



Important Dental Services Update – May 31, 2022

During the COVID-19 pandemic, some communities have not been able to provide all types of dental services. As a result of the pandemic, the regulatory body for dentists, the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (RCDSO), implemented new measures for Ontario dentists regarding the filtration and containment of aerosols produced during dental procedures.

Some communities' dental facilities need upgrades to meet the current RCDSO requirements. Depending on the clinic setting, these upgrades range from installing a new door to completely reconstructing the clinic space. In affected communities, this means that aerosol-generating procedures, like teeth drilling and fillings, cannot be done in community. However, these procedures remain available to all clients who are eligible for Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB). ISC recognizes the challenge that the new regulations have created and continues to take steps to ensure that no clients are without services. There has not been any change to the procedures that NIHB covers.

Clients requiring an aerosol-generating procedure that is not available in their community have two options to receive treatment.

Option 1: ISC referral process for aerosol-generating procedures

ISC can refer clients to out-of-community dentists whose facilities meet the RCDSO standards. NIHB covers travel and the cost of eligible procedures, up to a client's maximum allowance per year. To do this, clients first need to be examined by the in-community dentist or hygienist. We continue to book dentists and hygienists in affected communities to provide non-aerosol-generating procedures, including exams and consultations.

The dentist or hygienist will create a referral form for the client explaining what they need and electronically forward it to ISC. The ISC dental team uses that referral to book an appointment for the client at a clinic that is the closest to the client's community *and* at the earliest possible time. Sometimes, to ensure that clients are seen promptly, this means that an appointment may not be at the closest location. Clients do not pay any upfront fees at their appointment; all costs are billed to NIHB.

Option 2: Clients can book their own appointments

Clients also have the option to book their own appointment at a private dental clinic of their choice. As with appointments booked by ISC, NIHB will cover travel costs and the cost of eligible procedures, up to a client's maximum allowance per year. Clients MUST inform NIHB of their appointment at least two weeks (14 calendar days) in advance. Otherwise, NIHB may not be able to arrange travel. Clients can call 1-888-283-8885 to inform NIHB of their appointment.

Clients who book their own appointments with a private clinic are responsible for knowing what NIHB does and does not cover. It is highly recommended that clients consult NIHB before their appointment so that they do not incur unexpected costs, as there are maximum allowances per year. Clients can call 1-855-618-6291 for information about their NIHB insurance coverage.

Tele-dentistry

Using tele-dentistry is another option for clients and practitioners in community. Dentists are available for consultations from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. CST (9 a.m. to 11 p.m. EST). Nurses or clients can contact these dentists for advice, such as whether a client's concerns needs to be addressed immediately, what measures can be taken until a client can see a dentist, or what prescription should be given. Dentists can also provide referrals for



urgent care. The on-call dentists change monthly. Posters with contact information are shared with nursing stations and this information is also sent to Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority (SLFNHA).

Children requiring dental surgery

ISC is working with SLFNHA to address the backlog of children who require dental surgery. Children *are* being booked for surgeries.

The dental services team has secured a number of surgical clinics through hospitals and private practices throughout the region, in Winnipeg, Fort Frances, Thunder Bay, Kenora, and Sudbury, and at Meno-Ya-Win Hospital in Sioux Lookout. The ISC dental team is also working with NIHB to implement a number of temporary measures to help children be seen more quickly. These include:

- Providing temporary B numbers (registration numbers) for children who are eligible for NIHB coverage but who are not yet registered to avoid delays in them receiving services.
- Allowing dentists to submit certain documents to insurance *after* the procedure, instead of before, which means appointments can be scheduled more quickly.
- Using Jordan's Principle funding to pay costs beyond what NIHB covers.
- Establishing funding for children who live on reserve but who are not entitled to NIHB coverage, through Jordan's Principle.
- Exploring options to increase operation room time in Sioux Lookout.
- Expediting payment to providers.
- When it makes sense for individual clients and where possible, the NIHB travel team is booking multiple children for surgery at the same clinics at the same time. This enables NIHB to use charter flights, meaning that the children and support people who are travelling have community support while away from home, and may be able to return home more quickly.

ISC continues to look for other clinics that can perform the required surgeries, and continues to explore other ways to clear the backlog of surgeries.

All efforts should be made for children who have appointments to attend their scheduled appointment. With limited dentists available to perform surgeries, appointment attendance is critical to ensuring that all children are able to be seen sooner than later. Missed appointments can jeopardize the relationship with a clinic, which may affect our ability to efficiently clear the backlog.

Questions?

Clients can contact the Sioux Lookout dental program at 1-833-442-2605 with any questions about scheduling their dental appointment, getting in touch with NIHB, travel, or to request an update on their referral. This number can also provide updates about children's appointments at Meno-Ya-Win.

To confirm if your community is able to provide a full suite of dental services in your current clinic space, please contact Wendy Simpson A/Manager for the Sioux Lookout Dental Program.