

# Medicare Coverage of Durable Medical Equipment

Medicare Part B covers durable medical equipment (DME), which is equipment that serves a medical purpose, can withstand repeated use, and is appropriate for use in the home.

## What kind of DME does Medicare cover?

Medicare usually covers DME if the equipment:

- Is durable, meaning it is able to withstand repeated use
- Serves a medical purpose
- Is appropriate for use in the home, although you can use outside the home
- And, is likely to last for three years or more

Examples: wheelchairs, walkers, hospital beds, power scooters, portable oxygen equipment

Note: Medicare also covers prosthetics, orthotics, certain diabetes supplies. (This category is sometimes grouped with DME to be called DMEPOS.)

## What kind of equipment does Medicare *not* cover?

There are certain kinds of equipment and supplies that Medicare does not cover, such as:

- Equipment mainly intended to help you outside of the home
- Most items intended only to make things more convenient or comfortable
- Items that get thrown away after use or that are not used with equipment
- Modifications to your home
- Equipment that is not suitable for use in the home

Examples: air conditioners, incontinence pads, surgical facemasks, wheelchair ramps, medical equipment from a hospital or skilled nursing facility like an oscillating bed, a wheelchair or scooter that is only intended for use outside the home

**Note:** Some Medicare Advantage Plans may cover minor home modifications or other items as a supplemental benefit.

# Medicare Coverage of Durable Medical Equipment

## How can I get my DME covered?

Your doctor must sign an order, prescription, or certificate after a face-to-face meeting. In this document, your doctor must state that the required office visit occurred, that you need the requested DME to help a medical condition or injury, and that the equipment is for home use. Your face-to-face office visit must take place no more than six months before the prescription is written. You then must take the prescription to the right kind of supplier.

Note that the process is different if you need coverage for a manual or power wheelchair or scooter.



## What kind of supplier should I go to?

If you have Original Medicare, you should get your DME from a Medicare-approved supplier that takes assignment.

- Avoid suppliers who do not contract with Medicare for DME, because Medicare will not pay for services you receive from these suppliers. This means you are responsible for the entire cost.
- Be aware that many suppliers are Medicare-approved but do not take assignment. These suppliers may charge you more than Medicare's approved amount for the cost of services. Medicare will still only pay 80% of its approved amount for services, so you will be responsible for any additional costs.



# Medicare Coverage of Durable Medical Equipment

## Prevent, detect, and report DME fraud, errors or abuse

Some examples of DME fraud and abuse might include:

- A supplier who wants you to use their doctors (rather than your own), and these doctors then prescribe unnecessary medical equipment.
- Someone who steals your Medicare number and uses it to bill Medicare for DME that is not needed or is never delivered.
- Someone who calls you or visits your home to offer you “free” equipment that you do not need, and then bills Medicare for the equipment.
  - For example, you might receive a phone call from a telemarketer who asks if you are experiencing any pain. If you say yes, the caller may ask for your personal information, like your Medicare number, so they can send you a knee or back brace to help with the pain. This is likely a fraudulent call, and you should not provide the caller with any personal information. If you receive a call like this, contact your Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP) for assistance reporting it.
- Beneficiaries who willingly allow their Medicare number to be used in exchange for money, gifts, or unnecessary equipment and supplies.
- A DME supplier who bills Medicare for more expensive equipment than the supplies or equipment that you were provided.
- A DME supplier who continues billing Medicare for rental payments for your DME after it has been returned.

Remember that Medicare should not cover DME unless your doctor has certified that you need it. Be aware of aggressive marketing that tries to offer you free equipment or persuade you to change DME suppliers. Be skeptical of offers that seem too good to be true, and do not give any personal information to someone who calls offering DME that you did not ask for. If you see any suspicious charges on your MSNs or EOBs, call your provider to see if they have made a billing error. If you still suspect a health care provider of DME fraud, **contact your Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP).**





**SHIP**  
State Health Insurance  
Assistance Program  
Navigating Medicare



## Who can I contact with questions?



**State Health Insurance Assistance Program (SHIP):** Your SHIP provides individualized and unbiased Medicare counseling and assistance, including about Medicare coverage of DME. SHIP contact information is at the bottom of the page.

**Senior Medicare Patrol (SMP):** Your SMP can help you prevent, detect, and report health care fraud, errors, and abuse, including DME scams. SMP contact information is at the bottom of the page.

**1-800-Medicare:** You can also call Medicare for answers to your coverage questions. Call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227, or TTY 1-877-486-2048).

**Your health care provider:** Speak with your doctor if you believe that a piece of DME may be medically necessary for you.

**Your Medicare Advantage Plan:** Contact your Medicare Advantage Plan to learn about any other coverage rules for DME and to learn which suppliers are in-network.

Local SHIP contact information	Local SMP contact information
<b>Toll-free phone number: 877-839-2675</b> (To connect with your SHIP, say “Medicare”)	<b>Toll-free phone number: 877-808-2468</b> (To connect with your SMP, say “Medicare Fraud”)
<b>Online SHIP Locator: <a href="http://www.shiphelp.org">www.shiphelp.org</a></b>  Click: 	<b>Online SMP Locator: <a href="http://www.smpresource.org">www.smpresource.org</a></b>  Click: 
SHIP National Technical Assistance Center: 877-839-2675   <a href="http://www.shiphelp.org">www.shiphelp.org</a>   <a href="mailto:info@shiphelp.org">info@shiphelp.org</a> SMP National Resource Center: 877-808-2468   <a href="http://www.smpresource.org">www.smpresource.org</a>   <a href="mailto:info@smpresource.org">info@smpresource.org</a> © 2021 Medicare Rights Center   <a href="http://www.medicareinteractive.org">www.medicareinteractive.org</a>    <i>The Medicare Rights Center is the author of portions of the content in these materials but is not responsible for any content not authored by the Medicare Rights Center. This document was supported, in part, by grant numbers 90SATC0002 and 90MPRC0002 from the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services, Washington, D.C. 20201. Grantees undertaking projects under government sponsorship are encouraged to express freely their findings and conclusions. Points of view or opinions do not, therefore, necessarily represent official Administration for Community Living policy.</i>	