

**Operational
Policy**Section
Independent LivingSubject
Independent Living Devices

Policy

Workers who experience a serious work-related injury or illness that results in or is likely to result in a permanent impairment may be entitled to independent living devices to:

- restore (partially or fully) the worker's ability to communicate, be mobile, or engage in self-care, or
- prevent further injury or health complications due to the work-related injury or illness.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to outline the independent living devices covered under this policy, the criteria for entitlement and payment, when maintenance and repair are covered, and when entitlement may be reviewed.

Guidelines

This policy must be read in conjunction with 17-06-01, Independent living and quality of life measures - Overview and definitions.

Definitions

Activities of daily living (ADLs) are basic activities that are performed by individuals on a daily basis for self-care. Examples include, but are not limited to, ambulating (e.g., walking), mobility (e.g., transferring from bed to chair and back), feeding, dressing, personal hygiene (e.g., bathing, grooming, toileting), and taking medication.

Independent living describes the ability to function at home and in the community with reduced reliance on assistance from family, other people, or institutions.

Instrumental activities of daily living (IADLs) are basic activities that are performed by individuals on a regular basis to live independently. Examples include, but are not limited to, using communication devices (e.g., telephone), procuring basic necessities (e.g., groceries), preparing meals, housekeeping (e.g., sweeping, laundry), day-to-day travel, attending non-WSIB related health care appointments, managing medications, and handling personal finances.

A **serious injury** means a work-related injury that results in significant/severe functional limitations that impact a worker's ability to live independently such that they require assistance or other appropriate measures:

- for six months or more, or
- permanently.

A **serious illness** generally means a work-related illness that results in significant/severe functional limitations that impact a worker's ability to live independently that:

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- the worker is unlikely to recover from, and/or
- is a progressive life-limiting illness.

See 17-06-01, Independent living and quality of life measures - Overview and definitions for other definitions.

Entitlement

Entitlement to an independent living device is considered where the worker has a serious injury or illness that results in or is likely to result in a permanent impairment, and the WSIB finds the device:

- is a necessary, appropriate, and sufficient means of meeting the objectives of providing independent living devices as outlined in this policy
- does not duplicate an objective served by another benefit, service, modification, or device provided to the worker under the insurance plan
- is a safe and effective means of restoring function or preventing further injury or health complications
- is reasonable in terms of costs and anticipated benefits
- is cost-effective considering alternatives on the market and rental options
- meets performance standards generally accepted by medical or clinical rehabilitation specialists
- is certified by Canadian Standards Association International (C.S.A.I.) or meets other applicable safety standards, and
- is prescribed or recommended by a health care practitioner.

Eligible devices

Independent living devices considered under this policy are those that serve a purpose or perform a function that increases the worker's ability to meet the objectives outlined above. Such devices may:

- require modification, customization, fitting, precise sizing or adjustment, or
- require pharmacist or health professional to oversee the selection and purchase of the product, or
- be off-the-shelf.

The claim file information must clearly identify how the independent living device accomplishes one of the above objectives. This includes identifying:

- how the worker's ability to communicate, be mobile, or engage in self-care has been impacted and how the device helps restore (partially or fully) the ability and in doing so facilitates the worker's independent living, and/or
- the potential future injury or health complications and how the device will prevent these.

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Separate from independent living devices, a worker may be entitled to:

- assistive devices and/or prostheses to address functional loss and/or anatomical loss resulting from the work-related injury or illness (see 17-07-01, Prescription Eyewear, 17-07-04, Hearing Devices, and 17-07-05, Orthopaedic)
- off-the-shelf health care equipment and supplies required for treatment or functional aid during recovery or to improve or maintain independent living (see 17-07-06, Health Care Equipment and Supplies and 17-01-07, Preferred Supplier of Health Care Products/Services).

Items such as hot tubs, pools, all-terrain vehicles, tractors, snowplows, and riding lawnmowers are not approved as the WSIB does not consider such items to be a necessary, appropriate, and sufficient means of meeting the objectives of providing independent living devices.

Hospital beds

The WSIB may authorize a hospital bed or specialty mattress as an independent living device where due to the work-related injury or illness, the worker:

- requires assistance moving or alternating positions while in bed
- requires assistance transferring in and out of bed
- is unable to access their usual sleep location
- requires caregiving while in bed that is facilitated by the features of a hospital bed or specialty mattress, or
- experiences severe pain, as may be experienced by workers in a palliative state, that is partially eased by a hospital bed or specialty mattress.

The WSIB generally considers authorizing hospital beds where the head, foot, or height of the bed are independently adjustable. The WSIB generally considers authorizing specialty mattresses that are designed for the purpose of reducing or relieving pressure. Additional features such as heating or vibration may be approved if the WSIB determines they are medically necessary forms of treatment for the worker.

The WSIB does not consider authorizing beds or specialty mattresses for general comfort, sleep preferences, or pain other than as described above (e.g., standard mattresses, basic orthopaedic mattresses).

Entitlement to a hospital bed or specialty mattress includes the purchase of specialty sheets, if required. This does not include standard sheets (e.g., double, queen, king).

Where a hospital bed is not available in the same size as the worker's current bed, the WSIB may consider providing a hospital bed and companion bed.

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Medical conditions that require the use of a hospital bed or specialty mattress may include severe burns, lung cancer, mesothelioma, lower extremity amputations (not digits), spinal cord injuries, cardiopulmonary disorders, and pressure sores that do not respond to other treatment.

Pre-authorization

The WSIB must approve the independent living device. The WSIB is not responsible for reimbursing the cost of an independent living device where WSIB approval is not obtained in advance and the WSIB does not subsequently approve the device. In some cases, the WSIB may require workers to purchase a device from an approved vendor.

The WSIB processes reimbursement upon submission of receipts from workers or invoices from vendors.

Maintenance and repair

The WSIB pays for maintenance, normal inspection, repair, and replacement of independent living devices unless the damage is due to misuse or not following the warranty or operating instructions. Workers must ensure proper maintenance is carried out.

Material changes and reviews

A worker must advise the WSIB of any change that affects their entitlement to benefits and services under the insurance plan (material change). For more information about material changes, see 22-01-02, Material Change in Circumstances - Worker.

Upon notice of a material change, the WSIB determines if a review is required to assess ongoing entitlement to an independent living device. Entitlement to maintenance, inspection, repair, and replacement of a device applies only where there is ongoing entitlement to the device.

Application date

This policy applies to all decisions made on or after x for purchases made on or after x, for all accidents.

Document History

This document replaces 17-06-03 dated October 14, 2009.

This document was previously published as:

17-06-03 dated October 12, 2004

17-06-03 dated June 15, 1999.

References

Legislative Authority

Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, as amended
Sections 32, 33

Workers' Compensation Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended
Section 50

Minute

Administrative

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