appropriate medical equipment.

In most situations, MSDPR will ask for a prescription from a doctor or nurse practitioner and/or an assessment from a health professional, such as an occupational therapist or physical therapist.

MSDPR can purchase or replace equipment, but they do not have to replace or repair equipment that they consider to be damaged through misuse.

MSDPR can pay for the following equipment and devices:

1. canes, crutches, and walkers
2. wheelchairs
3. wheelchair seating systems
4. scooters
5. bathing and toileting aids
6. hospital beds
7. pressure relief mattresses
8. floor or ceiling lift devices
9. positive airway pressure devices (e.g., CPAP machines and nebulizers)
10. orthoses (custom made or off-the-shelf foot orthotics, custom-made footwear, a permanent modification to footwear, off-the-shelf orthopaedic footwear, an ankle brace, an ankle-foot orthosis, a knee-ankle-foot orthosis, a knee brace, an upper extremity brace, a cranial helmet, a torso or spine brace)
11. hearing aids
12. non-conventional glucose meters.

For some of the above categories of equipment and devices, MSDPR has also imposed additional restrictions such as spending limits (e.g., they will not pay more than \$450 for one pair of custom-made foot orthotics) and replacement time limits (they will not replace a wheelchair for at least five years).



## Extended therapy

- Acupuncture, chiropractic, massage therapy, naturopathy, physiotherapy or podiatry visits: A physician must confirm that you have an acute need for the service. You must have used the 10 visits allowed under the Medical Services Plan. The Ministry can approve up to 12 extra visits in a one-year period. MSDPR will not cover the full cost for practitioners who charge more than \$23 per visit.

## Medical transportation

- If you have no other means of getting to a medical appointment, the Ministry can pay for transportation costs to a doctor's office, clinic or hospital. The Ministry must agree to cover these expenses before your appointment. MSDPR can pay for transportation, meals and accommodation, if the only available medical treatment is at an out-of-town medical facility.

## Alcohol and drug treatment supplement

Up to \$500 a year can be paid to cover the cost of alcohol and drug counselling, and treatment services.

## Monthly diet supplements

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

The supplements and their special requirements are as follows:

1. **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 one 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



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

2. **Gluten-free diet** (\$40 per month)
3. **Low-sodium diet** (\$10 per month)
4. **Ketogenic diet** (\$40 per month)
5. **Phenylalanine diet** (\$40 per month)

Or, if you have one of the following conditions:

6. **Cystic fibrosis** (\$50 per month)
7. **Diabetes** (\$35 per month)
8. **Dysphagia** (\$40 per month)
9. **Kidney dialysis** (\$30 per month).

## Monthly Nutritional Supplement (MNS)

You may be eligible for a monthly nutritional supplement of up to \$205 a month, if you are receiving PWD—people receiving PPMB are not eligible. The nutritional supplement is divided into two parts for a total of \$205 a month:

1. **Nutritional items:** \$165. This part of the benefit will only be provided if you need to supplement your regular diet. You cannot receive both this supplement and a diet supplement (e.g., high protein diet).
2. **Vitamin or mineral supplementation:** \$40.

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

- Significant deterioration of a vital organ
- Immune suppression (moderate to severe)
- Malnutrition
- Significant muscle mass loss
- Significant neurological degeneration
- Significant weight loss
- Underweight status.

To qualify for the nutritional items or the vitamin/mineral supplementation, your doctor must state that you need each of these supplements to alleviate your identified wasting symptoms and to prevent an imminent danger to your life. This means your health will deteriorate significantly without the nutritional supplement. Contact MSDPR and ask for a Monthly Nutritional Supplement application form. Ask your doctor to complete the form, and return it to MSDPR. For more information, see **Help Sheet 4, Monthly Nutritional Supplement**.





## Short-term nutritional supplement

This supplement provides nutritional supplementation products, such as Ensure or Boost, for a three-month period. Your doctor must confirm an acute short-term need for a caloric (nutritional) supplement to prevent critical weight loss resulting from one of the following:

- Serious disease
- Severe injury
- Surgery
- Treatment side effects.

## Alternative hearing supplement

MSDPR can provide \$100 per month to people who have permanent profound hearing loss in both ears who cannot significantly benefit from a hearing instrument for the purposes of speech comprehension. Application forms can be obtained from MSDPR and must be completed with support from an audiologist or hearing instrument professional.

## Natal supplement

If you are pregnant, you will be eligible for a natal allowance during your pregnancy and until your child reaches seven 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.

## Infant formula

MSDPR can also provide infant formula for children under 12 months of age if:

- a child has a medical condition where a specialized infant formula is required, or
- the child is at risk of contracting a transmittable disease from the mother's breast milk.

## Tube feeding nutritional supplement

MSDPR can provide nutritional products to people whose primary source of nutrition is through tube feeding.





## Right to appeal

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



---

**This Help Sheet was prepared by Advocacy Access, a program of Disability Alliance BC.  
Thank you to the Health Sciences Association of British Columbia and the Law Foundation of British  
Columbia for funding the BC Disability Benefits Help Sheets.**

1450-605 Robson St., Vancouver, BC V6B 5J3 • tel: 604-872-1278 • fax 604-875-9227  
toll free 1-800-663-1278 • [www.disabilityalliancebc.org](http://www.disabilityalliancebc.org)

The full Help Sheet series and all DABC publications are available free at:  
[www.disabilityalliancebc.org/publications](http://www.disabilityalliancebc.org/publications).



we are all  
connected

