

WORK SAFE. FOR LIFE.
WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD OF NOVA SCOTIA

Hearing Health Services: Schedule of benefits and fees

A guide for Nova Scotia hearing health
professionals

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Introduction

This manual contains important information for those who provide hearing aid services to workers. It is intended to assist with the completion and submission of Hearing Aid Program forms, documentation and invoices to WCB Nova Scotia.

Overview of Services

In Nova Scotia, Noise Induced Hearing Loss is considered an occupational disease. WCB Nova Scotia covers the costs for hearing aids and related hearing health services for workers with accepted work-related hearing loss claims.

This manual provides an overview of the services and fees covered by the WCB, including the process for selecting hearing aid devices.

Please note: We will only reimburse hearing health services for those who have been approved for benefits. If you are submitting invoices for payment to WCB, it is your responsibility to ensure that the worker seeking treatment has an accepted claim for hearing loss before providing any services.

Determining Eligibility

If someone is experiencing hearing loss due to working in a noisy environment, they may be eligible for compensation from WCB Nova Scotia. In order to make a claim, workers must contact the WCB within 12 months of having their noise induced hearing loss diagnosed by a medical professional. If you suspect your client may be experiencing noise induced hearing loss related to a noisy work environment, you should encourage them to contact WCB Nova Scotia to discuss procedures and coverage:

WCB Nova Scotia

Toll Free: 1-800-870-3331

Phone: 902-491-8999

Eligibility– Initial Audiometric Assessment

Hearing tests are required to help determine the following:

- If the worker has occupational noise induced hearing loss
- If the worker has a permanent medical impairment
- If new hearing aids are required

WCB Nova Scotia may require a complete audiometric assessment/consultation to be performed. In most cases, the assessment must be pre-authorized by the WCB case worker.

The assessment must include:

- Comprehensive evaluation including a clinical history of hearing problems
- Otoscopic evaluation and report
- Pure-tone air conduction testing and masking when indicated to include the following frequencies where appropriate: 250, 500, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, 6000, and 8000Hz
- Appropriate masking must be used for both air and bone conduction testing, when necessary
- Speech audiometry including speech reception threshold testing, determination of uncomfortable levels, most comfortable levels and speech discrimination testing level
Assessment of the function of the middle ear system or impedance audiometry; including acoustic reflexes
- Any other tests required for assessing hearing aid candidacy
- Legible completion and submission of Audiometric Report (all fields are mandatory) completed report must be sent to WCB Nova Scotia case worker
- Must be performed by a certified audiologist
- Please ensure that a copy of the audiogram is sent to the worker's family physician

The assessment may include:

- Testing Unmasked bone conduction thresholds when abnormal air conduction thresholds exist at any frequency from 250 Hz to 4000 Hz can be performed based on clinic judgment

Billing Rules: Audiometric Assessment Services

- Audiometric Assessment/Consultation - **\$100 flat fee**

Ordering and Fitting Hearing Aids

Authorization for Hearing Aids

Before ordering a hearing aid you must determine if the worker is eligible for a hearing aid device. Use the information below to help determine eligibility:

First time hearing aids	The worker should present their decision letter stating that their claim is approved and hearing aids are authorized.
Replacement of a Hearing Aid that is less than 5 years old	<p>You must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a written request with rationale to the WCB Nova Scotia case worker indicating that replacement hearing aids are required; and • Submit the <i>Exception to Benefits Schedule</i> form with the supporting rationale. <p>Written or verbal approval is required from the case worker to proceed. A re-evaluation report may also be required.</p>
Replacement of a Hearing Aid that is greater than 5 years old	You will require written or verbal approval from the WCB case worker to proceed
Lost Hearing Aids	<p>Lost hearing aids are the client’s responsibility to replace. The loss and damage warranties should be utilized if still covered by the manufacturer. The deductible is not paid by WCB Nova Scotia.</p>

Fitting Services – First Time or for a New Device

For the initial fitting service you are expected to:

- Provide hearing aid evaluation to determine the type of hearing aid/technology required.
- Provide instructions on care, maintenance and operation of the device along with appropriate follow up.
- Provide verification (real ear measurement and electroacoustic assessment) and adjustment for a digital hearing aid, which includes ensuring that the hearing aid shell or ear mold is a precise, comfortable fit at the time of initial fitting.
- Ensure the worker can demonstrate how to remove cerumen from the aid, how to change wax guards, and how to use associated tools.

- Provide guidance on expected realistic hearing health benefit during and after the adjustment period.
- Educate the worker on all product manual provisions and warranty information.

Billing Rules: First Time Fitting Fee Services

If hearing aids have been approved by WCB Nova Scotia, you can bill:

- Hearing Aid Fitting fee - **\$465 per Aid (\$930** for two hearing aids);
- Ear molds, impressions, ear tips, if applicable - **\$95 per Aid Total**
 - A frequency of replacement is based on utilization/wear and tear of the ear mold(s) and impressions (typically two (2) years) and must be approved by the WCB case worker.
 - This fee (**\$95**) includes the cost of shipping and handling of molds, tips, etc.
 - Replacement tips– see **Accessories** section on Page 9
- The invoice should reflect the breakdown of the services performed.

Evaluation Period

There is a 90-day evaluation period during which the hearing aid can be returned to the manufacturer if the worker is not satisfied with the aid. Within that evaluation period a new hearing aid can be ordered from the manufacturer.

Re-Fitting Services (within first year)

Re-fitting services may be required after the initial evaluation period if there has been a significant change in the worker's weight, if the hearing aid's shell has been damaged, or if there is a problem with fit. The re-fitting service should include re-instruction, counseling and/or reprogramming, where appropriate.

Billing Rules: Re-Fitting Services Fee

WCB Nova Scotia will reimburse the following:

If re-fitting services have been performed, you can bill:

- Hearing Aid Re-fitting Fee - **\$40 per Aid (\$80** for two hearing aids);

The re-fitting fee **cannot** be billed:

- During the initial evaluation period
- After a repair

If there are exceptions to the frequency of re-fitting, please submit the explanation on the **Exception to Benefits** form. Exceptions are subject to review and approval by WCB Nova Scotia.

Criteria for Replacement

A hearing aid is replaced only when required, regardless of its age. Each time a hearing aid is replaced a rationale must be noted and supported with a completed form. The following criteria are considered when determining the need for replacement:

- The hearing aid is not functioning properly and the cost of repair is no longer considered cost effective.
- The hearing aid has inadequate gain to meet the worker's needs.
- The worker experiences excessive feedback that cannot be managed by adjustments to the hearing aid or fit.
- There have been significant changes in hearing. That is, audiometric test results show that the worker's hearing has changed by a minimum of 20 dBHL in three or more of the octave frequencies 500 Hz - 4000 Hz, such that audibility has been affected. The initial hearing aid fitting should be able to accommodate any changes less than this.
- The hearing aid style has become inappropriate for the worker.
- Hearing aid is not under manufacturer or repair warranty.

Billing Rules: Fitting Services – Replacement

If a replacement hearing aid has been approved by WCB Nova Scotia, you can bill:

- Hearing Aid Fitting Fee - **\$465** per Aid (**\$930** for two hearing aids);
- Ear molds, impressions and or tips - **\$95 Total** per hearing aid; where appropriate (includes shipping and handling).
 - Replacement tips and molds – see **Accessories** section on Page 9
 - Replacement molds/impressions NOT to be billed under in-house repair

Ordering From Manufacturer

Ordering Standard Hearing Aids

WCB Nova Scotia has an agreement with the following Hearing Aid Manufacturers to provide customary pricing for specific devices. Hearing aids must be ordered from these manufacturers from the list of devices found at the end of this document and billed to WCB Nova Scotia using the approved manufacturer contracted pricing.

Current manufacturers are:

- Beltone Canada
- Bernafon Canada
- Oticon Canada
- Phonak Canada
- Resound Canada
- Signia
- Sonic Innovations Canada
- Starkey Canada

- Unitron Canada
- Widex

WCB will update hearing aid clinics with any changes in the list of the participating manufacturers or updates to the approved device lists on a quarterly basis. If you have any questions or if you wish to join the mailing list please contact the WCB at HealthServicesInbox@wcb.ns.ca.

It is important that workers are fitted with devices that are appropriate to address the impact they are experiencing due to their occupational hearing loss.

Hearing Aid Devices Pre-Approved List provides a list of approved hearing aid devices. You can select a device from this list, provided they will meet the hearing health needs of the worker, and order directly from the manufacturer. You should invoice the WCB directly at the manufacturer's preferred pricing from our list of approved devices. The aids listed are priced at a maximum of \$750. The WCB Claim number should be used to identify the device under the negotiated pricing model.

Hearing Aid Device Approval Required List provides a list of devices available at a price cap of \$950 that require approval from the WCB case manager. To order a device from this list, please provide a rationale using the **Exception to Benefits** Form.

If you are considering ordering an aid from a different manufacturer than listed above, please confirm with WCB before ordering the hearing aids. We will require written justification using the **Exception to Benefits** Form.

Please note: The "hearing aid" includes all features of the hearing aid, such as the telecoil, directional/dual microphones and CROS/BiCROS cords. The cost of the entire hearing aid, including the features noted above, must be under the Manufacturers Hearing Aid Maximum Price Cap.

Purchasing Hearing Aids Prior to Claim Decisions

WCB Nova Scotia will cover the costs for hearing aid devices as outlined in this manual for claims that have been approved. Workers must be informed that if they purchase a hearing aid while the claim is pending with WCB they may not be reimbursed for the cost of the hearing aid or any services provided. You must document the worker's understanding of this if you provide services while the claim has not yet been approved.

Workers are assigned a claim number upon claim registration. Having a claim number **does not** mean the claim has been accepted.

Ordering Hearing Aids That Exceed The Maximum Price Limit Cap (\$750)

Cost Share

We are confident that in the majority of situations, you, as the Provider, will be able to find a satisfactory hearing aid for a worker from our list of approved devices. However, a worker

has the option to choose a hearing aid device other than what is on the approved manufacturer's pricing list. This is considered a Cost Share Arrangement.

In a cost-sharing arrangement, WCB Nova Scotia will reimburse a maximum of \$750 towards the purchase of a cost-share device for workers eligible for coverage.

- The worker must sign indicating that they are aware of the above and this must be maintained in the client's file using the Exception to Benefits form.

Billing Rules: Cost Sharing

- You bill WCB Nova Scotia the Hearing Aid Cap (**\$750** per aid).
- The worker pays the difference between the manufacturer's invoice cost to the clinic and the amount invoiced to WCB (**\$750** per aid).
- The Fitting Fee can also be billed to WCB, if applicable (**\$465** per aid).
- The Audiometric assessment/consultation can also be, if applicable (**\$100**).

Special Consideration

WCB Nova Scotia may consider exceptional circumstances in which we will cover the full cost of the hearing aids that exceed the Hearing Aid Cap. You must obtain pre-authorization from the WCB case worker before ordering the hearing aid device(s).

For consideration of exceptional circumstances you must provide the following:

- A statement of explanation outlining why such a device is required using the Exception to Benefits form;
- Example of situations where the worker encounters difficulty with current hearing aids;
- Reasons why and how this instrument would better meet the worker's needs (for example the request for an autocoil must demonstrate why a regular telecoil is inappropriate to meet the worker's needs); and
- A completed Audiometric Assessment containing pure tone air and bone conduction thresholds, speech reception threshold, speech recognition scores in quiet and in noise, uncomfortable listening levels, and any relevant hearing aid evaluation measures showing to the satisfaction of the WCB case worker that the hearing loss cannot be reasonably addressed by alternative amplification.

Supplies and Batteries

Batteries

WCB Nova Scotia provides an annual supply of batteries to workers with accepted workrelated hearing loss claims. Workers are required to receive their annual supply of batteries as part of their annual preventative maintenance appointment.

WCB will reimburse for the cost of batteries for a 12-month period on an annual basis. WCB considers a typical supply to be 60 cells per hearing aid.

You may choose to supply the worker with a 60-day supply during the trial period. This would be considered as part of the annual battery disbursement.

WCB does cover the cost of rechargeable batteries, but **not** the cost of the recharger.

WCB does not cover batteries for remote control devices.

Should the worker's aid require more batteries than 60 cells per year, an **Exception to Benefits** form should be completed explaining the rationale and sent to the WCB case worker for prior approval.

Billing Rules: Batteries

- You bill WCB **\$1.00 per cell up to a maximum of 60 cells per hearing aid**
- To be billed typically as part of the annual preventative maintenance service
- WCB does not cover the cost of 5-year batteries

Accessories

You can supply the worker with any of the following accessories without prior authorization from WCB:

- Basic Dry aid kits - **\$15**
- Ear Mold Blower - **\$15**
- Wax guard kits - based on manufacturer pricing in accordance with WCB approved manufacturers Wax removal kits - **\$15**
- Moisture barrier sleeves - **\$20**
- Tips - **\$20/package**
- Domes - **\$20/package**

Frequency of billing will depend on usage/wear and tear, typical 12 packages annually depending on quantity.

Other accessories may be approved with prior authorization from the WCB case worker. Provide a brief explanation of the accessory on your invoice.

Accessories Not Covered

There are a number of accessories that the WCB does **NOT** cover:

- TV listening devices
- Telephones
- Bed shakers
- Hearing aid remotes/streamers
- FM systems
- Fire alarms
- Wireless headsets
- Bluetooth (unless already included)

Service and Repairs

You are responsible for determining the reason why a hearing aid is not functioning and taking appropriate steps to support the repair within your clinic or through the manufacturer. You are expected to determine if it is more cost effective to service the hearing aid or to replace the hearing aid.

Please ensure that the aid being requested for service/repair is the most current approved device provided to the worker.

In-House Service/ Maintenance/Repair

You are expected to provide routine maintenance, adjustments and minor repairs for the life of the hearing aid. These services include but are not limited to:

- Parts;
- Fabrication and dispensing for minor in-house service;
- Assessment of hearing aid problems;
- Adjustments;
- Performance tests;
- Reprogramming and/or repairs such as battery doors;
- Re-tubing earmolds;
- Ear hooks;
- Soft coat;
- Removing wax; and
- Changing wax guards from the Hearing Aid
- Costs for tubing and other parts are included in this fee

Billing Rules: In-House Service/Maintenance/Repair

- Limit of **two** in-house services per year per hearing aid - **\$65** fee per hearing aid per visit. Costs for tubing and other parts are included in this fee. Can be billed in conjunction with the annual preventative maintenance visit.
- Costs associated with replacing the RIC/RITE/OTE receivers are in addition to the inhouse service fee and can be billed in a range of **\$50 to \$100**, if applicable.
- Include a brief explanation of the service on the invoice. You must indicate on the invoice what service has been provided along with the serial number of the hearing aid(s).
- Should more frequent repairs/maintenance be required, please provide a rationale using the Exception to Benefits Form.

Exceptions to Billing

- The in-house service **cannot be billed** at the same time as the out-of-office repair unless the out-of-office is for repair of the BTE and the in-house repair is for replacing the ear mold.

Out-of-Office Repairs

You can send hearing aids to the manufacturer for repair. Before doing so you should determine if the manufacturer's warranty period is in effect. The Hearing Aid Manufacturer should not bill for any repairs within the warranty period.

Please use your professional discretion to determine the cost effectiveness of repairing or replacing a hearing aid. If it is more cost effective to replace the hearing aid, the normal process for hearing aid replacement must be followed. Please refer to the section on ordering new hearing aids.

This service requires an assessment and analysis of the hearing aid problems, processing administrative work for repair(s), shipping and handling and refitting. If the warranty period for the device has expired, we would anticipate a one-year warranty from the manufacturer on the repair. Should the hearing aid be closer to potential five-year replacement, we would anticipate only a six-month warranty on the repair.

Billing Rules: Out-Of-Office Repair

You **can** invoice the following for out-of-office/manufacturer repairs:

- The cost that the manufacturer charges for the repair;
- **\$70 per hearing aid** for the assessment and any shipping and handling along with administrative processing and refitting.

Annual Preventative Maintenance

Each year you should perform preventative maintenance on the worker's hearing aid(s). This service includes, but is not limited to the following:

- Hearing aid inspection, adjustments, reprogramming and cleaning, along with cerumen removal from the aid only;
- Repair or replacement of battery doors, ear hooks, tubing and wax guards, where appropriate;
- A 12-month supply of batteries should be dispensed at the time of the preventative maintenance visit.

Where possible, the annual preventative maintenance appointment should be scheduled prior to the end of the warranty period.

Billing Rules: Annual Preventative Maintenance

- You can bill **\$50** per hearing aid for the yearly preventative maintenance service.
- To be billed only once per year. If exceptions exist, contact the WCB case worker for prior approval.
- Can be billed in conjunction with an in-house repair.
- Cannot be billed within 12 months from initial hearing aid purchase **and** billing of a fitting fee.

Re-Evaluation of the Worker's Hearing or Hearing Aid

You should re-evaluate the worker's hearing and/or the appropriateness of the aid if the worker indicates that the aid is not functioning as well as it used to.

A hearing evaluation will be covered every two years and may be performed by a Hearing Instrument Specialist or Hearing Instrument Practitioner.

A hearing evaluation may also be required to determine the worker's permanent medical impairment (PMI) and must be performed by a certified Audiologist.

Hearing Evaluation includes the following:

- Otoscopic evaluation
- Pure – tone air conduction testing, and masking when indicated to include the following frequencies: 250, 500, 1000, 2000, 3000, 4000, 6000, and 8000Hz
- Speech audiometry including speech reception threshold testing, and speech discrimination testing level
- Functional assessment of the middle ear system or impedance audiometry
- Results are to be entered on Audiometric Assessment Report or hearing ReEvaluation Report
- A copy of the report should be sent to the worker's family physician
- If there are exceptions to any of the above, the rationale must be provided using the **Exception to Benefits** form for WCB case worker approval

Billing Rules: Hearing or Hearing Aid Re-Evaluation

- You can bill for a Hearing Evaluation **\$60** every 2 years, where appropriate.
- Should there be a need for a full audiometric assessment, case worker approval is required, you can bill **\$100** flat fee.
- A hearing evaluation can also be billed with an annual preventative maintenance service (**\$50** per hearing aid) or the in-house repair/maintenance.
- A photocopy fee of **\$25** can be billed for copies of previously completed reports, which are required to determine benefit eligibility.
- The invoice should note all specific services performed.

Real Ear Measurements

Billing Rules: Real Ear Measurement

- You can bill for real ear measurement once every 12 months.
- You can bill **\$25** per ear.
- The invoice must include an explanation as to why a real ear measurement was required if outside of the annual maintenance appointment or the four repair service appointments.

Tinnitus Assessment

A tinnitus assessment will be approved by the WCB Nova Scotia caseworker on a claim by claim basis. Pre-approval is required prior to the assessment. To help determine if a full tinnitus assessment is required, you may provide additional details such as the following:

- When does the worker hear the ringing/buzzing – all the time or in quiet only?
- Is it constant?
- How long has she/he had it?
- Is it one ear or bilateral?
- Is the sound tonal? Or pulsating?
- How does it affect daily functioning? – e.g., complaints of sleep issues; anxiety; manages with no problems.

WCB Payment Fee Codes for Hearing Related Products or Services

Service/Product	Invoice Amount	WCB Fee Code
Audiometric Assessment	\$100	19A
Hearing Aid Batteries	\$1.00/cell	19D
Hearing Evaluation/tests	\$60 (every 2 years)	19C
Hearing Aid(s)	\$750 per aid	19B
Real Ear Measurements	\$25 per ear Can be billed once every 12 months	19J
Fitting Fee	\$465 per aid \$930 Total for 2 aids	19Q
Hearing Aid Molds, Impressions, Ear tips	\$95 (includes any shipping and handling)	19G
Manufacturer Repairs	Case-by case basis depending on the repair	19H
In-House Repair/Maintenance	\$65 per aid +additional \$50-\$100 for receivers (Maximum 2 visits per year)	19I
Re-fitting Fee	\$40 per aid – Total \$80	19R
Annual Preventative Maintenance	\$50 per aid - \$100 total	19P
Supplies: Ear Mold Blower Dry Aid Kits Wax guards, tips, domes Photocopy fee	Approx. \$15 - \$25; Photocopy fee - \$25 max	19S
Tinnitus Assessment	Case by case approval	19T

Hearing Health Services – Typical Billing Cycles

Use this timeline as a guide to understand the new service and billing cycles. Please see the *Hearing Health Services Guide* for specific considerations and pricing.

Prior to Claim Approval

- Initial assessment of worker – Possible Audiometric Assessment
- Can happen before a claim is received

Claim Approved	
	YEAR
Year 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Fitting Fee • Hearing Aid – See WCB approved device list for pricing • Potential re-fitting (post trial period) • Ear molds, impressions and/or ear tips • Batteries (60 cells per hearing aid) 	1
Year 2	2
Year 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ear molds, impressions and/or ear tips if required • Hearing evaluation if required 	3
Year 4	4
Year 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-evaluate hearing and hearing aid • Possible aid replacement • Possible fitting fee • Possible audiometric assessment 	5

Annually, Years 2-5

- Annual Preventative Maintenance
- In-House Clinic Repair/Maintenance (max of 2 per year/per hearing aid)
- Batteries (60 cells per hearing aid)
- Real ear measurements if required
- Manufacturer repair if required.

Billing tips – What to keep in mind

- The hearing aid re-fitting fee cannot be billed during the initial evaluation period or after a repair.
- Replacement molds/impressions cannot be billed under in-house repair.
- Batteries should be billed with the annual preventative maintenance service.
- The annual preventative maintenance visit cannot be billed within 12 months from an initial hearing aid purchase and billing of a fitting fee.