



The Hon Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health and Aged Care

MEDIA RELEASE

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\$2.1 million to support Australians with diabetes

The Australian Government is investing \$2.1 million over four years, making it easier for Australians with diabetes to monitor their condition.

From November 1, point-of-care glycosylated haemoglobin (HbA1c) tests will be listed on Medicare, funding 19,000 tests for Australians with previously diagnosed diabetes.

Around one in twenty Australian adults have diabetes. The condition accounts for 11 per cent of all hospitalisations, which can result in a range of health complications, including heart disease, kidney disease, blindness and lower limb amputation.

Monitoring patients with diabetes is vitally important and early detection and effective therapy can delay the onset and progression of diabetes late complications, resulting in better outcomes for patients.

HbA1c is a blood test which shows how much glucose has been in the blood over a period of time. This is an important part of treating diabetes, as patients with a high HbA1c level are at greater risk of developing diabetes-related complications.

Currently, HbA1c testing is performed in labs, which requires a referral, and a visit to a collection centre to have blood drawn. The blood is then sent to a pathology lab and results are provided to the referring doctor. The patient then has another appointment to discuss the results.

The point-of-care tests will be done in the doctor's surgery, by an appropriately trained GP or specialist guided by relevant quality and safety standards, providing immediate results.

By listing this as a Medicare item, our aim is to significantly reduce turnaround times, increase patient convenience and improved access particularly for patients based in regional, rural and remote areas, and people with impaired mobility.

Lab testing will continue to play a critical role in the diagnosis and management diabetes.

The National Pathology Accreditation Advisory Council (NPAAC) is working with the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) on an accreditation standard for the use of point-of-care testing in laboratories and non-laboratory settings to support the listing of this item.

This listing has been recommended by the Medical Services Advisory Committee.

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