

Guide to Reasonable and Necessary (R & N) decisions

Food and meal preparation

Case Example

Casey is 20 years old and lives with his parents and two teenage brothers in the family home. He has multiple sclerosis and has limited mobility and hand function because of his disability. This makes it unsafe for him to prepare his own meals without assistance and he can't go to the shops on his own. Casey would like the NDIS to pay for pre prepared meals that are delivered to his home every day.

Would we fund this?

No, we wouldn't fund food as it is not likely to meet the NDIS funding criteria. This is because food is:

- not generally a disability-related support
- considered a day-to-day living cost that is not caused by your disability.

We also think it is reasonable for Casey's family to help him to prepare some of his meals.

Why wouldn't we fund this?

The cost of the meal delivery service covers the cost of the food as well as the cost of preparing the meals and delivering them. Food is an everyday living cost that everyone has to pay for and isn't related to Casey's disability support needs¹, or to his disability.² The NDIS is not responsible for paying for food.³

While we can't fund the cost of food, Casey wants to become more independent in cooking meals and taking his turn to prepare meals to eat with his family. We may fund a support worker to help him to shop for food and to help prepare the ingredients for one or two meals each week. Casey's family can help him with meal preparation and take their turn to cook for the family on the other days.

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What meal preparation supports might we fund?

- Your disability might mean you can't shop, cook or clean up after preparing your meal. We may fund the cost of a support worker to help you shop for your food, prepare your meals, and to clean up afterwards.
- Your disability might mean you have trouble planning your meals or following multi-step instructions. If you can re-heat your meals, we may fund a support worker to help you shop for food and pre-prepare some meals for the week. We may also pay for delivery of pre-prepared ingredients.

What else do we think about?

To work out whether the cost of paying someone to help with meal preparation is reasonable and necessary, we'll look at the information you give us against the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

While the NDIS can provide reasonable and necessary funding for the cost of meal preparation and the cost of home delivery, we won't fund supports that aren't directly related to your disability.⁴ For example, if you want healthy meals delivered because you have a poor diet or need a different diet for reasons that aren't to do with your disability, we wouldn't be able to fund this.

We won't fund meal preparation and delivery if you only need these supports because of health issues such as:

- Weight loss
- food allergies
- diabetes
- cardiovascular (heart) disease
- kidney disease
- polycystic ovary syndrome
- irritable bowel syndrome.

These are not usually related to your disability⁵ and are better funded through the health system⁶ or through mainstream supports.⁷ You should discuss this with your doctor.

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How can you use your funding flexibly?

The NDIS may provide reasonable and necessary funding for the cost of meal preparation. Your core supports are flexible and you may decide to use that funding to pay for the preparation and delivery of pre-prepared meals in certain circumstances. It is up to you to manage your funding to cover your expenses for the length of your plan. You are only able to use your core support funding flexibly for meal preparation if this was specified in your plan.

Case Example

Laila lives with cerebral palsy. She has been getting support to prepare her own meals because she finds it difficult to coordinate her upper body movements. Laila has been working to build her independence using her NDIS supports. She can now cook simple meals from scratch and her support worker has been helping her to get meals ready in advance for the next few days, measuring ingredients and chopping vegetables. At her next check in, Laila asks for this support to continue.

To work out whether the funding for Laila's meals is reasonable and necessary, the planner looks at the information provided against the [NDIS funding criteria](#). Some of the things the planner thinks about are whether:

- Laila needs support to prepare meals because of her disability
- the cost of the support includes food, which is a day-to-day cost that everyone pays for whether they have a disability
- the support is value for money taking into account the benefits achieved and the cost of alternatives, like a delivery service
- the support will help Laila to pursue her goals.

The planner decides that:

- the support to help Laila plan, shop for and prepare her meals does not include food. Food is a day-to-day cost that everyone pays for whether they have a disability.
- one of Laila's goals is to become more independent in cooking her meals. She has made good progress towards this goal and she has worked hard to be able to cook simple meals on her own. Working with her support worker to plan her meals for the week, shop for the ingredients, measure out ingredients and get things ready a few days in advance so Laila can prepare the meal herself is strongly aligned to her goal.

Laila's planner decides Laila needs less support than she did in her last plan because she has made good progress in starting to cook simple meals herself. The planner includes funding for

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some extra occupational therapy sessions to help Laila to continue to work towards making her own meals with minimal support.

Using her plan flexibly

Laila reported her new plan is working well for her. She mentioned her support worker became unwell and for a couple of weeks was unable to work with Laila as she was isolating. During this time Laila was able to use her core support funding flexibly to pay for her meals to be prepared and delivered. Laila can heat these up without support from anyone else. Laila didn't pay for the cost of the food from her plan but is able to purchase the cost of the preparation and delivery of the meals. She could do this as she had funding for meal preparation specified in the core budget of her plan. Once her support worker had recovered, Laila was able to continue with pursuing her goal of preparing her meals independently.

For more information, go to:

- [Our Guideline – Reasonable and necessary supports](#)
- [Our Guideline – Nutrition supports including meal preparation](#)

Reference List

- ¹ See rule 5.1(d) and 5.2, *NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013*.
- ² See rule 5.1(b), *NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013*.
- ³ See rule 5.1(b) and (d), *NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013*.
- ⁴ See Rule 5.1(b) and (d) and 5.2, *NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013*.
- ⁵ See Rule 5.1(b), *NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013*.
- ⁶ See Subsection 34(1)(f), NDIS Act and Schedule 1, Rule 7.5, *NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013*.
- ⁷ See subsection 34(1)(f), NDIS Act and Schedule 1, Rule 7.4 and 7.5, *NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013*.

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Responses - Blind Citizens Australia

When calling the Agency to clarify recent changes, was told “don’t know”.

We are working closely with our National Contact Centre (NCC) staff to ensure they have the right information to assist with enquiries effectively.

We’ve created feedback systems to track common questions from participants. This helps us provide staff with the right information to answer those questions and offer the best support.

We are clarifying information and changes through [frequently asked questions that are regularly updated on the NDIS website](#). This ensures both staff and participants have access to the most current information.

This is an ongoing effort to ensure staff stay informed, confident, and ready to help participants as the changes are implemented.

Clarification regarding recent NDIS changes particularly relating to replacement supports (how they will be approved/rejected)

We know that every participant has their own unique needs.

In specific circumstances, participants can ask for an NDIS support to be replaced with certain non-NDIS supports. These are called replacement supports.

A replacement support may include household items, or very specific items that support a participant’s unique accessibility or communication needs. This may include a smart watch, tablet or smart phone. Replacement supports must be from this pre-approved replacement supports list.

To apply for a replacement support, you or your authorised representative will need to complete an application on the NDIS website. Or you can provide the same

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information to us in an email or over the phone. You can also contact us on 1800 800 110 and we can help you.

When you apply, you will need to tell us:

- information about the replacement support, like what it is and how much it costs
- which NDIS support or supports in your plan you want to replace
- how you think it will work the same or better than the support you want to replace.

After you apply, we will look at whether the information you've given us meets the criteria for approving a replacement support. We don't need any additional assessments or reports to make our decision.

The replacement support must:

- replace an NDIS support or supports in your plan
- help you the same or more than the NDIS support or supports it's replacing
- cost the same or less than the NDIS support or supports it's replacing
- be safe for you.

Participants must wait until the replacement support is approved before purchasing the replacement support. You cannot make an application after purchasing a non-NDIS support.

If the application for a replacement support for an item is not approved, we'll call you to let you know that we have not approved your application and why. We'll also send you a letter by post or email to confirm this in writing.

If we don't approve your application, you can't apply for that same replacement support again for 12 months.

If the application for a replacement support for an item is approved, we'll call you to let you know that we have approved your application and tell you how you can buy the replacement support. We'll also send you a letter by post or email confirming this in writing.

For more information visit - [What does NDIS fund? | NDIS](#)

Clear directions and guidelines regarding funding for tandem bikes to streamline decision making processes.

The list of supports that are NDIS supports includes:

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- Item 7: the provision of assistive products used in sports or other recreational activities.
- Item 7(a) also includes: Personal recreation equipment modification and sporting equipment modification.

Any bicycle or tricycle that is modified or adapted specifically to meet the needs of a person with a disability could be an assistive product for recreation.

If the tandem bike is necessary for addressing mobility needs and increasing independence for someone who is vision impaired, it could be eligible for funding under this category.

Clarification on the inconsistency between 'fingernail and toenail cutting and cleaning' being included and 'manicures and pedicures' being excluded from the support lists. Can individuals visit nail salons for trimming and shaping nails (cutting or filing) without the use of polish or decorations?

The distinction between fingernail and toenail cutting and cleaning being included in the NDIS support list and manicures and pedicures being excluded focuses on the purpose of the services.

Fingernail and toenail cutting and cleaning to maintain personal hygiene are included in the list of NDIS supports under Item 14(d).

Manicures, pedicures and other beauty services like nail painting and decoration are included in the list of not NDIS Supports under item 5(e).

NDIS funding is only to support activities that directly relate to a participant's disability and enhance their quality of life. Nail care to maintain personal hygiene falls under this category, while beauty treatments do not.

If a participant's disability means that they need help with daily living tasks to maintain personal hygiene, such as fingernail and toenail cutting and cleaning, we may include funding in their plan to pay for this support or for a podiatrist where the participant's disability means they need specialist foot care.

A participant may choose to engage a support worker to help with this, or to use their funding flexibly and access assistance with fingernail and toenail cutting and cleaning to maintain personal hygiene at a nail salon. Participants will not receive any additional funding if they choose to purchase this support from a salon.

NDIS funding is only to support activities that directly relate to a participant's disability. Fingernail and toenail cutting and cleaning to maintain personal hygiene falls under this category, while manicures, pedicures, false nail application or removal of any kind, nail painting and removal, nail decorations, nail piercings, hand or foot massage or treatments do not.

Clarification on the NDIA CEO's statement regarding hair washing and drying not passing the 'public test' and whether it is an allowable support

Hair washing and drying to maintain personal hygiene are considered daily personal activities and are included in the list of NDIS supports under Item 14(d). Hair treatments, cutting and drying for the purpose of beauty treatments are included in the list of not NDIS Supports under item 5(d).

NDIS funding is only to provide support that is needed as a direct result of a participant's disability. As with nail care, hair washing and drying to maintain a person's hygiene is included but other beauty services are not.

If a participant's disability means that they need help with daily living tasks to maintain personal hygiene, such as hair washing and drying, we may include funding in their plan to pay for this support. A participant may choose to engage a support worker to help with this, or to use their funding flexibly and access assistance with hair washing and drying to maintain personal hygiene at a hair salon. Participants will not receive any additional funding if they choose to purchase this support from a salon.

NDIS funding is only to support activities that directly relate to a participant's disability. Hair washing and drying to maintain personal hygiene falls under this category, while hair treatments, cutting, dying, styling, extensions, threading, weaving, hair replacements and transplants and wigs do not.

Confirmation that it is permissible for adult participants to have a support worker accompany them on visits to family

The NDIS can fund social and recreational supports if they are directly related to your disability. This can include support for things like visiting friends and family.

All NDIS funded supports must meet the NDIS funding criteria and are based on the participant's specific needs and circumstances. The NDIS funds supports that are reasonable and necessary for a participant's disability, so it's important for participants to discuss this with their NDIS planner to ensure it aligns with their plan.

Clarification on the new rules regarding meal delivery platforms, specifically how to separate costs for claims and whether Uber Eats can provide the necessary invoicing given the limited availability of service providers in rural areas

Food is an everyday living cost for everybody, whether they have a disability or not, so the NDIS won't fund the cost of food or ingredients. However, NDIS may fund someone to help you plan, shop for, and prepare meals if your disability means you need support to do this.

Occasionally, you may have a short-term change in your situation, which means you need to get this support differently. You may have funding in your core budget for a support worker to help you prepare meals or shop for groceries. If you do, you may decide to use this funding to have meals prepared and delivered for a limited time instead.

We don't need a quote for you to use funding from your core budget like this. But you can't use your funding to cover the cost of food, only to have the meals prepared and delivered. Meal preparation and delivery is included in the list of supports that are NDIS supports under item 23(a) Household tasks.

The list of supports that are not NDIS supports includes food and groceries. This includes fast food services, takeaway food and food delivery platforms. This does not include meal delivery platforms that provide access to pre-prepared meals and separately identify the meal preparation and delivery components.

Meal preparation and delivery providers will need to provide the necessary itemised invoicing in order for participants to claim. You can ask meal preparation and delivery providers to separate the cost of food from the total cost when you discuss the total cost for meal preparation and delivery.

More information is available in [Our Guideline Nutrition supports including meal preparation](#). We will be updating this guideline with more information on the evidence required to support claims for meal preparation and delivery and the difference to food delivery platforms that are not NDIS supports.

Clarification on the ambiguity of home maintenance and repair support, advocating for the inclusion of labour costs for people who are blind or vision impaired. For example,

swimming pool maintenance would mean a safety concern for people who are blind or vision impaired handling chemicals.

Standard home maintenance, repairs, and pool maintenance are generally not covered by the NDIS as they are considered day-to-day living costs.

However, the NDIS may fund supports that provide assistance with essential household tasks that a participant is not able to do themselves because of their disability. This includes essential house or yard maintenance which is included in the list of NDIS Supports under item 23(b).

If a participant's disability means that they need help with house or yard maintenance, we may include funding to pay for this support.

Participants are encouraged to discuss their specific home maintenance needs during their planning meetings to ensure clarity on what can be covered. This is especially important for tasks that may pose safety risks due to a participant's disability.

Clarification on whether vet insurance for assistance dogs remains claimable under the NDIS, as it is not specifically mentioned in the guideline.

NDIS funding can be used to buy an assistance animal and pay for most of its associated costs when approved by the NDIA. However, funding cannot be used to pay for pet insurance for an assistance animal. More information about assistance animals is available in [Our Guideline – Assistance animals](#).

Rationale for why pet insurance is not covered

The NDIS does not fund pet insurance for assistance animals. Instead, we will fund maintenance costs of approximately \$2725 annually which includes vet services and vet fees. In the situation that an assistance animal is no longer able to work at full capacity, we will fund a replacement assistance animal if it is reasonable and necessary.

Clarification and rationale as to whether other items for assistance dogs (beds, shoes, food, toys) are included as NDIS supports

The NDIS funds necessary items for assistance animals that contribute to their health and ability to perform their tasks.

When an assistance animal is provided it should be supplied with a bed, protective shoes and other essential items (bowl, collar, harness etc).

Food can be purchased using the maintenance funding provided in the participant's plan. Toys are not NDIS supports and cannot be purchased. Participants can discuss their specific needs with their NDIS planner to ensure clarity if there are other items they think their assistance animal needs to perform their work.

Clarification on the policy for claiming daily living consumables that were previously allowed but are now subject to stricter scrutiny (clearer guidelines on what consumables can be claimed).

Consumables must be reasonable and necessary for the participant's disability. This means they should directly relate to the participant's needs and goals outlined in their NDIS plan, and address support needs arising from the participant's functional impairments for which they meet the disability or early intervention requirements.

The NDIS has clarified that consumables must:

- directly relate to the participant's disability
- be beneficial to the participant's daily living
- align with the goals set in their NDIS plan.

Items like continence aids, adapted or modified personal hygiene products, and other assistive products for daily living can typically be bought using the participant's consumables budget. However, items that are not directly related to a participant's disability, including standard household items and everyday living costs are not funded.

For claiming consumables through the NDIS, participants need to ensure that their plan includes funding for consumables and keep receipts or invoices as proof of purchase. The items claimed must relate to their disability support needs, and the claim details must match the evidence provided.

Clarification on the new requirements for assistive technology claims, specifically the need for items to be explicitly listed in participants' plans

The changes to the legislation do not require all assistive technology to be explicitly stated in a participant's plan.

All assistive technology must meet the reasonable and necessary criteria, meaning it should directly relate to the participant's disability and help them achieve their goals.

Participants must spend in accordance with their plan. For assistive technology (AT) this means spending must align with the types of AT listed (if any) in their plan and the AT must be an NDIS Support.

AT items that are not an NDIS support, cannot be funded through the NDIS.

Clarification on whether a daily support budget can be used for taxis since people who are blind or vision impaired can't drive and the disability directly influences daily activities and inclusion

The NDIS provides transport funding for participants who cannot use public transport due to their disability. This includes people who are blind or vision impaired, as their condition can affect their ability to drive or use public transport safely.

Participants can use their flexible core supports for transport to help with community access and inclusion. If a participant's plan includes transport funding, they can use it for taxi services to attend appointments, social activities, or other essential outings.