

HEALTH CARE BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN OF VIETNAM VETERANS

CHAPTER: 2
SECTION: 5
TITLE: DURABLE MEDICAL EQUIPMENT (DME)

AUTHORITY: 38 CFR 17.900 -17.902

I. DESCRIPTIONS

Durable medical equipment is equipment which:

1. can withstand repeated use,
 2. is primarily and customarily used to serve a medical purpose,
 3. generally is not useful to a person in the absence of an illness or injury,
- and
4. is appropriate for use in the home.

II. POLICY

A. Durable medical equipment (DME) is covered when:

1. The equipment is medically necessary. Medical necessity is established when it is shown by reasonable medical documentation that the equipment can be expected to improve function or prevent further disability.
2. The equipment is appropriate for the covered condition(s).
3. The equipment is ordered by a physician for the specific use of the beneficiary and complies with the guidelines set forth in this policy manual subject to applicable conditions, exceptions, limitations and exclusions.

B. Preauthorization (see [Chapter 2, Section 1](#), *Preauthorization*).

1. Preauthorization is required for any item bought or rented with a total purchase price that exceeds \$300.00.
2. Requests for preauthorization must include the doctor's DME order or certificate of medical necessity. This information can be submitted in the form of a letter or a certificate of medical necessity form (a Medicare certificate of medical necessity form is acceptable). In either case, the following must be included:

- provider,
- a. the name, address, and tax identification number of the
 - b. the required equipment (the make and model number, cost and specifications for any customization),
 - c. diagnosis,
 - d. the medical necessity, and
 - e. the anticipated duration that the item is needed.

3. If the equipment has already been purchased by the beneficiary without preauthorization, medical documentation will be reviewed to determine if it meets the criteria for authorization in A (above).

4. In the case of an emergency, immediate rental will be authorized from a local supply center until the equipment can be provided through VA sources. In urgent need situations (such as being discharged from the hospital to the home and requiring a hospital bed), preauthorization may be requested by phone. If purchase of the equipment is required, rental can be approved while the documentation is forwarded to the VA for purchase of the equipment. A certificate of medical necessity is still required.

III. POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

A. Durable medical equipment with a purchase price over \$300 may be purchased through VA sources.

B. Durable medical equipment must provide the medically appropriate level of performance and quality for the medical condition present (non-luxury and non-deluxe).

C. The equipment must be prescribed by the attending physician for a use consistent with required Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved labeling for the item.

D. Replacement of beneficiary owned DME which otherwise meets the requirements, may be allowed when the item is not serviceable due to normal wear, accidental damage, a change in the beneficiary's condition, or the device has been declared adulterated by the FDA. For life support equipment, a new item may be purchased when the same type of item in use is within 90 days of the manufacturers' recommended replacement threshold.

E. Repairs due to everyday wear and tear of beneficiary owned DME, which otherwise meets the DME benefit requirement, is covered when necessary to make the equipment serviceable.

1. The repair charge may include the use of a temporary replacement item provided during the period of repair.

2. Maintenance which must be performed by a manufacturer-authorized technician is covered as a repair charge.

F. Customization, accessories, and supplies that are medically necessary and appropriate for the beneficiary owned DME and which otherwise meet the Health Administration Center benefit requirement to provide therapeutic benefit, or to ensure the proper functioning of the equipment, or to make the equipment serviceable may be covered.

G. A duplicate item of DME which otherwise meets the benefit requirements and is essential to provide a fail-safe, in-home, life-support system is covered (for example, back-up ventilators).

H. Equipment such as manual wheelchairs to back-up electric wheelchairs or scooters is covered.

I. Assistive technology, such as DynaVox equipment, may be covered when medically necessary and related to the covered medical condition(s).

IV. EXCLUSIONS

A. DME with deluxe, luxury or immaterial features that increase the cost of the item to the government such as queen or king size beds, remote controls, etc.

B. Household and recliner chairs.

C. Purchase or rental of back-up equipment, other than life-support equipment or manual wheelchairs, to back-up currently owned or rented equipment.

D. Costs for separate maintenance agreements and/or contracts.

E. Sporting equipment, exercise equipment, spas, hot tubs, whirlpools, swimming pools or other such items.

F. Vehicle and housing modifications.

G. Items prescribed solely for convenience or personal comfort.

H. DME for a beneficiary who is a patient in a facility that ordinarily provides the same type of DME item to its patients at no additional charge in the usual course of providing its services.

I. DME for which a beneficiary has no obligation to pay (such as DME received at no charge from a Uniformed Services Medical Treatment Facility).

TRANSMITTAL #: 1
DATE: 01/31/02

END OF POLICY