

Health Care Advice

ASSISTIVE DEVICES AND EQUIPMENT

Support Surfaces

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

Pressure Redistributing Surfaces (or Support Surfaces) can be either mattress overlays (placed on top of the existing mattress) or a mattress replacement. These surfaces help reduce or relieve pressure, and can also reduce shear, friction, heat and moisture.

Guiding Principles

Pressure Redistributing Surfaces are generally considered for workers who have:

Considerations

What is needed	WSIB considers
Information that the worker has a work-related injury/disease contributing to skin breakdown or a risk for skin breakdown.	Risk factors for skin breakdown may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• limited mobility in bed,• poor nutrition,• excessive sweating and/or moisture,• incontinence,• long periods of bed rest,• sitting for long periods of time in a wheelchair,• radiation treatment. Note: This is not an exhaustive list. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If it is unclear whether the condition is work-related, clarify medical information with health professional or WSIB medical consultant.
Information from a health professional.	Examples include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• nursing information, or• information from a physician, occupational therapist, physiotherapist. Note: A written recommendation and rationale is required.

- risk of skin breakdown, and/or
- existing skin breakdown.

It is important to address skin breakdown concerns in a timely manner. Pressure sores can develop and worsen quickly, which may ultimately lead to further impairments, a need for more invasive treatments, and/or a higher level of support surface.

Problems with skin breakdown may be related to a number of factors such as poor nutrition, incontinence, poor seating in a wheelchair, etc. While a change in the sleeping surface may be required, it is also important that the health professional provide holistic information, and outline risk factors and necessary recommendations. Recommendations may include changes to other surfaces and/or referrals to different health professionals (e.g., dietician, registered nurse, occupational therapist).

Relevant Operational Policies

Entitlement to Health Care, 17-01-02
Independent Living Allowance, 17-06-02
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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Pressure Management Information and Review of Recommendations

If not already on file, pressure management information is required to determine if a support surface is necessary, appropriate and sufficient for the worker’s work-related injury/disease.

If a health professional is already involved with the worker’s care, he/she may be able to provide the required information. This information may be collected in a variety of settings, such as the worker’s home, a hospital or treating facility. This information may be provided by individual health professionals or a team.

If pressure management information has not been provided, a referral should be made to a

health professional by the WSIB Service Delivery Team to obtain the required information.

The Pressure Management information is submitted to the Service Delivery Team for review.

This report will:

- clarify the clinical rationale for the support surface, and
- recommend specific features required for the worker’s needs.

Pressure management information required	WSIB considers
What are the safety and/or medical concerns with the worker’s current sleeping surface?	<p>Rationale should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stage and severity of any existing wound(s), and/or • risk factors for developing pressure sores.
What simpler or more cost-effective alternative devices were considered and why do they not meet the worker’s needs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a wide range of support surfaces available, with a variety of features and pricing. • Support surfaces also vary in terms of the amount of maintenance they require, their ease of use, and noise level. • Consideration should be given to the least intrusive, most cost-effective option that will meet the worker’s needs.
Has the support surface been tried?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The worker should try the support surface (or a similar one) to ensure that it is appropriate. • Consider renting the device prior to purchase (when possible) to ensure support surface meets the worker’s needs.
<p>Is the worker able to safely and independently use the support surface (if appropriate)?</p> <p>This includes information regarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the worker’s ability to reposition and transfer on and off the support surface, • identification of any cognitive/perceptual concerns, • ability to use the controls, and • amount of assistance required by a caregiver, if applicable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The worker must be deemed able to safely use the support surface or if assistance is required, ensure that a caregiver is available.

Pressure management information required	WSIB considers
How long will the worker require use of the support surface?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarify prognosis/long-term need for support surface with treating health professional. • If condition is temporary and expected to improve, consider if rental of device is more cost-effective. • If it is expected that the condition will worsen, rental of device may be appropriate as a higher level support surface may be required in the future.
What is the required maintenance of support system?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worker or caregiver must be able to properly maintain support surface (e.g., clean filters, regulate pressure). • A back-up plan should be in place in the event that the support surface requires repairs.
Are there any other contributing factors to skin breakdown and have interventions been recommended?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other contributing factors may include <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - problems with other surfaces where worker sits or lies down, - nutrition, - wound care, - sweat/moisture, - incontinence. • Changes to other surfaces may be required (e.g., new wheelchair cushion). • Referrals to other health professionals may be indicated (e.g., dietician, registered nurse, occupational therapist, physiotherapist, etc.)
<p>Is the support surface compatible with other assistive devices in the home?</p> <p>Other assistive devices may include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • transfer lift, • trapeze bar, • over bed table, • wheelchair. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The support surface should be compatible with the existing assistive devices or any changes needed to existing equipment should be identified.

Home Compatibility

Information required	WSIB considers
Does the support surface and bed frame fit into current accommodations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most support surfaces are available only in one size (i.e., size of a hospital bed). • A supplier may be able to modify existing bed to include support surface. • Need to consider size of bed required for worker's needs (e.g., weight, height, mobility). <p>Example: Individuals with paraplegia may need a larger bed to be able to complete transfers, turning, and self-care activities such as dressing.</p>

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

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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