

Durable Medical Equipment What You Need To Know

What is Durable Medical Equipment?

Durable Medical Equipment (or DME) describes the equipment and supports you need to help you with your health. How can you tell if something is DME? There are three quick clues. First, it must be **durable**, meaning it has to be reusable. Second, it has to be **medical**. This means it has to be prescribed by someone, usually a doctor. And third, it has to be some form of **equipment**. Medication or services are not DME.

What kinds of items are generally considered DME?

Medicare and Medi-Cal pay for many, many items that are DME. For example, hospital beds, walkers, wheelchairs, home oxygen equipment, and scooters are all DME.

Note: Disposable items used in connection with DME—like diabetic test strips used with a glucose monitor—are considered DME.

Who covers DME—Medicare or Medi-Cal?

Both Medicare and Medi-Cal cover DME. Medicare only covers DME if you need it in your home. Medi-Cal also covers DME that you use in the community, such as a wheelchair you use outside. If you have both Medicare and Medi-Cal, then Medicare pays first, and Medi-Cal pays second, if Medicare won't pay.

What Will You Pay For DME?	
Your Insurance	How Much You Pay
MEDICARE & MEDI-CAL	No payment due
MEDI-CAL/NO MEDICARE	No payment due
MEDICARE ADVANTAGE/NO MEDI-CAL	Co-pay set by plan
ORIGINAL MEDICARE/NO MEDI-CAL	20% of Medicare charge. If you have a MediGap plan, it may cover this amount.

How do I get DME?

Step 1. Contact a doctor.

Your doctor must write a prescription for the DME.

If you have Medicare, your doctor must participate in Medicare. The DME must be “medically necessary” and appropriate for you to use at home. You may need prior authorization if you have Medicare Advantage.

If you have Medi-Cal, your doctor must participate in Medi-Cal. He or she also needs to complete a form. If you are in a Medi-Cal managed care plan, the plan may have its own forms. The plan may require prior authorization.

Step 2. Find the right supplier.

If you have Medicare, you need to use special suppliers called competitive bidding contract suppliers for most types of DME. Here is the website to find them: <https://www.medicare.gov/supplierdirectory/search.html>. For other types of DME, you can use any Medicare-enrolled supplier. You can contact the supplier directly.

If you have Medicare Advantage, you must use a supplier in the network of your Medicare Advantage plan. The plan should provide you with a list of suppliers you can use.

If you have Medi-Cal, you must use a Medi-Cal supplier. If you are in a Medi-Cal managed care plan, you must use a Medi-Cal supplier that is also in the managed care plan’s network.

**WATCH OUT! Medi-Cal suppliers are different from Medicare suppliers.
Make sure you are using the right one!**

Troubleshooting:

What are some common problems, and how do I solve them?

My DME needs a repair or replacement. The supplier is delaying. What should I do?

File a complaint.

If you got the DME through Medicare:

If you have Original Medicare, complain to 1-800 MEDICARE. If you used a competitive bidding contractor, tell them that you want your complaint to go to the Competitive Bidding Ombudsman.

If you have a Medicare Advantage plan, contact the plan and say you want to file a grievance about the delay. You can also contact 1-800 MEDICARE.

If you got the DME through Medi-Cal:

If you are in a Medi-Cal plan, contact the plan and file a **grievance**. You can also complain to the Medi-Cal Managed Care Ombudsman by calling 1-888-452-8609. In addition, contact the Department of Managed Health Care Help Center at 1-888-466-2219.

I was denied my DME request. I want to appeal. What should I do?

1. Read your notice carefully.
2. Pay attention to deadlines.
3. Make sure to file your appeal on time.
4. Talk to your doctor. See if your doctor can provide more information to explain why you need the DME.
5. Get help. A lawyer can help you with the DME appeal process. You can find a lawyer through LawHelp.org: <http://lawhelpca.org/find-legal-help>.

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