

Alberta Health

Alberta Aids to Daily Living Compression Stockings and Lymphedema Sleeves – Ready Made Benefits

Policy & Procedures Manual

June 21, 2021

Classification: Public



Revision History

Description	Date
Updated throughout to reflect the transition to Alberta Blue Cross	June 21, 2021
Incorporated N-08 Insurance Coverage into N-07 N-02 Fitter certification needs to be renewed every three years N-03 AADL will not accept lower leg assessments more than six months old N-07 Certified Lymphedema Therapist or a Specialty Assessor can authorize over quantity with appropriate rationale.	July 1, 2020
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Policy N – 01

Eligibility Criteria

Policy Statement

AADL has adopted the Clinical Etiology Anatomy Pathophysiology (CEAP) classification of chronic venous disorders which was developed by the American Venous Forum (1994, revised 2004).

Clients will be eligible for authorization of compression garments if they are assessed and meet Clinical Etiology Anatomy Pathophysiology (CEAP) criteria C₄ or C₅ or who have chronic lymphedema. Clients with C₆ (active ulceration) do not meet criteria.

Chronic Venous Insufficiency: an advanced form of chronic venous dysfunction caused by increased ambulatory venous hypertension resulting in a series of changes in the subcutaneous tissue and skin. Limb swelling, pigmentation (hemosiderin staining), lipodermatosclerosis, venous eczema (stasis dermatitis) or venous ulceration can develop.

(Gloviczki et al. (May Supplement 2011). *“The care of patients with varicose veins and associated chronic venous diseases: Clinical practice guidelines of the Society for Vascular Surgery and the American Venous Forum”* Journal of Vascular Surgery.

Lymphedema: an abnormal collection of high-protein fluid just beneath the skin due to reduced lymphatic drainage. This swelling occurs most commonly in the arm or leg, but it also may occur in other parts of the body including the breast or trunk, head and neck, or genitals. (Best Practice for the Management of Lymphedema, International Lymphedema Framework, 2006).

CEAP Classification:

Note: Client *does not meet criteria* with C₁-C₃ alone:

C ₀	No visible or palpable signs of venous disease
C ₁	Telangiectases, reticular veins or malleolar flare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild venous dilation
C ₂	Varicose veins <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dilated, tortuous veins
C ₃	Edema <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent ankle edema worsening by end of the day • May become persistent <p>Note: Client <i>meets criteria</i> if they have all or some of findings in C₁-C₃ and have findings in C_{4a}, C_{4b} or C₅</p>
C _{4a}	Pigmentation (hemosiderin staining) and/or venous eczema(stasis dermatitis)
C _{4b}	Lipodermatosclerosis and/or atrophe blanche
C ₅	Skin changes as defined above with healed venous ulceration Note: Client with active ulceration <i>do not meet</i> AADL criteria
C ₆	Skin changes as defined above with active ulceration

Note: Clients presenting with chronic lymphedema should be assessed by a qualified Certified Lymphedema Therapist (CLT) or Specialty Assessor (SA). If a CLT/SA is not accessible to the client, clients will be required to provide a prescription from a physician or nurse practitioner.

AADL does **NOT** provide compression stockings or lymphedema garments for:

- use in acute care/sub-acute care facilities
- short-term interventions
- application or intervention in a physician’s/nurse practitioner’s/vascular surgeon’s office.

Procedure

Authorizers:

1. Confirm client meets AADL general eligibility requirements.

2. Confirm client's previous benefit consumption:
 - a. Refer to the Compression Garments APL for quantity limits at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-n>
 - b. Refer to the patient inquiry screen on the Alberta Blue Cross Online Health Portal (OHP) and check product consumption.
 - c. Submit authorization on the OHP with any relevant documentation including the client declaration form.
 - d. Refer to Policy N-07 Quantity and Frequency Limits for clients who are over quantity/frequency limit.
3. Inform client of their eligibility status.

Clients:

1. Confirm eligibility with Authorizer.
2. Provide prescription to authorizer, if required.
3. Sign client declaration form.

Vendors:

1. Check clients' previous benefit consumption:
 - Refer to the Compression Garments Benefits APL to determine quantity limits at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-n>. Refer to the patient inquiry screen on the Alberta Blue Cross Online Health Portal (OHP) to review client's benefit consumption history and confirm they are eligible for the benefit.
 - Refer to Policy N-07 Quantity and Frequency Limits for clients who are over quantity/frequency limit.

Alberta Blue Cross:

1. Responds to telephone or email requests for information on compression benefits eligibility; and provides reference to the AADL website for further information at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-n>
2. Adjudicates and audits authorizations for accuracy and completeness submitted through the OHP.

Policy N – 02

Authorizer Qualifications

Policy Statement

Existing AADL Authorizers who are PTs, OTs or RNs may apply to have compression garments added to their product range.

Authorizers must complete the Authorizer Application for Product Range: Compression Garments form and submit to AADL for consideration.

Assessors and authorizers doing the actual fitting must:

- be a certified fitter by completing a manufacturer fitter course that is recognized by AADL;
- renew their certification every three years; and
- provide certification to AADL or Alberta Blue Cross upon request.

Procedure

AADL Authorizer applying for secondary product range:

1. Complete Authorizer Application for Product Range: Compression Garments form available under Authorizer Application Forms at:
2. <https://www.alberta.ca/aadl-authorizer-information-and-training.aspx>. Complete compression on-line module available under Videos at:
<https://www.alberta.ca/aadl-authorizer-information-and-training.aspx>
3. Forward completed application with supporting documentation to AADL.

AADL:

1. Reviews application.
2. Advises Alberta Blue Cross to add the product range to eligible authorizers.
3. Monitors authorizer activities to determine compliance with policies and procedures.

Policy N – 03

Prescription/Lower Leg Assessment Tool

Policy Statement

Clients may be eligible for funding for off the shelf compression garments for Chronic Venous Insufficiency when the values are within the following parameters:

- Ankle Brachial Pressure Index (ABPI) must be within the 0.8 to 1.3 range. TBPIs must be 0.7 mmHg or greater;
- PPGs must be 50 mmHg or greater and are only accepted if the authorizer has done an advanced assessment (e.g., visual assessment, client history, troubleshooting, consulting with another assessor if warranted).

Note: If the client's ranges are not within the values stated above, a prescription from a vascular surgeon, physician or nurse practitioner with expertise in lower leg assessment must be provided.

Note: All clients with diabetes require a TBPI or PPG when the ABPI is below 1.0 or above 1.3.

Note: A prescription from a vascular surgeon is required for clients who have had recent surgery, including bypass surgery.

The Lower Leg Assessment form must be completed and kept on the client's file.

Clients presenting with chronic lymphedema should be assessed by a qualified Certified Lymphedema Therapist (CLT) or Specialty Assessor (SA). If a CLT/SA is not accessible to the client, clients will be required to provide a prescription from a physician or nurse practitioner.

Completion of the Lower Leg Assessment Form may not be required based on the origin of the lymphedema.

Prescriptions are not required for clients receiving active treatment from Alberta Health Services cancer rehabilitation oncology programs.

Clients with venous insufficiency must present with hemosiderin staining and/or ropey torturous veins above knee and to be eligible for funding for thigh high stockings or, if appropriate, must present with hemosiderin stains and/or ropey torturous veins into the groin to be eligible for panty hose.

Authorizations for thigh-high stockings must include on the Lower Leg Assessment Form, indication of hemosiderin staining and ropey torturous veins above the knee. If pantyhose are

requested, there must be indication on the Lower Leg Assessment Form of hemosiderin staining and ropey torturous veins into the groin.

Note: Clients with a history of Deep Vein Thrombosis (DVT) at or below the knee or tortuous veins in the area where a knee high would lie, may be eligible for thigh high stockings if knee high stockings present a clinical risk or are deemed ineffective. Clinical rationale must accompany the request.

If a client wants thigh-high stockings or pantyhose but only qualifies for below-knee stockings, the client may pay the up-charge for the longer length.

Note: The authorizer is required to advise the client that they will be responsible to pay the upcharge for the thigh high stockings or pantyhose.

If a client requires two different styles and/or compression of stockings, the authorizer is required to document rationale on the Lower Leg Assessment form or the client file.

Procedure

Authorizers:

1. Assess client or review assessment if authorizer is not the assessor.
2. Document assessment details and clinical rationale on the client file to support the provision of benefits.
3. Determine benefit and quantity needed based on the client's final clinical assessment results.

Clients:

1. Fully participate in the assessment.
2. Sign declaration form.

AADL:

1. Provides direction to authorizers regarding eligibility criteria as it relates to the assessment as needed.

Alberta Blue Cross

1. Responds to telephone or email requests for information on compression benefits eligibility; and provides reference to the AADL website for further information at: <https://open.alberta.ca/publications/aadl-program-manual-n>
2. Adjudicates and audits authorizations submitted through the OHP for completeness and accuracy.

Policy N – 04

Contraindications for Eligibility for Compression Stockings

Policy Statement

AADL does NOT provide funding for compression stockings for:

- acute treatment including: DVT, emboli or arterial blood clots, cellulitis, thrombophlebitis, phlebitis, post phlebitis syndrome, arterial insufficiency, hypotension;
- prevention;
- predisposing conditions such as pregnancy;
- active treatment (initial edema reduction prior to achieving dry/stable state preceding garment fitting) edema management, and systemic edema;
- short-term interventions;
- nighttime use; or
- osteoarthritis, to the degree of mechanical restriction.

Policy N – 05

Contraindications for Compression Garments

Policy Statement

Do not authorize compression garments for the following contraindicated conditions:

- Any acute presentation of the lower leg:
 - Acute cellulitis/acute untreated cellulitis or erysipelas of the lower leg(s) including abscess or furuncle formations.
 - Acute Lipodermatosclerosis (also called hypodermatitis sclerodermiformis) which presents as episodes of painful inflammation in the inner leg above the ankle, resembling cellulitis. The affected area is red, tender and warm, and may be scaly. Authorizations may be done once lipodermatosclerosis is in the chronic phase.
- Untreated malignant tumor of the leg.
- Scleroderma.

Note: Peripheral neuropathy (as in individuals with diabetes) is not a contraindication to compression if peripheral arterial perfusion is within acceptable AADL ranges* or has been deemed acceptable by an authorized prescriber. However, the client must be provided education regarding proper application and careful monitoring of pressure gradient stockings as sensation is impaired.

* See Policy N-03.

Policy N – 06

Authorizer Responsibilities

Procedure

1. Authorizers ensure the client:
 - meets AADL’s eligibility criteria as outlined in the Client Eligibility Criteria section of the general Policies and Procedures;
 - meets the specific eligibility criteria outlined and authorizes quantities based on the clinical assessment of the client’s needs;
 - does not have an open wound on the area to be compressed;
 - signs the Client Declaration Form;
 - is aware that they have a choice of vendors and that a full list of all AADL approved vendors is available; and
 - is provided with follow-up assessments.

Authorizers:

1. May only enter authorizations by an assessor that is an RN, PT or OT and who is trained in lower leg assessment that includes an ankle brachial index.
2. Must ensure that the client meets AADL’s eligibility criteria and that the lower leg assessment form has been completed when appropriate.

Clients are authorized based on the lower leg assessment that verifies that the client meets AADL criteria: confirm that any Edema has been investigated and reduced prior to authorization.
3. Can only authorize clients who have an ankle brachial index of 0.8-1.3.

Clients with a diagnosis of diabetes with values below 1.0 or above 1.3 must have a toe pressure completed to ensure that it is safe to compress the limb, or a prescription that includes the amount of compression.
4. Ensure clients with values outside of AADL criteria have a prescription that includes the amount of compression.

Authorizations:

1. It is the authorizer's clinical discretion to determine the period of time for an authorization, however authorizations cannot exceed two years.
2. Best practice recommends that clients wear a 30-40 mm Hg of pressure, and that below-knee stockings are the most effective and have the highest rate of client compliance.
3. Cellulitis, dermatitis and open wounds must be healed prior to authorization.
4. Authorizers must complete the authorization on the Alberta Blue Cross Online Health Portal and include prescription if appropriate. Clients receive one compression garment initially to ensure compliance and/or that length or degree of support is clinically appropriate.

Note: clients should advise the authorizer with any concerns about the compression garment.

Note: clients are responsible to obtain the remaining garments as needed based on AADL maximum quantity limits.

Authorizer Role in the Client Fitting by the Vendor:

1. Authorizers should inform clients that vendor fittings must occur early in the morning when the edema is minimized.
2. If the authorizer is doing the actual fitting, then the authorizer must be a certified fitter with one of AADL's recognized manufacturer training courses.
3. If a client cannot put on heavy graduated pressure stockings, two lesser stockings (e.g., two 15mm), one worn on top of the other, may be manageable.

Note: AADL does not provide funding for these two lesser weight stockings.

Policy N – 07

Quantity and Frequency Limits for Ready-Made Compression Garments

Policy Statement

The quantity and frequency limits for ready-made compression garments is a maximum of four garments per limb per 12-month period.

The AADL Program does not replace lost, stolen, or broken/damaged benefits. It is recommended that clients be advised that they are financially responsible to replace damaged compression stockings related to tears, rips and/or runs that can occur from misuse, such as not wearing stocking gloves.

Note: A client requiring compression for one leg only is permitted a maximum of two pairs of stockings per year.

Certified Lymphedema Therapist (CLT) or Specialty Assessor (SA) may authorize for over the maximum quantity pending the provision of adequate clinical rationale to support the quantity increase without submitting a QFR.

Note: eligibility renewal for subsequent pairs is based on when the vendor submitted the claim to ABC for the compression garment, not based on the date of the authorization.

Procedure

Authorizers:

1. Advise clients of quantity and frequency limits.
2. Explain policy and process to client, ensuring client understands.
3. Enter QFR authorization on the OHP including the following documents:
 - QFR Request Form.
 - Other supporting documentation.
 - Client declaration.
4. CLTs or SAs can contact the Alberta Blue Cross provider contact center to request products over quantity without completing the QFR authorization.

Clients:

1. Pursue alternate funding sources prior to requesting additional benefits from AADL or if benefits requested fall outside of the QFR process.

Alberta Blue Cross:

1. Receives and log QFR requests.
2. Forwards QFR requests to AADL for adjudication.
3. Updates QFR status on the OHP which can then be viewed on the provider portal.
4. Notification of the decision will be sent to the client and authorizer.

AADL:

1. Receives the QFR and supporting documentation from Alberta Blue Cross.
2. Adjudicates and provides decision to Alberta Blue Cross.

Policy N – 08

AADL Pricing

Policy Statement

The vendor must offer a minimum of two different manufacturers' brands of compression garments that:

- meet the generic description;
- comply with AADL's product standards; and
- are at or below AADL's price.

For detailed information, vendors should refer to their AADL agreement.

Policy N – 09

Vendor and Trained Providers Qualifications Policy

Policy Statement

AADL Approved Compression Garment and Lymphedema Sleeve vendors must meet the following criteria:

- Meet AADL’s general vendor criteria as outlined in the General Policy and Procedures Manual.
- Adhere to benchmark pricing as outlined in the General Policy and Procedures Manual.
- Employ at least one full-time certified fitter.
- Ensure fitters have certification from each manufacturer brand sold by the vendor.
- Ensure certification is updated every three years and that a copy is provided to AADL.
- Ensure the premises have a private wheelchair accessible fitting room with a table for clients to lie down. Staff, who do not hold active certification, are not permitted to fit clients for compression garments.

Product

- Provide a minimum of two different manufacturers’ brands.

Procedure

1. Perform fittings between 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. only when the edema is generally most reduced. Exceptions may apply, for example the client wrapped or as per clinician recommendation.
2. Document the client’s fitting and keep the information on the client’s file.
3. Vendors:
 - Cannot recommend a different type of garment than what has been ordered by the authorizer.
 - Must notify the authorizer if there are any concerns regarding the garment ordered.
 - Must not proceed with the fitting and contact the authorizer if there is evidence of edema or any other concern during the fitting to ensure the product authorized is still appropriate.

- Must provide stockings based on the clients measurements and are not to provide larger sizes. If a client requests a larger size, the vendor is to stop the fitting, not provide any stockings to the client and notify the authorizer.
4. Have clients demonstrate to the vendor that they can don and doff the garments independently or confirm with the authorizer that the client has assistance to don/doff on a daily basis.
- If there are concerns, regarding the client’s ability to don and doff the garments the authorizer is to be contacted.

The vendor will provide one garment or pair of compression garments initially. The vendor must conduct a follow-up three to four weeks after initial fitting to ensure product is suitable for client.