

The Department of Vermont Health Access Medical Policy

Subject: Shower/bath benches/seats

Last Review: June 15, 2016

Revision 3:

Revision 2: June 15, 2015

Revision 1: September 9, 2013

Original Effective: February 15, 2012

Description of Service or Procedure

Bath chairs and seats, including shower chairs and transfer benches.

Disclaimer

Coverage is limited to that outlined in Medicaid Rule that pertains to the member's aid category. Prior Authorization (PA) is only valid if the member is eligible for the applicable item or service on the date of service.

Medicaid Rule

[7102.2](#) Prior Authorization Determination

[7103](#) Medical Necessity

[7505](#) Durable Medical Equipment

[7505.2](#) Bullet 4 DME Covered Services

[7505.6](#) DME Noncovered Services

Medicaid Rules can be found at <http://humanservices.vermont.gov/on-line-rules>

Coverage Position

A shower/bath/bench/chair/seat may be covered for beneficiaries:

- When the device is prescribed by a licensed medical provider, enrolled in the Vermont Medicaid program, operating within their scope of practice in accordance with Vermont State Practice Act, who is knowledgeable in the use of the device and who provides medical care to the beneficiary AND
- When the clinical criteria below are met.



Coverage Criteria

A **shower/bath bench/chair/seat** may be covered for members who:

- Are unable to access the standard bathing facilities in his/her home without the device due to a medical condition AND
- Have a medical condition which results in the need for supportive seating to enable safe and effective bathing AND
- Have had a physical or occupational therapy home assessment to determine the type of device that meets the beneficiary's medical needs, is efficacious and safe for the beneficiary's use including during transfers on and off the device, and fits properly in the physical plant of the beneficiary's bathroom AND
- Have had a successful trial of the requested device or a close simulation of that device AND
- Where there has been a documented unsuccessful trial or negative consideration with documented rationale for all less expensive devices.

Note: For coverage of additional components, such as a backrest or arm supports, documentation must be provided demonstrating the medical necessity of the specific device requested and each component.

Extra wide/heavy duty devices may be appropriate for beneficiaries who meet the above guidelines AND weigh more than 300 pounds.

A **bath/shower chair** may be covered if there is a documented medical need for seating during bathing.

- Devices that lower individuals in to the bathtub for immersion are only covered with clear medical rationale explaining why full immersion is a medical necessity AND where a therapist has assessed transfer safety.

A **transfer bench** may be covered for beneficiaries that cannot perform safe transfers on to a bath/shower chair positioned in the bathtub or shower.

A **rehab shower chair** may be covered for beneficiaries that require complex positioning during bathing. This device may be appropriate to decrease the number of daily transfers for individuals with complex transfer needs.

A **rehab shower commode chair** may be covered for beneficiaries that require complex positioning during bathing and toileting, and where the bathroom physical plant enables practical use of a combined shower commode device. This device may be appropriate to decrease the number of daily transfers for individuals with complex transfer needs.

Considerations:

- **Mobile devices** must be used with caution as the brakes can be ineffective; the device may move during a transfer.
- Care must also be taken for individuals with fragile skin during transfers and when sitting upon the device; **padded devices** should be considered.
- A device with a **tilt feature** should be considered for individuals with sitting stability issues.
- Use of a bath/shower seating device without a trained caregiver present may result in a safety risk for some individuals with balance, judgment and/or mobility impairments. Care providers may require instruction in proper body mechanics for transfers and bathing.

- Certain devices may not be adequately stable for individuals with balance issues.
- Individuals who cannot reach to wash themselves should be referred to an Occupational Therapist for assessment of the use of adaptive washing equipment or techniques.
- Bed bathing may be a viable option for certain individuals who cannot be safely bathed in a bathroom setting. The bathroom environment is inherently dangerous given the slippery conditions and hard surfaces encountered in a bathroom. There are many products that can be utilized for safe and efficacious bed bathing.
- Many adaptive devices are not utilized after acquisition. Proper assessment followed by proper instruction is essential for successful use. Documentation of a thorough assessment and thorough training process is required.
- Regarding dual eligible beneficiaries: Medicare does NOT cover shower/bath chairs. Medicare may cover certain multipurpose commode chairs that can also be used as shower chairs.
- Wheelchairs must not be used as shower chairs because they may rust and padded components may become mildewed or moldy. It is not acceptable for beneficiaries to use the bath as an opportunity to ‘clean’ a wheelchair.

Rental devices: Particular care must be provided by the supplying provider to ensure the equipment is properly sanitized.

Clinical guidelines for repeat service or procedure

Repeat services are covered when the DME requires replacement before the DME restriction time frame, for one of the following reasons:

- When the device has been outgrown **OR**
- When the device no longer meets the medical needs of the beneficiary **OR**
- When the device is no longer functional through normal wear and tear (expected to last at least 5 years).

Type of service or procedure covered

Bath chairs and seats, including shower chairs and transfer benches.

Type of service or procedure not covered (this list may not be all inclusive)

- Duplicate devices for multiple bathrooms are not covered.
- Any device that requires a home modification is not covered. For example, the DVHA does not cover grab bars for walls alongside bathing areas, because they are permanently affixed to the wall, require specific placement into wall studs for safety, and are not placed by Durable Medical Equipment providers to ensure proper placement and security. The types of shower/bath seating devices covered by Vermont Medicaid are not considered home modifications because they are not permanently affixed, require no tools to install, and can be correctly placed by any lay person.
- Hand held showerheads are not covered because they are not “primarily and customarily used to serve a medical purpose” and because they are primarily hygienic in nature.

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