

Medical Heating and Cooling Concession Scheme

Illustrative examples for medical eligibility

Mrs FM is a 43 year old housewife who developed acute optic neuritis symptoms 4 years ago and underwent evaluation by a neurologist. Her MRI showed up likely demyelination plaques. This woman has recovered completely from her episode of acute optic neuritis and has had no other significant problems associated with her diagnosis of MS. She complains of intolerance of hot weather and reports that she gets increased frequency of headaches and feels more lethargic. However she is able to maintain her domestic and parenting role despite her discomfort during hot weather.

This person has a confirmed diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis. However she is currently in remission and therefore she does not meet any of the categories of qualifying criteria. Her headaches and feelings of lethargy are insufficient to be described as a demonstrable aggravation of clinical condition. This person is considered to be ineligible for the subsidy.

Mr KL is a 73 year old diabetic man who has advanced peripheral vascular disease as well as peripheral neuropathy affecting his lower limbs. He tolerates the cold weather badly and reports that his legs become swollen and painful during the winter months. On examination he has absent limb pulses below the knees, red and swollen legs and has signs of a predominantly sensory peripheral neuropathy.

This person has clinical features of lower limb ischaemia and peripheral neuropathy associated with his diabetes. He describes symptomatic worsening during cold weather and has supportive clinical signs of vascular insufficiency. His primary qualifying condition is noted as diabetes with advanced peripheral vascular disease and peripheral neuropathy affecting his lower limbs. He also meets the secondary criteria of hypersensitivity to extremes of environmental temperature leading to an unacceptable increase in pain or discomfort or an increased risk of complications. This person is considered to be eligible for the subsidy.

Mr TH is a 30 year old farmer who suffered full thickness burns to his chest, both arms and the right leg three years ago in an industrial accident. He has had extensive skin grafting performed. He reports a poor tolerance of hot weather, describing increased discomfort of his skin grafted areas.

This person has had significant burns which equals approximately 36% of his body surface area. He would meet the qualifying criteria of loss of skin integrity due to his burns being greater than 20% of his surface area and would be considered to meet the additional criteria of aggravation of clinical condition at extremes of environmental temperatures due to his extensively skin-grafted areas being unable to sweat. This person is considered to be eligible for the subsidy.

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Clinical Guidelines

The South Australian Government has implemented the Medical Heating and Cooling Concession (MHCC) Scheme to provide financial assistance to fixed or low-income South Australians with a serious medical condition to assist them with the increased energy costs incurred by frequent operation of an air-conditioning or heating unit in order to closely regulate body temperature to prevent the severe exacerbation of their condition due to the impact of hot or cold weather. This concession is paid in addition to the energy concession for eligible applicants.

It is important to differentiate between South Australians with the many medical conditions that can be aggravated by exposure to hot or cold weather and those who have a verified medical need for close control of their environmental temperature. Only the latter are eligible for the MHCC.

The key difference is the person must medically need the air conditioning or heating to prevent a severe exacerbation of their condition rather than to make them more comfortable. Temporary conditions such as migraines are not eligible.

The MHCC is paid quarterly via a direct payment and the annual concession amount is indexed each year.

Verification of information

The Department of Human Services may ring the certifying medical practitioner to verify or clarify the medical condition details on the form. Incomplete forms will be returned to the applicant and where the omission relates to the medical certification the applicant will need the medical practitioner to complete the missing details.

The MHCC Scheme will be audited annually. In addition, random audits of concession recipients will be conducted on a regular basis. Recipients receiving benefits on the basis of incorrect information will be required to repay any benefits.

Medical practitioner details will be verified using the Medicare Provider Directory System.

For more information:

Visit: www.sa.gov.au/concessions

Email: concessions@sa.gov.au

Call the Medical Heating and Cooling line on 1300 735 350