

In some provinces, certain non-prescription drugs such as antacids, dandruff shampoos and aspirin for treatment of arthritis are a benefit in varying degree. There is also a custom of supplying, through health department auspices, certain drugs of continuing treatment that are essential for life-saving or maintenance of minimum health.

Dental-care benefits

Dental benefit plans are operated for selected recipients of welfare in most provinces. In British Columbia, special means tests are applied to public-assistance recipients in order to qualify them for enrolment. A separate program is operated in that province for the children under 13 years of age of all welfare recipients. The Ontario program provides dental benefits to persons in receipt of mothers' allowances and dependent fathers' allowances. This includes parents and their children under the age of 18. Provincial assistance is also available for essential dental services for others at municipal discretion. All provincial public-assistance recipients qualify for dental benefits of schemes operated in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and selected categories in Manitoba. Quebec has introduced a program that emphasizes care among lower age categories.

Benefits under these dental plans typically exclude certain specified services and require prior authorization for some services. In the three most westerly provinces, posterior bridgework, prophylaxis and paedodontics are excluded. Prior authorization is required in British Columbia and Saskatchewan for dentures, relines, gold inlays, orthodontia and periodontia. Payments to dentists are at negotiated fixed rates under each of these plans. The patient is required to pay a co-charge of approximately 50 per cent of the cost of dentures in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

A limited range of in-hospital dental surgery performed by physicians and dentists is a benefit under provincial medical-care insurance plans.

Optical care benefits

Health benefit schemes for welfare recipients included certain optical-care services and eyeglasses in the four most westerly provinces.

With the nation-wide implementation of public medical-care insurance programs, refractions performed by physicians became general benefits under most schemes, and refractions by optometrists as well in a number of provinces.

Frames, lenses and fittings continue to be benefits of the provincial health benefit schemes in the Western provinces. Certain restrictions typically govern the amount that will be paid for frames -- e.g., for cosmetic purposes.

Other health-care benefits

Other health benefits provided under programs in some provinces include home nursing, appliances, physiotherapy, podiatry, chiropractic, and