



17 March 2025

Tēnā koe

Official Information Act request

Thank you for your email of 27 February 2025, requesting information about financial assistance from the Ministry of Social Development (the Ministry) for skin or laser treatments, and any related criteria.

I have considered your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act).

There is no specific assistance available from the Ministry towards the cost of laser hair removal, Tesla Chair or Tesla Former. However, the cost of laser hair removal, Tesla Chair or Tesla Former may be included in a Disability Allowance if the cost is directly related to the client's disability and meets all the qualifications. A client's entitlement to a Disability Allowance is assessed on a case-by-case basis.

A Disability Allowance provides assistance to people who have ongoing, additional costs because of a disability.

To be able to receive a Disability Allowance a client must meet the qualifications. These can be found here: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/qualifications.html

A Disability Allowance can be paid to help people with disabilities to meet costs that are:

- regular and ongoing and
- a direct result of a disability which is expected to continue for at least 6 months and
- additional to, or over and above those costs that a person without a disability would have and
- not fully funded by another agency (for example, Health New Zealand – Te Whatu Ora, ACC or other accident insurers, Ministry of Education, or regional councils) and
- not a residential care service

There are a number of things to consider when determining whether a cost is considered additional, such as the need for, and therapeutic value of the treatment, and if there are less costly treatment or services that might meet the client's need.

Regarding the Tesla Chair and Tesla Former for treating incontinence for example, pelvic floor physiotherapy can generally be provided through a client's local hospital or where it is not available, we may be able to include the cost of private physiotherapy in a Disability Allowance. If this treatment has been trialled and it

is not meeting the needs of the client, and it is supported by the client's medical practitioner, that the Tesla Chair or Tesla Former is necessary and of therapeutic value to the client, it may be considered under a Disability Allowance. Again, each client's situation is assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Please see the following link to see more information about what is considered when assessing additional costs: www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/additional-costs-01.html

There are specific types of costs that can be included in a Disability Allowance. The cost of laser hair removal may be considered under alternative treatment where the treatment is provided by or supervised by a registered health practitioner and the treatment is additional and directly related to the client's disability. A client must be eligible for a Disability Allowance and provide proof of alternative treatment to support their application.

- www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/types-of-costs-01.html
- www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/alternative-treatment-01.html

Where a client is eligible for a Disability Allowance, the amount paid is estimated in relation to the actual costs that have been or will be incurred on a regular basis, up to the maximum of \$78.60 a week, as at 1 April 2024.

- www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/extra-help/disability-allowance/payment.html
- www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/deskfile/extra-help-information/disability-allowance-tables/disability-allowance-rates-01/disability-allowance-current.html

More information about a Disability Allowance or how to make an application can be found on the Work and Income website here www.workandincome.govt.nz/ or you can call Work and Income on 0800 559 009.

I will be publishing this decision letter, with your personal details deleted, on the Ministry's website in due course.

If you wish to discuss this response with us, please feel free to contact OIA_Requests@msd.govt.nz.

If you are not satisfied with my decision on your request, you have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or 0800 802 602.

Ngā mihi nui

pp. 

Anna Graham
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Ministerial and Executive Services