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The Department of Vermont Health Access Clinical Criteria

Subject: Shower/bath benches/seats

Last Review: February 22, 2024*

Past Revisions: September 3, 2021, January 28, 2020, June 13, 2018, May 5, 2017, June 15, 2016, June 15, 2015, September 9, 2013, February 15, 2012

***Please note: Most current content changes will be highlighted in yellow.**

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 or Health Care Administrative Rules that pertain 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

Medicaid and Health Care Administrative Rules can be found at <https://humanservices.vermont.gov/rules-policies/health-care-rules/health-care-administrative-rules-hcar/adopted-rules>

- 7102.2 Prior Authorization Determination
- 4.101 Medical Necessity for Covered Services
- 4.104 Medicaid Non-Covered Services
- 4.106 Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) Services
- 4.209 Durable Medical Equipment

Coverage Position

Shower/bath benches/seats may be covered for members:

- When the device is prescribed by a licensed medical provider, enrolled in the Vermont Medicaid program, operating within their scope of practice as described on the Vermont Office of Professional Regulation's website*, Statute, or rule who is knowledgeable regarding shower/bath devices, and who provides medical care to the member AND



- When the clinical criteria below are met.

* Vermont's Office of Professional Regulation's website: <https://sos.vermont.gov/opr/>

Coverage Criteria

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

- Are unable to access the standard bathing facilities in the 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 member's medical needs, is efficacious and safe for the member's use including during transfers on and off the device, and fits properly in the physical plant of the member'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 members who meet the above criteria AND weigh more than 300 pounds.

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 members with fragile skin during transfers and when sitting upon the device; **padded devices** should be considered. A tub bench with a sliding seat system may also be considered for members with fragile skin.
- A device with a **tilt feature** should be considered for members with sitting stability issues. Safety belts and harnesses should also be considered.
- Use of a bath/shower seating device without a trained caregiver present may result in a safety risk for some members 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 members with balance issues.
- Members who cannot reach to wash themselves should be referred to an Occupational Therapist for assessment of adaptive washing equipment or techniques.
- Bed bathing may be a viable option for certain members 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 members: 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 members to use the bath as an opportunity to 'clean' a wheelchair.

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

Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT): Vermont Medicaid will provide comprehensive services and furnish all Medicaid coverable, appropriate, and medically necessary services needed to correct and ameliorate health conditions for Medicaid members under age 21.

Please note, Vermont Medicaid Clinical Criteria is reviewed based on available literature, evidence-based guidelines/standards, Medicaid rule and policy, and Medicare coverage determinations that may be appropriate to incorporate when applicable.

Clinical criteria for repeat service or procedure

Repeat services are covered when the DME requires replacement before the [DME limitation list](#) 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**
- The device is no longer functional through normal wear and tear (expected to last at least 5 years) or when the useful lifetime has been reached (HCAR Rule 4.209).

See the DME limitation list on the VT Medicaid Portal under Provider Resources at <http://vtmedicaid.com/#!/resources>.

Type of service or procedure covered

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

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

Devices that lower a member into 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 members who cannot perform safe transfers on to a bath/shower chair positioned inside the bathtub or shower, **but who can slide over the tub**.

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

A **rehab shower commode chair** may be covered for members who 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 members with complex transfer needs.

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.

Coding guidelines

Please see the Medicaid Portal at <http://vtmedicaid.com/#/feeSchedule> for fee schedules, code coverage, and applicable requirements.

Supplying providers must not use generic codes to request bath/shower devices because these devices have specific codes. Additional components are considered part of the base code and cannot be billed separately under a generic code.

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