



# Children's Spectacle Subsidy

For Children Fifteen Years  
and Younger

**Enable New Zealand administers this service under  
contract with Disability Support Services, Service  
Commissioning, Ministry of Health**

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# MINISTRY OF HEALTH CHILDREN'S SPECTACLE SUBSIDY FOR CHILDREN 15 YEARS AND YOUNGER

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Children's Spectacle Subsidy (Spectacle Subsidy) is a Ministry of Health contribution towards the costs of certain vision services for eligible children 15 years of age and under.

The Spectacle Subsidy is intended to assist low income families with eligible children and young people (children) who need their vision corrected with prescription spectacles (glasses).

### 1.1 Costs covered by the Subsidy

For eligible children costs can be covered under five areas of the Spectacle Subsidy, up to the value of \$287.50 per year. All costs are GST inclusive:

- Eye examinations
- Frames: a maximum of \$138.00 is available per year
- Lenses
- Eye patches
- Repairs.

A further \$51.11 is available for children that require an adult size frame. A clear rationale is required as to why a child's size frame is not clinically appropriate.

### 1.2 High Level Subsidy

A High Level Subsidy is available for children with more complex vision needs provided the child has:

- amblyopia or strabismus that requires more extensive intervention, or
- a rapidly progressing myopia that requires six monthly eye examinations and may result in six monthly changes to the spectacle prescription.

### 1.3 Claims

Claims for the Spectacle Subsidy must be submitted using the Enable Online with RTL (Round Trip Logistics) service by a registered Ophthalmologist or Optometrist (referred to as Approved Assessors under the Ministry of Health's EMS Assessor Accreditation Framework<sup>1</sup>).

To register for this Enable Online service, information is available under Spectacle Subsidy on the Enable New Zealand website. <http://www.disabilityfunding.co.nz/spectacle-subsidy>

## 2. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

### 2.1 Standard Children's Spectacle Subsidy

To be eligible to access the Spectacle Subsidy, the child or young person must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- be 15 years old or younger at the date of assessment; and
- present as a referral by a parent, family or whānau or guardian, to the Approved Assessor (under the Ministry of Health's EMS Assessor Accreditation Framework) to establish if prescription spectacles are required. The referral can be from any of the following:

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.disabilityfunding.co.nz/ems-assessors/approved-categories-of-accreditation/vision-spectacles>

- A registered medical practitioner, a class room teacher or specialist teacher such as a Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour
- A District Health Board (DHB) Ophthalmologist, Optometrist, allied health professional (Occupational Therapist/Physiotherapist), or Vision Hearing Technician.

In addition:

- has undergone a vision assessment from an Ophthalmologist or Optometrist who is registered under the Ministry of Health Accreditation Framework; and
- has an identified sensory (vision) problem that is likely to continue for longer than 6 months and that has resulted in a loss of independence and participation with activities at home, school, or in the community; and
- holds a valid Community Services Card either in the name of the child or his/her parent/guardian or hold a current High Use Health card in the name of the child; and
- the child or young person has an identified vision need requiring prescription spectacles, frames, lenses or eye patches to achieve a higher quality of vision; or
- the child or young person requires replacement spectacles as his/her current spectacles no longer meet their needs; and
- meets the Spectacle Subsidy Clinical Guidelines (see section 4).

## 2.2 Higher Level Subsidy

To be eligible to access the Higher Level Subsidy, the child or young person must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- All the criteria listed in section 2.1 above, and
- has more complex vision needs, either:
  - amblyopia or strabismus who require more extensive intervention, OR
  - a rapidly progressing myopia that requires six monthly eye examinations and may result in six monthly changes to the spectacle prescription.
  - Any requests outside these guidelines see section 4.6.

## 3. EXCLUSIONS<sup>2</sup>

### 3.1 People who are excluded

The following persons are not eligible for the Spectacle Subsidy:

- Children and young people who have experienced an eye injury or vision impairment as a result of an accident that meets ACC's cover and entitlement criteria under the Accident Compensation Act 2001.
- Children and young people who do not hold, or whose family and whānau does not hold, a valid Community Services Card or a High Use Health Card.
- Young people who are aged 16 years or over at the date of the vision assessment.

### 3.2 Services and items that are not available

The following services and items are not available as a part of the Spectacle Subsidy:

- The provision and management of short term loan optical equipment (i.e. less than six months) or the provision of any optical equipment for trial.

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<sup>2</sup> If the Children's Spectacle Subsidy is not available to a child, the family can apply for assistance such as a recoverable loan for spectacles through the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), the family need to use a MSD preferred provider and discuss it with Work and Income first.  
<https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/health-and-disability/glasses-suppliers/index.html>

- Any type of contact lens (note that funding may be covered under the Ministry of Health Contact Lens Benefit for eligible people).
- Costs associated with eye examinations undertaken within a DHB (as these are funded within the DHB). However, if the eye examination results in a spectacle prescription, eligible children can access the Spectacle Subsidy.
- Any other items or services not listed in the eligibility criteria above (section 2) or service items in section 6 below, such as a spectacle case, lens cleaner or vision therapy services.
- Refurbishment or repairs of the lenses, frames or eye patches (aside from the repairs that are within the available annual subsidy amount).
- Lost spectacles (see section 6.1).
- Sunglasses of any kind. Tinted lenses may be funded for symptoms of severe photophobia associated with ocular pathology. Clinical rationale must be provided and prior approval is required (see section 4.6).

## 4. CLINICAL GUIDELINES

### 4.1 Clinical criteria

A child who meets the eligibility criteria in section 2, and has **at least one** of the clinical criteria below (sections 4.2-4.5) or has an uncorrected visual acuity of 6/12 or worse in the better eye, is eligible to receive the Children's Spectacle Subsidy.

It is acknowledged that any prescription for a child aged five years and under will normally require a cycloplegic refraction.

### 4.2 Hypermetropia

Age of child	Criterion	Notes / Clinical evidence
< 1 year	6D or more	Lower Powers may be used for the treatment of strabismus.
1 - 3 years	+3.5D or more. Partial script unless accommodative esotropia when the full script should be prescribed	Cycloplegic refraction is essential.
4 - 6 years	2.5D or more	Reasonable not to treat without symptoms unless 4.0D or more.
7 – 15 years	1.0D or more.	1.0-1.5D only prescribed if symptoms. A trial is recommended.

### 4.3 Myopia

Age of child	Criterion	Notes / Clinical evidence
< 1 year	5D or more	
1 – 3 years	3D or more	
4 – 6 years	1.5D or more	
7 – 15 years	0.75D or more	

### 4.4 Astigmatism

Age of child	Criterion	Notes / Clinical evidence
<1 year	3D or more	
1 – 3 years	2D or more	
4 – 6 years	1.5 D or more	
7 – 15 years	0.75D or more if symptoms	

## 4.5 Anisometropia

Age of child	Criterion	Notes / Clinical evidence
< 1 year	2.5D or more for hyperopia or astigmatism 4D or more for myopia	Monitor for amblyopia
1 – 3 years	1.5D or more if hyperopia 2D or more if astigmatism 2D for myopia	Monitor for amblyopia
4 – 15 years	1D or more of hyperopia 1.5D or more of astigmatism 2D of myopia	Monitor for amblyopia under 8 years.

The clinical guidelines are intended to show the typical range of prescribing spectacles for the majority of children. Children whose vision is assessed as being outside these Guidelines and may benefit from spectacles may still be eligible, see section 4.6.

## 4.6 Claims Outside of the Clinical Guidelines

Some children may need spectacles outside of the Guidelines range, however these cases would be an exception under genuine and exceptional (G&E) circumstances, and prior approval would be required before an online application is submitted. An example, of genuine and exceptional circumstance would be additional funding for tinted or photochromic lenses for a condition such as albinism, resulting in symptoms of severe photophobia associated with ocular pathology. Clinical rationale must be provided (see also section 3.2).

To access the Spectacle Subsidy outside the ranges submit your request, supporting documentation and clinical rationale for the reason for prescribing outside of the Guidelines (section 4.1-4.5) using the G&E form (found at [www.disabilityfunding.co.nz/spectacle-subsidy](http://www.disabilityfunding.co.nz/spectacle-subsidy)) for approval prior to making an online application.

Email this form to [SpecsEnquiries@enable.co.nz](mailto:SpecsEnquiries@enable.co.nz)

## 5. REFERRAL PROCESS

A self-referral by a parent, family, whānau or guardian or from the following professionals is received by an Optometrist or Ophthalmologist, to establish if prescription spectacles are required:

- registered medical practitioner, a classroom teacher or specialist teacher such as a Resource Teacher Learning and Behaviour
- District Health Board Ophthalmologist, Optometrist or allied health professional (Occupational Therapist/Physiotherapist) or Vision Hearing Technician.

The child then attends an appointment with an Optometrist or Ophthalmologist, who performs the examination and also determines if the child meets the eligibility criteria for the Spectacle Subsidy.

The outcome from the examination may be that:

- Spectacles are not required; however, a claim may be submitted for the cost of the examination for eligible children and young people.
- Spectacles are required and a prescription is created.

Where a prescription is created a child/family may choose to remain with the examiner if they provide spectacles, or they may choose to go to an alternative spectacle provider such as a dispensing optician.

## **6. SPECTACLE SUBSIDY PAYMENT**

### **6.1 Standard Children's Spectacle Subsidy**

The Ministry of Health will make the following payments to the supplier provided eligibility criteria are met, up to the value of \$287.50 per year. All costs are GST inclusive:

- Eye examinations
- Frames: a maximum of \$138.00 is available per year
- Lenses
- Eye patches
- Repairs.

The Enable Online service requires information about the child's prescription for both eyes and details of the full cost of the vision services provided including any client, family, whānau or guardian contribution along with the total subsidy amount claimed.

The Spectacle Subsidy is paid directly to the supplier of the examination and/or spectacles. The Enable Online service then deducts the subsidy amount from the child's account.

Retrospective or reimbursing payments to the client/family are not available through the Spectacle Subsidy.

The child's Spectacle Subsidy year starts from the date of the first assessment by a registered Ophthalmologist or Optometrist. This becomes the child's anniversary date. Each year on this anniversary date the child has another \$287.50 to access but only if the eligibility criteria are met.

If the child's spectacles are lost or broken within the year, another claim may be made if the \$287.50 per annum has not been claimed in total. The total amount of the subsidy per annum, including replacement is \$287.50.

Dispensing Opticians are not able to register on the Ministry of Health Accreditation database for the Spectacle Subsidy but they are able to register to use the Enable Online service when making a claim for the provision of spectacles provided an Approved Assessor (Ophthalmologist or Optometrist) has undertaken the examination that results in a prescription.

### **6.2 Adult Size Frames**

A further \$51.11 is available for children that require an adult size frame. A clear rationale is required why a child's size frame is not clinically appropriate.

### **6.3 Higher Level Subsidy**

The Ministry will pay the examination fee and actual supply cost of the prescribed spectacles (or other appropriate vision services such as eye patches) provided all eligibility criteria set out in this manual is met. Please ensure the most cost-effective solution is being prescribed, and provide clinical reasoning for any higher cost frames (i.e. any child or adult frame over \$250).

## 7 HOW TO MAKE A CLAIM FOR PAYMENT

### 7.1 Register

To access the Spectacle Subsidy or the Higher Level Subsidy on behalf of the child the Optometrist and/or Ophthalmologist need to be registered with Enable New Zealand:

- as an approved assessor under the Ministry of Health EMS Assessor Accreditation Framework<sup>3</sup> and
- to use the Enable Online service to process the claim for payment.

### 7.2 Eligibility Check

As part of the Enable Online service, all claims will undergo screening for eligibility criteria according to the Ministry of Health Children's Spectacle Subsidy manual.

### 7.3 How To Make a Claim

- Complete all the fields using the Enable Online service. This service includes both the standard Children's Spectacle Subsidy and the Higher Level Subsidy – you will need to select which is applicable.<sup>4</sup>
- Print out the completed on line claim form so the child's parent or guardian, family or whānau can sign the form while attending the appointment.
- An original signed copy of the claim form and referral must be kept on file with the spectacle supplier for audit purposes. For the Higher Level Spectacle Subsidy the optometrist or ophthalmologist must keep supporting rationale on file for audit purposes.
- A completed approved claim will result in an Enable New Zealand purchase order number being emailed to the Optometrist or Ophthalmologist Approved Assessor, using the email address that was loaded at time of registration to use the Enable Online service.
- Complete the Enable Online service by the last working day of the month for prompt payment.
- Online processing is immediate with payments to suppliers for claims to be made on or about the 22nd of the month for Enable Online applications received and approved for payment in the previous month.

### 7.4 Rejected Claims

Spectacle Subsidy claims not meeting the Ministry of Health eligibility criteria will not be able to proceed in the Enable Online system.

## 8. AUDIT PROCESS

The Optometrist or Ophthalmologist is considered an expert in their field. An audit will only be initiated when there appears to be incorrect recommendations, ongoing instances of not following correct procedures or if there are other grounds to consider an audit. Enable New Zealand will contact the Optometrist or Ophthalmologist to discuss the situation before proceeding with an audit. If the issue can be resolved between Enable New Zealand and the Optometrist or Ophthalmologist, no further action will be taken.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.disabilityfunding.co.nz/ems-assessors/approved-categories-of-accreditation/vision-spectacles>

<sup>4</sup> [For consideration of any claims for genuine and exceptional circumstances outside of the spectacle subsidy clinical guidelines see section 4.6. Approval is required before you submit a claim request.](#)

Where a full audit needs to be conducted, Enable New Zealand, on behalf of the Ministry of Health, reserves the right to seek the advice of relevant professional person/s to conduct an independent audit. Any findings and recommendations will be referred to the Ministry of Health for action.

## **9. CONTACT DETAILS**

Enable New Zealand  
PO Box 4547  
Palmerston North  
Call Free 0800 362253  
Email: [enable@enable.co.nz](mailto:enable@enable.co.nz)

## **10. REGULAR REVIEW**

These guidelines are effective from 1 November 2018 and will be reviewed at least every five years to check they are working well, and are appropriate for the New Zealand setting and remain up-to-date with current clinical practice.

## **11. REFERENCE**

Leat, SJ. (2011) To prescribe or not to prescribe? Guidelines for spectacle prescribing for infants and children. *Clinical Experimental Optometry* 94 (6):514-527.

Donahue, SP. (2007) Prescribing spectacles in children: a paediatric ophthalmologist's approach. *Optometry and Vision Science* 84(2):110-114.

## 12. PROCESS FLOW CHART

