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With changing circumstances the way you may be using your plan budgets is also changing.

We have also answered questions about [your plan and planning](#).

[Transcript for 'I need to use my plan funding differently'](#)

## Vaccination support

### Can I ask my support worker to help me arrange my vaccination appointments?

Yes. If you normally have a disability support worker to help you with daily activities, you can ask them to include booking your appointments and accompanying you to appointments in their weekly tasks.

Many providers are eligible for the [participant vaccine enablement payment](#). This payment helps your provider to cover any additional costs associated with supporting you to get vaccinated including receiving your booster dose.

This payment does not come out of your plan. It is claimed directly from the NDIA.

Your provider can also claim the cost of other supports required for you to get to your appointments, such as taxi fares and a support worker.

You must be consulted and agree to any payments for these services.

### When should I get the COVID-19 vaccine booster dose?

You are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine booster dose if:

- you are 18 years and older, and
- had your second dose of your primary course of COVID-19 vaccination at least 3 months ago.

Visit your state or territory government website for more information.

A booster dose will help you stay safe against COVID-19.

The [Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation \(ATAGI\)](#) has recommended a third dose of a COVID-19 vaccine for people who are severely immunocompromised.

If you have received three primary doses, it is also recommended to have a booster dose four months after your primary course of the vaccine.

You can talk with your GP and other health professionals to discuss the COVID-19 vaccine booster.

More information about the benefits of a booster dose are on the [Department of Health website](#).

### **Why is the NDIA offering providers a participant vaccine enablement payment? What is it for?**

To ensure more NDIS participants are supported to receive COVID-19 vaccines and the booster dose, we've extended the [participant vaccination enablement payment](#) to more providers.

We introduced this payment to remove any funding barriers preventing NDIS participants to become fully vaccinated.

This payment does not come out of your plan, it is claimed directly from the NDIA.

It helps your provider to cover any additional costs associated with supporting you to get vaccinated, such as:

- contacting you to discuss vaccination options
- administration to arrange vaccination appointments, including your informed consent
- arranging COVID safe transport to and from your appointments
- staff rosters.

Your provider can also claim the cost of other supports required for you to get to your appointments, such as taxi fares and a support worker. You must be consulted and agree to these services.

## Is the NDIA forcing participants to get vaccinated?

No. The COVID-19 vaccination and booster dose are voluntary for participants.

Providers can only make vaccination appointments with your consent.

When a person has a substitute decision maker, then the provider will need to arrange for consent as required in the jurisdiction the person lives in.

This can vary across states and territories. This would be similar to what a provider would do with a flu vaccination or other health care arrangements.

The vaccination team needs to know that you (or your authorised substitute decision maker) has consented to having the vaccination. Some vaccination clinics have asked for a copy of consent for their records.

More information including a [consent form](#) is available through the [Australian Department of Health](#) website.

You can talk with your GP and other health professionals to discuss the risks and benefits of the COVID-19 vaccination and booster dose.

You can ask whether you should receive the vaccine. Final consent is your decision and you can have support to make a decision.

You can call Disability Gateway on 1800 643 787 to find out more, talk to your GP or visit the Department of Health website:

- [vaccine information for people with a disability](#)
- learn [about COVID-19 vaccines](#)
- vaccination information in [Easy Read](#) , [Auslan](#) and [other languages](#) .

## Low cost assistive technology (AT) for support continuity

### Can I buy additional assistive technology, electronics or equipment with my NDIS funding?

We recommend participants and their families and carers work with their existing providers to discuss the best way to receive services and supports when required to maintain physical distancing (such as during a pandemic outbreak or because of specific disability related personal health risks).

This may include using available technology, developing exercise programs participants can do at home or borrowing equipment and keeping in touch over the phone.

To help participants continue to receive their NDIS funded supports and services, the NDIA is continuing the flexible approach to purchasing low cost AT items to help.

This allows participants to access low cost AT items, such as smart devices and fitness equipment, in consultation with their existing support providers.

Find out more on the [Low cost AT for support continuity](#) page.

### [Transcript for 'Increased flexibility for low cost AT'](#)

Low cost Assistive Technology during COVID-19:

- [How you can spend your budget to get what you need \(PDF 8MB\)](#)
- [How you can spend your budget to get what you need \(DOCX 54KB\)](#)

## How can I purchase low cost AT?

Low cost AT items can be purchased using the consumables support category in the Core budget of your NDIS plan.

Under this policy you cannot purchase items more than \$1500 and must comply with the exclusions, but we do not think participants will need to spend more than \$750 to get the items they needed to maintain existing services.

As an example, therabands and exercise balls are likely to be more appropriate than exercise machines for use at home to continue a fitness program under the policy.

In the case of computer tablets or iPads for telehealth/care or participating in online video classes, advice from AT specialists is that most NDIS participants will not need more than a standard tablet, which costs no more than \$600.

Your Core support budget is flexible – so if you don't have enough money in your consumables support category, you can use funding allocated to other support categories.

Plan managed or self-managed participants can purchase these items from any provider, and NDIA-managed participants can purchase these from NDIS providers registered to deliver the relevant AT support.

Many NDIS therapy and support coordination providers registered to deliver AT supports could assist Agency managed participants with the supply of the AT item for you, and make the claim through the provider portal.

We know some participants may only have funding in their Capacity Building budget, like children assessing the early childhood approach. In this case you can use a specific support code in the Capacity Building budget called: Low Cost AT - Support Capacity Building delivery - 15\_222400911\_0124\_1\_3.

You can use this to claim for these supports.

### **What do I need to do to make a purchase or rent AT using this policy?**

You should work with your existing provider to discuss the best way to receive services and supports when you may have to maintain physical distancing – this could include using equipment and devices you already have, following exercise programs at home or borrowing equipment and keeping in touch over the phone.

You should also check to see that you have sufficient funds in your plan to cover the equipment you are considering. The NDIA will not increase plan values to accommodate the purchase of a device under this policy.

If a specific item is needed to maintain supports, your provider will need to provide written confirmation that the device is necessary and appropriate to continue supports and services.

If your plan is NDIA-managed you can purchase these items from NDIS providers registered to deliver the relevant AT support after discussion with your current support provider(s) about the most suitable item. Your provider will need to provide you with written confirmation - a letter or email with the necessary details of the required support for continuity.

Participants who are self-managing and have funds in their plan to cover the purchase, can buy low cost AT items, complete a payment claim and upload the written advice they have received from their provider to their participant record.

Participants who are using a plan manager should check with their plan manager if they have available plan funds. If they have funding available, the participant can work with their providers to identify and buy the necessary AT, providing they have and retain the necessary evidence letter / email from the provider of face-to-face supports that would be impacted (or medical practitioner where the requirement is for an air purifier).

Participants and/or their registered plan managers must keep a record of the written advice in case the Agency requests it at a later date.

You can use your Core budget flexibly to cover the cost of the item.

Participants who only have funding in their Capacity Building budget can use the line item Low Cost AT - Support Capacity Building delivery -15\_222400911\_0124\_1\_3 to purchase low cost AT.

### **What if I don't have a Core support budget, or don't have enough funds in that budget?**

If you only have funding in your Capacity Building budget you can use the special line item to use this new flexible approach:

- Low Cost AT - Support Capacity Building delivery
- 15\_222400911\_0124\_1\_3

For NDIA-managed participants, only NDIS providers registered to provide Communications and Information Equipment can provide these supports.

If you are self-managing your Capacity Building budget, select Improved Daily Living as the support category when claiming.

You should only use the special line item for low cost AT items purchased or rented in line with this policy.

You should use your plan wisely for all your support needs. The NDIA will not increase plan values to accommodate the purchase of a device under this policy.

### **How can I purchase low cost AT if I don't have a Core budget or any funding for daily activity (e.g. therapy) in my Capacity Building budget?**

It is really important that you have talked to your provider about the best way to continue your supports and if low cost AT is part of that solution.

They will need to give you written advice about the low cost AT you need.

If you have an NDIS plan without a Core budget or any funding in Capacity Building - Improved Daily Living, you will need to contact the NDIA to discuss moving funding in your plan.

If you are in this situation and need to purchase low cost AT to continue to receive your current NDIS supports and services, please contact the NDIA.

You will need to request a change to your plan to move funding in your plan.

This will not result in additional funding being added to your plan, but will ensure you have the flexibility you need to make this purchase.

Please have the written advice from your provider before you call.

### What if I don't have enough money in my plan?

The intent of this policy is to help participants continue therapy and supports when physical distancing requirements associated with COVID-19 are in force.

This policy is not intended to support participants in starting new supports that weren't in place before a physical distancing restriction was put into place.

You should use existing funds to pay for low cost AT.

Additional funds will not be added to your plan just for these purchases. We expect these costs to be accommodated within an existing budget.

If your plan does not have sufficient funds for ongoing supports, you should follow the usual process for a [plan reassessment](#). The NDIA will not accept changes to plans solely to purchase low-cost AT under this policy.

### How do I pay for my purchase?

If your plan is NDIA-managed you can purchase these items from NDIS providers authorised to supply AT devices.

If you are using a plan manager, they can arrange the payment for low cost AT for you.

If you are self-managing your NDIS plan, there are 2 options to pay for your supports with your NDIS funding:

1. Make a Payment Request and then pay your provider. Once you receive written confirmation that the AT item is required to support your existing NDIS services and an account or invoice from your provider, make a Payment Request. This can be done online using the myplace portal. Money from your NDIS plan budget will be paid into your nominated bank account within 24 to 48 hours. You can then pay your provider.
2. Pay your provider and then make a Payment Request. Once you receive your support, pay your provider using your own money and get a receipt. Make a Payment Request to have the money from your NDIS plan budget paid into your nominated bank account. You will be reimbursed within 24 to 48 hours.

For times when self-managed participants need to make a claim after 90 days, they can't claim using the myplace participant portal. Participants should instead use the [self-management form](#).

You can use your Core budget flexibly to cover the cost of the item.

Participants who only have funding in their Capacity Building budget can use the temporary line item to purchase low cost AT:

- Low Cost AT - Support Capacity Building delivery
- 15\_222400911\_0124\_1\_3

All participants and providers should keep a copy of the written advice about the AT item purchased. Self-managing participants can upload this to their participant record.

### What needs to be included in the written advice?

If a specific item is required to maintain supports, written advice will be required to support this purchase. If the need is for an air purifier to enable in-home services for a participant with significant disability related respiratory risk, the advice needs to be provided by the participant's medical practitioner.

You must make sure you receive and retain the written advice before you buy or rent the proposed AT item. You need to keep this evidence in case the Agency request it at a later date.

The written advice, as part of an email, should include:



- the participant's name and NDIS number;
- confirmation that delivery of current supports in the participant's plan have been, or would be significantly hindered due to physical distancing restrictions (or other consequences of COVID-19 and that alternative solutions to maintain delivery/outcome have been considered, but do not fully address the limitations;
- how the device is necessary to maintain supports and services while maintaining physical distancing requirements;
- the specific technologies and associated accessories required, and that these represent the lowest specification capable of delivering the benefit; and
- that the participant is able to use the device/s to access the support.

Before the participant (or nominee) or provider makes a claim for the selected item, the participant should be sure that:

- the participant does not already have the item, another suitable item or access to the item, and
- a similar or suitable item has not been funded by another service system (such as education), and
- the item or circumstances are not specifically excluded under this policy.

### **What is the definition of low cost? And how much money can I spend?**

Participants are able to spend up to \$1,500 on low cost AT items from their existing budgets under this policy.

We expect that participants should not need to spend more than \$750 on electronic devices to maintain existing services.

In the case of computer tablets for telehealth and care or participating in online video classes, advice from AT specialists is that most NDIS participants will not need more than a standard tablet, which costs no more than \$600.

For information on what is excluded from this policy visit the [Low cost AT for support continuity](#) page.

### **Can I buy a laptop or desktop computer under this policy?**

Generally no, unless you and your provider agree they are the most suitable solution to continue your supports and for your particular disability needs, and they are within the low cost AT price limit.

You can only buy items that help you continue to access your existing supports and services. You cannot use your NDIS funding to purchase a smart device for entertainment, education or gaming.

## Can I buy an air purifier for personal use under this policy?

You can temporarily use your existing core - consumables budget to purchase a portable air purifier (or other ventilation device such as a portable extraction fan or pedestal fan) to ensure safe access to NDIS funded supports in your home, where you:

- have a disability that compromises your breathing (lung function) and/or puts you at increased risk of acquiring, or becoming very unwell if you acquire, COVID-19
- are at increased risk of acquiring COVID-19 due to the nature and volume of close personal supports you receive each day from support workers in your home
- are unable to (due to disability) effectively minimise your risk of acquiring COVID-19 by following public health advice (e.g. to wear a mask), or otherwise ensure adequate ventilation within your home or residence by other means (e.g. opening windows).

You do not need to provide any evidence or otherwise seek approval for any low cost AT device purchased below \$1,500 in value, but you must keep the [evidence](#).

The expected price range of a portable air purifier varies between \$300-\$700 per unit.

If you need additional funding or believe you need to purchase a device valued at more than \$1,500, you will need to seek a plan reassessment and provide relevant [evidence](#).

You can refer to the following for more information:

- [Low cost AT for support continuity](#)
- [Participant factsheet - Understanding assistive technology evidence, advice, assessments and quotes](#)
- [Mid cost AT](#)

For more information on low cost AT, read [Our Guideline - Assistive Technology](#).

Portable air purifiers are unlikely on their own to prevent transmission of COVID-19. You should consider current health advice on how to effectively minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission

within their home. Improving ventilation and air quality (whether through natural or mechanical means) is just one of a hierarchy of controls that should be considered.

You should also seek professional advice before selecting and installing a portable air purifier or other ventilation improvement equipment within their home, if you choose this as a control.

### **Do I need an assessment before I buy low cost AT?**

We recommend participants and their families and carers work with their existing providers to discuss the best way to receive services and supports while maintaining physical distancing. This may include using available technology, developing exercise programs you can do at home or borrowing equipment and keeping in touch over the phone.

Your provider of supports must confirm in writing the proposed device is necessary to continue supports and services while maintaining physical distancing requirements.

No further assessments are required to purchase of low cost AT.

## **Plan flexibility**

### **Can I use my plan funding differently (with video)?**

The funding in your Core support budget is flexible, so you can use the overall funding in this budget to purchase the disability-related supports you need.

You can decide how to use this funding for day-to-day disability-related assistance, to pay support workers to help with everyday tasks like grocery shopping, or daily living tasks.

Daily living expenses like groceries, rent or bills are still a personal expense, and you cannot use your NDIS funding to pay for day-to-day items.

[Transcript for 'Using the Funding in Your Plan Differently - Auslan'](#)

### **Can I use my Core support funds flexibly?**

From 9 May 2020, participants who are either plan-managed or NDIA-managed and have a Core support budget will be able to use all four funding categories without the need for a plan reassessment.

This means that, if your NDIS plan is plan-managed or NDIA-managed, you have more flexibility in how you use your Core support budget. Self-managed participants already had this flexibility.

This gives you flexibility in accessing the disability related supports you need to pursue your goals, for example, purchasing a smart device to participate in telehealth sessions.

It is important to remember that NDIS funding is for disability-related supports, not for everyday or ordinary living expenses.

While this change will give you greater flexibility as a plan or NDIA-managed participant using their Core support, your total plan amount will not change.

Participants who already receive periodic transport payments will continue to have these paid into their bank account. This funding is not flexible.

### **I was accessing support coordination through my Core budget. How do I access it now?**

After 31 March 2021, you won't be able to use your Core budget to access support coordination.

28 February to 31 March 2021 is the transition period to assist participants still utilising this temporary measure to better manage their supports. If you were not utilising this support during the COVID-19 pandemic you should not start using this support during the transition period.

The temporary line items for support coordination in Core – Assistance with Daily Life will be deactivated on 1 April 2021.

If you have support coordination funds in your Capacity Building budget, you can continue to access this support.

If you do not have support coordination in your plan and your circumstances have changed, you can ask for a plan reassessment to have any reasonable and necessary supports included in your next plan.

**Can I use my transport funding flexibly?**

Participants who already receive periodic transport payments will continue to have these paid into their bank account, to cover transport costs connected to activities included in their plan. These funds cannot be used towards other Core supports.

Participants who do not receive periodic transport payments will still be able to use their core funding flexibly across all four support categories for transport funding.

If you have periodic transport funding already in your plan, you will be able to use your funding across three Core support categories, not including transport.

**My plan is part NDIA-managed, part plan-managed. Are all of my Core support categories flexible?**

Yes, you can use your funding flexibility across all Core support categories.

You are, however, restricted to the amount allocated to the plan management type.

**Can I change my plan from self-managed to plan-managed or agency-managed to have more flexibility in my overall funding?**

Yes but this will require a reassessment of your plan. Special teams of planners in the NDIA are available to help make urgent changes to plans. Phone 1800 800 110 if you need urgent assistance.

If you get approval to change to self-managed, you have record keeping responsibilities. You are required to adhere to the guidance on management of the plan as outlined on the [Self-management](#) page.

If you would like to change the way part or all of your plan is managed, you can contact your early childhood partner, LAC or NDIA planner or contact us on 1800 800 110 to discuss the best way to manage your funds for your needs and circumstances.

**Using your budget**

Visit the [Your health and safety FAQ](#) page to learn more about personal protective equipment (PPE).

### What do I do if my funding is at risk of running out?

If you are concerned about your funding running out, please call the NDIS Contact Centre on 1800 800 110 select option 5.

All calls received relating to COVID-19 are prioritised.

### Can I claim rapid antigen tests (RAT) through my NDIS plan?

If you are an NDIS participant, you can [claim RATs using your core funding](#), to continue to access your reasonable and necessary disability-related supports.

### How do I claim a RAT from my core budget?

Depending on how your NDIS plan is managed, how you claim the purchase of RATs from your core budget will be different.

Find out more about the process and your responsibilities when claiming for supports when you are [NDIA-managed](#), [Plan managed](#) or [Self-managed](#).

Most participants have sufficient funds in their Core - Consumable budget to pay for this.

Your core supports budget is flexible and can be used temporarily to cover the cost of RATs.

If you are concerned about the impact of purchasing RATs to your funded supports, you can call the NDIS on 1800 800 110 Monday to Friday, from 8.00am to 8.00pm.

We have a dedicated option to allow you to identify if you have a COVID-19 related query.

### **My day program has been suspended due to the NSW Public Health Order. My provider wants to claim cancellation fees from my plan budget, can they do this?**

If you have agreed to a program of support with your provider, your provider can claim cancellation fees for the cancellation notice period (up to 2 weeks) in your program of support agreement.

If you do not have a program of support agreement, your provider can claim the agreed cancellation fee in your service agreement. Short notice cancellation fees must follow the conditions set out in the [NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits](#).

### **I usually pay for group support rates, but the NSW Department of Health is advising against group activities. Can I get more money for 1:1 activities?**

We encourage you to purchase the essential supports that best meet your needs using your existing budget.

If you are concerned that your support needs have significantly changed and your plan budget is exhausted because of the NSW health guidelines, please contact your support coordinator or the NDIA on 1800 800 110.

### **My gym has closed, can I use my NDIS funding to pay for my trainer to provide in-home sessions, or buy gym equipment?**

If you currently have funding in your plan for a gym program, you may be able to use your funding flexibly to maintain your fitness goals.

You may be able to use your funds for short-term rental of gym equipment or online fitness training programs if:

- you cannot access the program, or
- it cannot be delivered remotely.

You can also work with your therapist or trainer to develop an exercise program using everyday items, while gyms are closed.

It is important to take into account social distancing advice. This means exploring options around safe home-based exercise programs that can be performed independently, with online support or the personal supports already in your home.

### **My ADE employer has closed or can't let me come to work because of social distancing. Can I use my NDIS budget to pay my wage?**

Your NDIS budget can't be used to pay your wage.

You should talk to your employer about how you can continue to work together either online or from your home.

If your employer can't provide alternative working arrangements for a short time, you can talk to your Local Area Coordinator or Support Coordinator about what other supports may be available to you.

The Fair Work Commission has made changes to some awards, including the Supported Employment Services Award 2010, which provide unpaid pandemic leave and greater flexibility for annual leave for employees.

### **I am not at work at the moment and don't know how I can use my employment supports during coronavirus (COVID-19)?**

Your Finding and Keeping a Job budget can be used flexibly so that you can keep focussing on work.

Talk to your employer about the types of supports they can offer to keep you connected to your work and keep building your skills.

These kind of supports might include:

- in home education
- online training or developing skills that you can use in your current job or as part of your career development
- employment assistance that maintains your connection with work and colleagues and helps you learn new skills like video conferencing.

You need to agree to any changes to your supports, and the NDIA encourages you and your employer to come up with creative ways to work together during this time.

If your employer isn't offering alternative supports while you're at home, you are able to use your NDIS plan to discuss options with other service providers who provide supports to keep focussing on work and developing your skills.

### **Can I redirect my funds to family or friends to provide support that would normally be provided by support workers? Can I use it to**



**assist others who do not have enough to cover basic essentials?**

Not at this time. Your funding is designed to support your disability-related needs.

Any NDIS participant who is concerned that their own support needs are not being met should call their support coordinator or the NDIA on 1800 800 110.

**My providers will be delivering services using videoconferencing. Can I use my NDIS funding to pay for my internet connection?**

Daily living expenses like groceries, rent, bills (including internet charges) are a personal expense. You cannot use your NDIS funding to pay for day-to-day items.

The Government has announced a range of support measures for eligible people affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

More information is available at [Services Australia](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/) .

**When a provider is delivering support to a participant via telehealth, how are the remote and very remote area price limits applied—is it based on the provider’s location when they deliver the support or the participant’s location?**

When providing a service using telehealth, with agreement from the participant, the price limit should, in general, be based on the location of the person delivering the support at the time of service delivery.

However, participants in remote or very remote locations can agree that price limits for remote and very remote locations can apply, if those activities are part of delivering a specific disability support item to that participant, the provider explains why they represent the best use of the participant’s funds, and the provider has the agreement of the participant in advance.

**My provider can’t deliver services – how do I make sure I am not charged?**

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If your support workers can't work with you, your provider should be in touch to organise a replacement worker or carer to help you.

It's important that you discuss what your essential needs are with your providers, to ensure they are being met.

All NDIS providers are expected to follow NDIS rules, codes and policies.

If you have any concerns, you should first speak to the provider directly, or to your support coordinator if you have one.

If you need additional advice, contact us by phone 1800 800 110. If you think you are still being charged incorrectly, you can report the problem to the fraud reporting hotline on 1800 650 717 or email [fraudreporting@ndis.gov.au](mailto:fraudreporting@ndis.gov.au). If you have any concerns about the quality or services or supports, you can also contact the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission.

### **Will the funding in my next plan be reduced because of the COVID-19 pandemic?**

Your funding may change in your next NDIS plan, but this is determined by your disability-related support needs, not by assessing unspent funds from your previous plan.

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