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PolicySection
Prosthetic and Assistive DevicesSubject
Hearing Devices

Policy

The WSIB may ~~authorize pay for~~ the provision, replacement, or repair of hearing devices, which includes, hearing aids and related accessories, and hearing assistive technologies, where entitlement has been established for any work-related ~~traumatic hearing loss or occupational noise induced~~ hearing loss.

Purpose

This policy outlines the criteria for allowance and payment for the provision, replacement, or repair of hearing devices in cases where work-related hearing loss entitlement has been established.

Guidelines

Definitions

Audiologist: regulated health professional qualified to measure hearing, and prescribe, supply, and fit hearing aids and assistive technologies according to individual needs.

Hearing aid: a small battery-powered electronic apparatus which typically fits in or behind the worker's ear, and is designed to amplify and modulate sound to compensate for impaired hearing.

Hearing aid related accessories: ~~items required for ease of use, and for the proper care and maintenance of hearing aids (e.g., cleaning kit, sanitizer, wipes, brush, carrying case, battery tester, telephone pads, dri-aid kit, wax guard/basket, ear mold blower).~~

Hearing assistive technologies (HATs): ~~items that can present auditory, visual, or tactile information to workers with impaired hearing (e.g., alerting systems, telephone amplifiers, television specific devices, FM systems).~~

~~**Hearing device:** any item, including hearing aids, that is used to provide amplification for workers with impaired hearing.~~

~~**Hearing instrument practitioner:** practitioner qualified to test hearing, and to select, fit, counsel and dispense hearing instruments pursuant to a prescription.~~

~~**Noise induced hearing loss (NIHL):** permanent loss of hearing in both ears resulting from sensorineural (inner ear) damage due to prolonged, continuous, hazardous noise exposure (see 16-01-04, Noise Induced Hearing Loss).~~

~~**Traumatic hearing loss:** sudden onset of hearing loss experienced after an acute trauma (see 15-04-01, Traumatic Hearing Loss).~~

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Hearing aids

Entitlement criteria

Workers should request approval from the WSIB before purchasing a hearing aid to avoid having to pay for the device if it is not ultimately approved by the WSIB.

The WSIB may authorize the purchase of a hearing aid when

- the worker has an allowed claim for work-related NIHL or traumatic hearing loss, and
- it is prescribed by an audiologist or physician, and
- a hearing evaluation (i.e., audiogram) has been conducted which meets practice standards, and contains findings that support the use of a hearing aid.

The worker is entitled ~~WSIB expects the hearing aid dispenser to conduct~~ a trial period offer at least 30 days from the date the worker is provided with the hearing aid was dispensed before submitting a payment request to the WSIB. This trial period helps ensure the worker has been fitted with the proper hearing aid.

Models

When Payment

~~Once~~ the worker has entitlement to a hearing aid, the WSIB considers ~~pays up to the amount set out in Operational Policy Manual document 18-01-05, Table of Rates. This amount covers the hearing aid and its integrated options and features.~~

~~Options and features are components integrated within the hearing aid that range from basic functioning and user control, to advanced components that are often digital in operation and are related to programmability, fitting, and sound/noise management (e.g., receiver tubes, domes, adaptive directional microphones).~~

Exceptions

~~The WSIB only pays for costs above the amount set out in the Table of Rates if there are exceptional circumstances. An exception may be made if there are no hearing aid models available from two categories, for the amount set out in the Table of Rates that meet the clinical requirements of the worker as documented by the treating health professional.~~

The primary category includes a range of ~~When reviewing~~ hearing aid models that consist of various integrated components and types of fit that meet ~~above~~ the needs of most hearing aid users.

For those workers with specific clinical requirements that cannot be met by a hearing aid model from amount set out in the primary category, the WSIB may consider offering a suitable hearing aid model from the alternate category. When reviewing these exceptional cases ~~Table of Rates,~~ the WSIB considers the supporting clinical evidence provided through the hearing evaluation report and documented clinical rationale. The WSIB considers whether the

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~~integrated components and integrated options/features requested for the aid are~~ clinically required for the worker to be able to function fully and safely at home, work, and/or in the community.

~~To view the hearing aid models available in each category, see Hearing Devices which is accessible through the WSIB website.~~

~~Examples of exceptional circumstances may include workers with severe to profound hearing loss who may require high gain hearing aids that use prescriptive methods not found in other hearing aids, and workers with tinnitus who may require noise generation options/features that are not available for the maximum allowable amount.~~

Hearing aid repairs

After the warranty period ~~for a hearing aid previously authorized by the WSIB expires~~, the WSIB may pay reasonable costs to repair ~~the~~ hearing aid unless there is evidence that the ~~hearing aid device~~ was deliberately damaged, misused, or the operating instructions were not properly followed. The WSIB also covers the cost for the loan of a hearing aid while repairs are being made.

Hearing aid replacements

~~Whenever the WSIB allows a request for a replacement hearing aid, it pays up to the amount set out in the Table of Rates unless the requested device meets the exception criteria outlined above.~~

Generally the WSIB does not replace a hearing aid before 5 years. ~~When determining the necessity for replacement before 5 years, the~~ The WSIB ~~considers the condition of the~~ recognizes that how long a hearing aid lasts depends on a number of factors including ~~usage and/or changes in the worker's clinical requirements.~~

~~All the model purchased. Consequently, all~~ hearing aid replacement requests before 5 years must be accompanied by documentation ~~from the relevant treating health professional~~ which substantiates the worker's need for a new hearing aid. ~~The~~ documentation must include a detailed explanation as well as any recent evaluation (i.e., audiogram) and/or other supporting information.

~~When determining the necessity of replacement before 5 years, the WSIB considers the information provided as well as relevant factors such as the condition of the hearing aid and/or changes in the worker's clinical requirements.~~

Condition of the hearing aid

~~The WSIB recognizes that the longevity of a hearing aid can be dependent on the extent of usage which may warrant a replacement aid before 5 years.~~

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The WSIB may authorize a replacement before 5 years when a hearing aid is beyond repair unless there is evidence that the ~~hearing aid device~~ was deliberately damaged, misused, or the operating instructions were not properly followed. ~~A hearing aid~~The WSIB may ~~be considered consider a hearing aid~~ beyond repair ~~when in situations such as those where~~ high repair costs ~~makemakes~~ replacement a more appropriate alternative, or the nature/extent of the damage prevents repairs.-

Change to the worker's clinical condition**Clinical requirements**

The WSIB ~~will consider authorizingmay authorize~~ a replacement before 5 years when there is a permanent change in the worker's work-related or non-work-related clinical condition that impacts the ongoing use of the current hearing aid ~~and this is substantiated by the clinical documentation, as documented by the treating health professional (e.g., ear infection resulting in permanent worsening or hearing loss, permanent change in mobility, dexterity, or vision that impacts the worker's ability to properly handle the current hearing aid).~~

Lost or stolen hearing aids

If the worker's hearing aid is lost or stolen, the WSIB may authorize a replacement ~~aid device~~ ~~on a~~ once ~~before 5 years. For each replacement aid requested due to loss or theft, the worker must provide the WSIB with a signed written declaration confirming the same.~~

~~only basis.~~In the event the WSIB has authorized a replacement and the ~~hearing aid device~~ is lost or stolen again ~~before 5 years~~, the purchase of a new device is generally the worker's responsibility.

Hearing aid accessories

~~The WSIB may authorize payment for hearing aid accessories that are required for ease of use and for the proper care and maintenance of hearing aids.~~

Hearing aid batteries

The WSIB may authorize reasonable requests for the replacement of hearing aid batteries.

Hearing aid accessories

~~The WSIB may authorize payment for hearing aid accessories that are required for the proper care and maintenance of hearing aids. Hearing aid accessories include items such as a cleaning kit, sanitizer, wipes, brush, carrying case, battery tester, telephone pads, dri-aid kit, wax guard/basket, and ear mold blower.~~

Hearing assistive technologies (HATs)

~~Workers should request pre-approval from the WSIB for the initial purchase and for the subsequent repair/replacement of a HAT.~~

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The WSIB may authorize the provision of HATs, ~~which are items that present auditory, visual, or tactile information to workers with impaired hearing (e.g., alerting systems, telephone amplifiers, television specific devices, FM systems).~~ When determining entitlement, the WSIB considers whether evidence supports that the requested HAT will assist~~supports~~ the worker's return to work, facilitate~~facilitates~~ improved communication at home or in the community, or increase~~increases~~ the worker's personal safety.

~~Workers should request pre-approval from the WSIB for the initial purchase of a HAT as well as for subsequent repairs/replacements, in order to avoid having to pay for items not ultimately approved by the WSIB.~~

After the warranty period for a HAT previously authorized by the WSIB expires, the WSIB may pay reasonable costs to repair the HAT~~a previously authorized device~~, unless there is evidence that the HAT~~device~~ was deliberately damaged, misused, or the operating instructions were not properly followed.

The WSIB may replace~~authorizes the replacement of~~ a previously authorized HAT if~~when~~ necessary. When determining the necessity of ~~the~~ replacement, the WSIB considers factors such as the condition of the HAT~~device~~, and permanent changes in the worker's clinical requirements that impact the ongoing use of the HAT~~device~~ as supported~~documented~~ by clinical documentation~~the treating health professional~~.

Application date

This policy applies to all requests for the provision, initial~~or~~ replacement, or repair of hearing aids and related accessories, and hearing assistive technologies that are received by the WSIB for approval on or after January 9, 2017~~February 1, 2011~~, for all injuries/diseases.

Document history

This document replaces document 17-07-04 dated February 1, 2011~~November 23, 2009~~.

This document was previously published as:

17-07-04 dated November 23, 2009.

17-07-04 dated October 12, 2004.

06-04-03 dated February 23, 1994.

References

Legislative authority

Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, as amended
Sections 32, 33, 119(1)

Workers' Compensation Act, R.S.O. 1990, as amended
Sections 50, 51, 52, 73

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~~#1, November 19, 2010, Page 484~~

~~#1, December 14, 2016, Page 537~~