The Dental and Pharmaceutical Benefits Agency in Sweden
We promote health and make the best possible use of society’s economic resources by evaluating and taking decisions on the pharmaceutical products and dental care procedures that shall be subsidized.

The Dental and Pharmaceutical Benefits Agency (TLV) is a central government agency whose remit is to determine whether a pharmaceutical product or dental care procedure shall be subsidized by the state. In other words, we strive to create the greatest possible improvements in health using the tax revenues that are allocated for medicines and dental care. This responsibility has been assigned to a central government agency to ensure that benefits are equally distributed through Sweden.
Based on good principles

When we take a decision on whether a pharmaceutical product or dental care procedure shall be subsidized or not, we consider cost-effectiveness, i.e. whether or not the cost of the treatment is reasonable in relation to the good it does. Our decisions are also based upon the concept of providing more assistance to those people who have the greatest needs. The equality of all people is the third principle that we base our decisions upon.

The TLV cooperates with patient organisations in a “User Council”. In more comprehensive decisions, involved patient organisations may also submit comments.
Decisions regarding what will be subsidized are taken by two different boards; one for dental care and one for pharmaceutical products, both of which consist of a chairman and a number of members. Each of the board members has a great amount of knowledge and experience in his or her individual field, and is appointed by the Government for a period of two years.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Board has ten members who take decisions on prices and subsidies for pharmaceutical products and those medical devices that are included in the pharmaceutical benefits scheme and part of the high-cost threshold. During 2007, almost 20 billion Skr in subsidies were distributed for pharmaceuticals.

The Dental Care Benefits Board has six members and takes decisions on the dental care procedures that shall be subsidized, how much the compensation in the high-cost threshold shall be as well as the reference prices for different dental care procedures. As a result of the new reform for dental care that went into effect on July 1, 2008, dental care benefits in Sweden will be 6 billion Skr annually, which represents a doubling of the amount previously made available.
Creating more health from the funds allocated for pharmaceutical products

An important principle underlying our decisions is the idea that pharmaceutical products subsidized with public funds have to be cost-effective. This is why costs have to be seen in relation to the benefits they provide in the form of better health, quality of life or a longer life for the patient.

The use of pharmaceuticals may also reduce costs for medical care in other sectors of society. A patient may not need to undergo surgery, or may be able to work instead of being on sick leave and an elderly person may better manage to get through the day without the assistance of elderly care or relatives.

If a new pharmaceutical product has very positive effects on a person’s health, then it may cost more than treatment that does not provide equally good results. The decisions that we take lead to taxes allocated for pharmaceutical subsidies being used efficiently, which in its turn makes it possible to subsidize new and expensive pharmaceuticals.
Good dental care at a reasonable cost

The goal of the new reform that went into effect on July 1, 2008 is to provide good dental care at a reasonable cost. The TLV determines which dental care procedures are eligible for subsidies. The idea is to make it less expensive to visit the dentist – especially for those who are in the greatest need.

At the end of 2008, the TLV will begin taking decisions on subsidies for dental care based on principles similar to those applied to pharmaceutical subsidies. The quality of the dental care procedures and how long they will be of use to the patient shall be weighed against their costs. Preventive dental care and dental care that frees the patient from pain or illness as well as making it possible to eat, chew and speak without difficulties shall be eligible for subsidies. Dental care that improves appearance when necessary shall also be subsidised, but not dental care for cosmetic reasons alone.

The National Board of Health and Welfare is developing guidelines for good and cost-effective dental care. Together with the information gathered from other agencies and organisations such as the Swedish Council on Technology Assessment in Health Care (SBU), guidelines will be developed that underlie the assessments and decisions made on what dental care shall be included in the national subsidy system. The TLV will actively participate in forming and developing health-economic assessments regarding cost-effectiveness.
FROM THE LFN TO THE TLV

The TLV was previously known as the Pharmaceutical Benefits Board (LFN). The LFN was established in 2002 and was responsible for taking decisions on what prescription-only pharmaceutical products and medical devices would be subsidized. In July 2008, a new dental care reform went into effect; a new law whose aim is to make it less expensive to go to the dentist, especially for those who are in the greatest need of dental care. As the new Dental Care Benefits Board was established, on Sept 1, 2008 the name of the LFN was changed to the TLV, the Dental and Pharmaceutical Benefits Agency to better reflect the remit.
If you would like to know more about pharmaceuticals, have questions about price setting or know more about how companies apply for subsidies please feel free to contact us.

For dental care you are welcome to contact us regarding the principles upon which the subsidies for dental care are based. However, if you have questions on dental care subsidies and the costs of particular dental care procedures, you should contact the Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan). If you are a patient and are wondering about prices and subsidies, you should turn to your dentist.