

# Health Care Advice

## ASSISTIVE DEVICES AND EQUIPMENT

### Standers

This item is primarily used for workers who are severely impaired. Workers are considered severely impaired if their disabilities/impairments are:

- permanent and have been rated for either permanent disability (PD) benefits totaling at least 100%, or non-economic loss (NEL) benefits totaling at least 60%, or
- likely to be permanent in the opinion of a WSIB medical consultant, and are likely to meet one of the criteria above (Operational Policy 17-06-02).

#### General Description

A stander allows a person to stand with support.

Types of standing devices include

- static stander (worker is brought from sitting to standing directly from wheelchair using a sling),
- exercise stander (worker uses “handles” to passively move legs), and
- mobile stander (worker utilizes “wheels” to move standing device from one indoor location to another).

#### Guiding Principles

Standers may benefit severely impaired workers who are unable to stand independently without support. These devices are used with workers who

#### Considerations

What is needed	WSIB considers
Information that the worker is unable to stand independently due to work-related injury/disease.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Standers are most commonly recommended for workers with spinal cord injuries.</li><li>• If it is <b>unclear</b> whether the condition is work-related, clarify medical information with health professional or medical consultant.</li></ul>
Written information from a health professional recommending and providing rationale for stander.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medical clearance for standing activities must be obtained prior to further consideration of this device.</li><li>• There are risks associated with standing, especially if it has been a long time since the worker stood.</li><li>• The health professional may need to complete testing related to bone density, and cardiac and respiratory function prior to medical clearance.</li></ul>

are wheelchair dependent or have severely limited mobility.

There are many potential benefits of standing for people with spinal cord injuries, such as:

- maintaining range of motion,
- reducing risk of bone density loss,
- improving circulation,
- reducing spasticity and preventing contractures,
- preventing skin breakdown,
- positive effects on bowel, bladder, respiratory, digestive functioning, and
- normalizing social interactions (e.g., face-to-face conversations while standing).

Prior to considering provision of a stander, it is important to obtain medical clearance due to the risks associated with standing. Some of the risks associated with standing for workers with paraplegia relate to insufficient bone mass/density, cardiac and respiratory complications and lower extremity edema (swelling).

#### Relevant Operational Policies

*Entitlement to Health Care, 17-01-02*  
*Independent Living Allowance, 17-06-03*  
*Independent Living Devices, 17-06-03*

**NOTICE:** This document is intended to assist WSIB decision-makers in reaching consistent decisions in similar fact situations and to supplement applicable WSIB policies and guidelines as set out in the Operational Policy Manual (OPM). This document is **not a policy** and in the event of a conflict between this document and an OPM policy or guideline, the decision-maker will rely on the latter.

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## Functional Information and Review of Recommendations

As indicated above, a request for medical information needs to be received from the worker's treating physician. Only after medical clearance is obtained, can further assessment be completed to ensure that a stander is a safe and appropriate device for the worker.

Information would generally be provided by a health professional, often in an out-patient facility.

The health professional should have experience with standing devices. If information has not

been provided, a referral should be made to a health professional by the WSIB Service Delivery Team.

The information is submitted to the Service Delivery Team for review. This information will:

- clarify the clinical rationale for the stander, and
- recommend specific features required for the worker's needs.

Functional information required	WSIB considers
<p>Why is the worker unable to stand without appropriate support? This takes into account the worker's physical abilities, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• range of motion,</li> <li>• strength/endurance,</li> <li>• muscle tone,</li> <li>• sensation</li> <li>• skin integrity, and</li> <li>• safety concerns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information must describe the worker's current condition, level of function and daily living situation.</li> </ul>
<p>Are there specific goals for standing? This may include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• maintaining range of motion,</li> <li>• reducing risk of bone density loss,</li> <li>• improving circulation,</li> <li>• reducing spasticity and preventing contractures,</li> <li>• preventing skin breakdown,</li> <li>• reducing edema,</li> <li>• increased bowel, bladder, respiratory, cardiovascular, or digestive functioning,</li> <li>• normalizing social interactions (e.g., face-to-face conversations while standing), and/or</li> <li>• engagement in functional tasks.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The information must specify the anticipated benefits/outcomes of standing (short-term and long-term).</li> <li>• Standing device must be considered reasonable in terms of costs and anticipated benefits.</li> <li>• If a mobile stander or standing wheelchair is recommended, the information must state why the worker needs to move locations and what functional tasks can be completed in standing.</li> </ul>
<p>What simpler or more cost-effective standing devices (if applicable) have been considered?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information should specify <i>why</i> simpler, more cost-effective alternative devices do not meet the worker's needs.</li> <li>• WSIB will consider payment of the most cost-effective standing device which is clinically necessary.</li> </ul>
<p>Is there a defined standing program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how many times per week stander will be used, and</li> <li>• length of standing sessions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is important that the worker indicate that he/she will follow the prescribed program if provided with the stander.</li> <li>• Defined goals can only be met through a standing program.</li> </ul>

Functional information required	WSIB considers
Has a supervised trial of the standing device and training for the worker/caregiver been completed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Worker should have tried the stander (or a similar one) within a formal therapy program to ensure that it is appropriate.</li> <li>• A health professional should have provided education to the worker (and caregiver, if applicable) on the safe and proper use of the stander.</li> </ul>
Is the worker able to safely use the stander? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• identification of features required to increase safety or prevent complications (e.g., padding to prevent skin breakdown), and</li> <li>• identification of any cognitive difficulties affecting the worker's ability to use the stander safely and effectively.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The worker must be deemed safe to use the stander independently <b>or</b> a caregiver must be available to provide needed assistance.</li> </ul>

If the available information is not sufficient, consult with the health professional who provided the information for clarification.

### Home Compatability

Information required	WSIB considers
Does the stander fit into the current accommodations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where possible, stander should be located in an area that is convenient for the worker.</li> </ul>

### Maintenance/Repair

The WSIB pays for maintenance, normal inspection, repair and replacement of independent living devices (that cost over \$250) unless the damage is due to misuse or to not following the warranty or operating instructions. Workers must ensure proper maintenance is carried out.

Health Services

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