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The Department of Vermont Health Access Clinical Criteria

Subject: Humidifiers for Use in the Home Setting

Last Review: December 17, 2024*

Past Revisions: May 24, 2023, December 21, 2021, June 9, 2020, October 2, 2014, October 4, 2013, September 12, 2012, August 1, 2011, 2004

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

Description of Service or Procedure

Humidifiers provide extensive supplemental humidification that may be prescribed for use with intermittent positive pressure breathing (IPPB) treatments, oxygen delivery, or use with positive pressure devices (e.g., CPAP/Bi-PAP, mechanical ventilators). Humidifiers can provide heated or non-heated humidification.

The upper airway's role in heating and humidifying inspiratory gases is bypassed for individuals with an artificial airway. During mechanical ventilation the gases must be artificially warmed and humidified to prevent additional breathing problems.

A Heat and Moisture Exchanger (HME) is a filter that retains heat and moisture during expiration and delivers humidity to the incoming gases during the next inspiration. HME is exclusively used for someone with an artificial airway such as a tracheostomy and needs additional humidification. This is ordered as a supply item.

High-flow nasal cannula (HFNC) oxygen therapy can deliver high flow oxygenated gas ranging from 10 to 80 L/min in adults with the gas adequately heated and humidified.

Bubble humidifiers consist of a bottle or reservoir partially filled with water. It can be reusable, disposable, or pre-filled. They are not to be used with artificial airways. They are not recommended for flow rates > 10 L/minute.

Aerosol generators are used for the delivery of cool aerosol particles. Some devices may incorporate immersion heaters. Use can be considered whenever mobilization of secretions is indicated and may include delivery of set oxygen concentrations when indicated or room air.



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
- 4.209 Durable Medical Equipment
- 4.106 Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) Services

Coverage Position

A humidifier may be covered for members:

- When the humidifier is prescribed by a licensed medical provider, enrolled in the Vermont Medicaid program, operating within their scope of practice as described on the Vermont's Office of Professional Regulation's website*, who is knowledgeable in the use of humidifiers and who provides medical care to the member AND
- When the clinical guidelines below are met.

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

Coverage Criteria

A humidifier may be covered for members who:

- Is using a CPAP or Bi-PAP device under the guidelines for that device and has been determined to require humidification to prevent/minimize common oral/nasal symptoms such as nasal congestion or dry nose or throat **OR**
- Is using oxygen, with a flow greater than 4L/min via nasal cannula, and symptoms including epistaxis, nasal congestion, dry nose and/or throat are present **OR**
- Oxygen flow rate less than 4L via nasal cannula and symptoms including epistaxis, nasal congestion, dry nose and/or throat **are present OR**
- Has an artificial airway, such as a tracheostomy and needs supplemental humidification via an HME. May be used for weaning periods off the mechanical ventilator. In-line HME is not recommended where detection and treatment may not be easily identified if filter fails.

Please note, since there are different types of humidifiers that are used for different purposes, depending on the type of equipment, a member may require more than one type of humidifier **given different clinical scenarios and medical conditions.**

A humidifier and HME should never be used together. HME is not recommended for large amounts of thick, copious, or bloody secretions. Excessive secretions or liquids can clog the filter. Family/Caregiver should be appropriately trained to use this device.

Integrated and non-integrated humidifiers for CPAP and Bi-PAP are currently on the DVHA capped rental list. These are paid in 10 monthly installments.

Humidification is included in the rate for mechanical ventilators. Mechanical ventilators are only rented and never purchased.

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 service or procedure is limited to the guidelines as noted above. Equipment replacement is limited to loss, the need for repair of the device (if more than 50% of the price of a new device) or warranty limitations.

Type of service or procedure covered

A humidifier is deemed durable medical equipment which provides extensive supplemental humidification that is prescribed for use with intermittent positive pressure breathing (IPPB) treatments, oxygen delivery, or use with positive pressure devices (e.g., CPAP/Bi-PAP/Ventilator) and meets the coverage guideline noted above. Humidifiers can provide heated or non-heated humidification.

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

Humidifiers used for environmental control/enhancing the environment (e.g. central, ultrasonic, or room humidifiers), are not a covered service.

MyAirvo2 is only reviewed under EPSDT or the Exceptions process.

Coding guidelines

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

References

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. (2017). *Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic, and Treatment | Medicaid*. Medicaid.gov.

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