

Walkers,  
wheelchairs,  
grab bars, raised  
toilet seats, etc.:

Tools to help you move  
around safely



These materials were put together by a group of researchers and practitioners in New Brunswick who work with older adults. Our aim was to help older adults in New Brunswick navigate the complex landscape of information, services, forms, and resources. We hope that you will find this helpful. This guide was last updated in December 2023.

[www.stu.ca/aging-in-nb/](http://www.stu.ca/aging-in-nb/)

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Do you have a hard time getting around (e.g., moving around the house, getting up and down stairs)?

Do you have a physical disability?

If so, the **first step** is to talk to someone who can help!

## **The following can help you find equipment that is right for you:**

### **Private Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists**

- You can hire an Occupational Therapist or a Physiotherapist. An Occupational Therapist can work with you to make your daily activities easier to do. A Physiotherapist can help you get back on your feet after an injury or move around more easily. If you have private insurance (E.g., Blue Cross, Sun Life, etc.), check to see if these services are included in your plan. You may need a note from your doctor or nurse practitioner that says these services are needed. This note is needed so you can claim these costs on your health insurance and/or taxes. Doctors and nurse practitioners will sometimes charge a fee to write that note.

### **Extra-Mural Program (to see an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist)**

- You do not need a referral from your doctor or nurse practitioner to go through the Extra-Mural Program. You can contact the Extra-Mural Program directly to be referred for Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy.
- For more information:
  - Phone number: **1-888-862-2111**
  - Website: <https://extramuralnb.ca/en/> (Or Google ExtraMural NB)

*This guide is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical, legal, or financial advice. Programs and information can change over time, so please check details with the services and agencies mentioned in these documents. [Last update, December 2023]*

## Outpatient Services (to see an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist)

- Depending on where you live, you may be able to see an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist via your local hospital or community health centre free of charge. Call your nearest hospital or health care centre and ask for the Occupational Therapy/Physiotherapy department to find out what services are available to you. Depending on the facility, you may not need a referral from your doctor or another health care professional.

## Ability New Brunswick

- They can connect you with specialists (e.g., Occupational Therapists or Physiotherapists), help you find financial help, and point you in the direction of many other helpful services and information.
- For more information:
  - Phone number: **1-866-462-9555**
  - Website: <https://www.abilitynb.ca/> (Or Google “Ability NB”)

## Family Doctor/Nurse Practitioner

- You do not need to be referred by your family doctor or nurse practitioner to see an Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist. However, they can help you find one of these specialists. They can also help you find other services and figure out what may be causing the issue with mobility.
- If you have private insurance (E.g., Blue Cross, Sun Life, etc.), you may need a note from your doctor or nurse practitioner. This note is needed so you can claim these costs on your health insurance and/or taxes. Doctors or nurse practitioners will sometimes charge a fee to write that note.

### Are you concerned about your home safety?



**Tip:** To request a Seniors Health, Wellbeing and Home Safety Review from the Department of Social Development, register online at <https://socialsupportsnb.ca/en/program/home-first>. You can also call **2-1-1**.

**Tip:** A Home Safety Checklist can help you identify hazards in your home and make suggestions. For more information see [https://nbtrauma.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/TraumaNB\\_HomeSafetyChecklist\\_EN.pdf](https://nbtrauma.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/TraumaNB_HomeSafetyChecklist_EN.pdf) or Google “staying independent checklist NB”. You can also ask for a home safety assessment from an Occupational Therapist.



**Tips on buying or renting equipment (e.g., walkers, canes, wheelchairs, lift chairs, etc.):** There are many kinds of equipment that can help you. These include walkers, canes, wheelchairs, raised toilet seats, seats for the shower, chairs that raise you up to help you get out of the chair, and grab bars (e.g., by your bed, in the shower, next to the toilet), etc.



**Financial Tip:** Before you buy, ask your Occupational Therapist if you can use any equipment that you may already have (e.g., a walker that used to belong to a friend or spouse). Equipment needs to be right for your height, weight, and needs. It is important that you have the right equipment for you.

**Financial Tip:** Ask your doctor or nurse practitioner to write a prescription for equipment (like walkers, wheelchairs, or lift chairs) before you buy them, so they can be claimed on your taxes or private health insurance, if your insurance plan covers this).

**Financial Tip:** Keep your receipts to use for when you file your taxes. You can find out more information about how to claim these kinds of purchases on your taxes here: <https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/forms-publications/publications/rc4065/medical-expenses.html> or Google “Medical Expenses CRA.”

**Financial Tip:** If you do not have the money to pay for equipment (e.g., wheelchairs, hearing aids, glasses), assistance finding financial help may be available through one of following:

- Health Services Branch of the Department of Social Development (**1-833-733-7835**)
- The Extra-Mural Program (**1-888-862-2111**)
- Ability New Brunswick (**1-866-462-9555**)

**Financial Tip:** If you need financial help to buy equipment, it's good to start early. This process means first getting a note from your doctor or nurse practitioner. Then, you need an assessment and a recommendation from an occupational therapist or a physiotherapist. After that, you get a trial period for using the equipment. Then you apply for the equipment. After that, you can order and then will receive the equipment. All of this can take anywhere from 2 months to a year or more.

## Drug Stores

Did you know that equipment like walkers, canes, and wheelchairs can be rented or bought from some drug stores?



**Financial Tip:** Most drug stores have “seniors’ day” discounts. Try to buy equipment on these days or ask if they will give you the senior’s day discount anyway.

**Financial Tip:** Some stores will let you put the price of a rental toward the purchase. So, if you rent a walker and decide you want to keep it, they will sometimes discount what you already paid from the price of the purchase.

Here is a list of some of the programs and services that are available in New Brunswick. Occupational Therapists and Physiotherapists (via **Extra-Mural, Outpatient Services**, or hired **Privately**) and **Ability NB** (listed above) can help you figure out what you qualify for, and which of these are right for you.

Working with these professionals can help a lot so calling them is a good first step!

## **Veteran's Disability Benefits**

**Do you have a physical disability and are a veteran, a serving, or former member of the Canada Armed Forces or the RCMP, or their spouse or dependent?**

Disability benefits are available to eligible veterans, serving and former members of the Canada Armed Forces and the RCMP, as well as to their spouses and dependents.

**For more information:**

Phone: **1-866-522-2122** (toll-free, English)

**1-866-522-2022** (toll-free, French)

Website: <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/health-support/physical-health-and-wellness/compensation-illness-injury/disability-benefits> (Or Google "Veterans disability benefits Canada").

## Easter Seals Equipment Rental Programs

**Are you having a hard time finding or paying for equipment rentals? You may qualify for help through Easter Seals.**

These programs provide long-term loans for people who ‘fall through the cracks’ and can’t get the equipment and help they need.

Contact number: **1-888-280-8155**

Personal Services Program: <https://www.easterseals.nb.ca/index.php/en/inner-page/personal-services-program-ppsp> (Or Google “Easter seals personal services program”)

Equipment Recycle Program: <https://www.easterseals.nb.ca/index.php/en/inner-page/social-development-equipment-recycle-program> (Or Google “Easter seals equipment recycle program”)

## First Nations and Inuit Health Branch

**Are you from a First Nations or Inuit community and are having a hard time with mobility (e.g., getting around the house or climbing stairs)? The First Nations and Inuit Health Branch can help you get started.**

Contact number: **1-800-567-9604**

Website: <https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1569861171996/1569861324236> (Or Google “CRA indigenous health”)

# Canadian Red Cross: Health Equipment Loan Program (HELP)

**Are you having a hard time moving around (e.g., trouble walking, getting up and down stairs) and need a short-term loan of equipment (e.g., wheelchair, walker, cane, bath seat, bed handle)?**

The Canadian Red Cross offers free short-term equipment loans to people in need. You will need to have a written referral from a doctor, nurse practitioner, physiotherapist, or occupational therapist to borrow equipment through this program.

**To apply, contact your nearest local Canadian Red Cross office:**

- Bathurst: 506-548-2824
- Campbellton: 506-759-852
- Edmundston: 506-736-0050
- Fredericton: 506-458-8445
- Grand Falls: 506-473-5897
- Moncton: 506-863-2650
- Richibucto: 506-523-4479
- Sackville: 506-364-8813
- Saint John: 506-674-6200
- Sussex: 506-433-5886
- Tracadie: 506-395-2010
- Woodstock: 506-328-8881

**For more information on this program, visit:**

<https://socialsupportsnb.ca/en/program/red-cross-equipment-loan-programs>

(Or Google “Social Supports NB Red Cross equipment loan”).



# Health Services Program (Government of New Brunswick)

## Do you have low income and need help finding medical supplies and equipment (e.g., wheelchairs, compression socks, hearing aids, etc.)?

This program helps people with low income to get the medical supplies and equipment they need (e.g., wheelchair, hearing aids, compression garments, ostomy supplies, vision care).

Contact number: **1-833-733-7835**

Website: [https://socialsupportsnb.ca/en/complex\\_page/health-services](https://socialsupportsnb.ca/en/complex_page/health-services)

## Home-owner repair program for Seniors

### Do you have low income and need to make changes to your home so that you can get around more easily and safely (e.g., putting in ramps, grab bars, brighter lights, or railings in hallways)?

This program gives financial help to seniors with low income to make changes to their house or apartment to make it easier for them to move around.

#### To qualify:

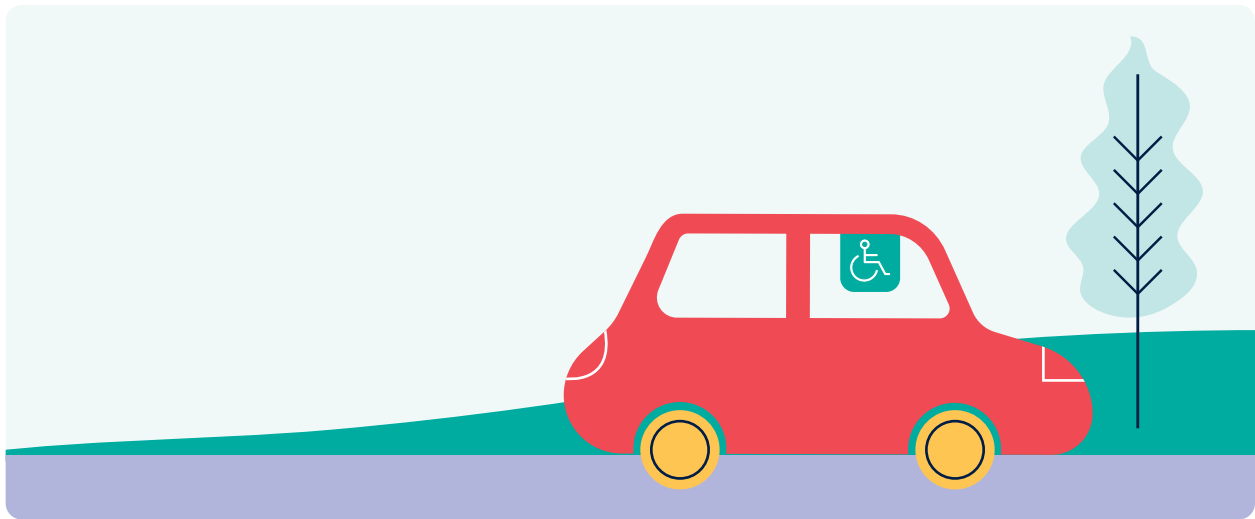
- You are 65 years of age or older
- You qualify as 'low income' by the Department of Social Development (**1-833-733-7835**)
- You have a hard time with daily living activities (moving around easily at home, getting dressed, getting up and down stairs, etc.)
- You own or rent a house or apartment

Contact number: **1-833-733-7835**

Website: <https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/sd-ds/pdf/Housing/HomeownerRepairProgramSeniors.pdf> (Or Google "Homeowner repair program for seniors GNB")



**Tip:** If you rent, you will need a written note from your landlord to approve the changes. Get this note before you start the application process.



## Parking permits and placards for persons with disabilities

### Do you have a physical disability and need a parking permit or placard (sign that hangs in your car window) for your vehicle?

You can get a temporary or permanent parking placard to hang in the window of your vehicle to be able to park in marked parking spots that are closer to buildings.

Contact number: **1-888-762-8600**

To apply: <https://www.pxw1.snb.ca/snb7001/b/1000/CSS-FOL-78-9300B.pdf>

(Or Google "GNB application for disabled parking permit")

Some of the application form needs to be filled out by your doctor, nurse practitioner, occupational therapist, or physiotherapist. Once the form is complete, send it by mail or bring it in to any Service New Brunswick centre to get your placard.

## **Tax rebate for specially equipped vehicles for persons with disabilities**

**Do you have a physical disability or have a hard time moving around and have bought a vehicle in New Brunswick?**

**If so, the provincial government will refund the 10 % provincial portion of the HST if:**

- Your vehicle has the equipment installed to help a wheelchair or scooter to get in or out of your vehicle (e.g., hydraulic lifts);
- Your vehicle has special driving controls (e.g., hand controls, steering devices, etc.) that help with the operation of your vehicle (does not include spinner knobs);
- Your vehicle is not operated by any person who earns any money by using your vehicle;
- You are not able to get any other GST/ HST credit or rebates related to the purchase of your vehicle.

Contact number: **1-800-669-7070**

To apply: <https://www.pxw1.snb.ca/snb7001/b/1000/CSS-FOL-HST-R-02B.pdf>

(Or Google “Tax rebate for specially equipped vehicles GNB application for refund”)

# Vehicle Retrofit Program (Through Ability NB)

## Does your vehicle need assistive technology (e.g., ramps) to make getting in and out or driving easier?

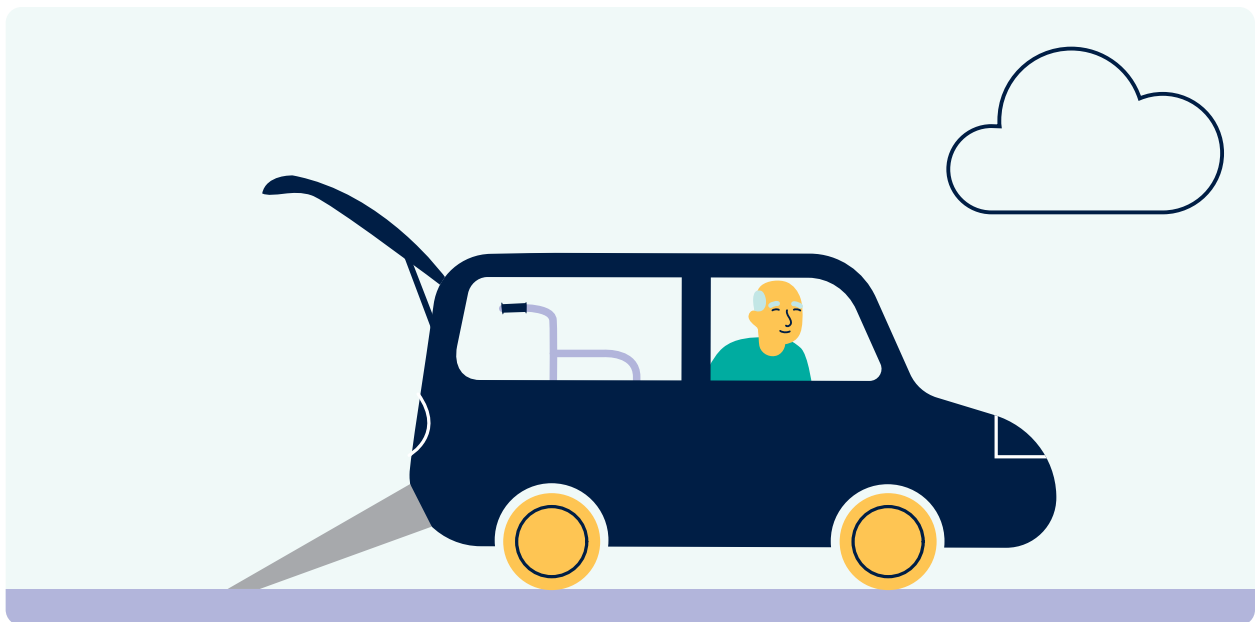
This program provides financial help up to 80% of the cost of installing accessibility features to your vehicle, to a maximum of \$8000. You can renew this financial help every eight years.

### Examples of changes to your vehicle that may be eligible:

- Wheelchair lifts and ramps
- Equipment for getting into a vehicle (such as a transfer seat)
- Roof, floor, and door alterations (only if needed to help with accessibility)
- Wheelchair and scooter lifts
- Driving equipment (requires evaluation, training, and retesting)
- Other features not listed above may also be considered

Contact number: **1-866-462-9555**

For more information, see <https://socialsupportsnb.ca/en/program/vehicle-retrofit-program> or Google “Application for vehicle retrofit program Ability NB”.



# Vision Loss Rehabilitation Program

## Is your daily life being affected by vision loss?

There are services offered through Vision Loss Rehabilitation New Brunswick to support you. These services can be accessed in two ways:

1. Referral from a health professional: A family doctor, a nurse practitioner, an ophthalmologist, optometrist, Extra-Mural worker, or other health practitioners can send a referral in for you
2. Self-referral: If you have vision loss, you can contact one of the province's four Vision Loss Rehabilitation offices directly:
  - Bathurst: **506-546-9922**
  - Fredericton: **506-458-0060**
  - Moncton: **506-857-4240**
  - Saint John: **506-634-7277**



**For more information on the Vision Loss Rehabilitation Program, you can also visit:**  
<https://socialsupportsnb.ca/en/program/vision-loss-rehabilitation> (Or Google "Social supports NB vision loss program").

# Hearing Loss

## Are you having trouble with your hearing?

### If so, you can get your hearing tested by:

- Making an appointment with your family doctor or nurse practitioner. They can refer you to be tested by an audiologist, who specializes in hearing loss.
- You can also choose to find an audiologist yourself. Many audiologists have private offices which can be found by looking under 'audiology' in your local phone book's yellow pages.

Hearing aids are not covered by Medicare. Some private insurance companies (e.g., Blue Cross, Sun Life Financial, etc.) may offer some coverage as part of your plan. If you have private insurance, check with your provider.

Some financial supports are available for people with low income. If you are a current client of the Department of Social Development (i.e., you have a Social Development health card that they provided you), you may be able to get some financial help for hearing aids. More information on this can be found by calling **1-833-733-7835** or online at [https://socialsupportsnb.ca/en/complex\\_page/health-services](https://socialsupportsnb.ca/en/complex_page/health-services).

