



## COVID-19 Temporary MBS Telehealth Services

### GPs and Other Medical Practitioners

Last updated: 25 June 2021

- Commencing 13 March 2020 and extending until 31 December 2021, temporary MBS telehealth items have been made available to help reduce the risk of community transmission of COVID-19 and provide protection for patients and health care providers.
- The temporary MBS telehealth items are available to GPs, medical practitioners, specialists, consultant physicians, nurse practitioners, participating midwives, allied health providers and dental practitioners in the practice of oral and maxillofacial surgery.
- It is a legislative requirement that GPs and Other Medical Practitioners (OMPs) working in general practice can only perform a telehealth service where they have an established clinical relationship with the patient, with limited exemptions. Further exemptions to this requirement were introduced on 1 July 2021.
- In addition, the broad range of temporary GP and OMP telephone attendances were replaced with a smaller number of telephone items as of 1 July 2021. Longer telephone items for mental health treatment will continue to be available until 31 December 2021.
- A service may only be provided by telehealth where it is safe and clinically appropriate to do so.
- The temporary MBS telehealth items are for out-of-hospital patients.
- GP and OMP COVID-19 telehealth services are eligible for MBS incentive payments when provided as bulk billed services to Commonwealth concession card holders and children under 16 years of age.
- All providers are expected to obtain informed financial consent from patients prior to charging private fees for COVID-19 telehealth services.
- A patient must assign their right to a Medicare benefit to an eligible provider by signing a completed assignment of benefit form.

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### Why are the changes being made?

The temporary MBS telehealth items allow people to access essential Medicare funded health services in their homes and reduce their risk of exposure to COVID-19 within the community.

As part of the 2021–22 Budget, the Government is investing an additional \$204.6 million to support continued access to MBS COVID-19 telehealth services until 31 December 2021, building on previous investment of \$3.6 billion since March 2020.

From 1 July 2021, GP and OMP telephone items will be streamlined to align with how they are commonly used by providers and expert advice on the use of telephone based services. This means that the broad range of telephone services established in response to the COVID-19 pandemic will be replaced with a smaller number of MBS items:

- a short consultation item (less than six minutes) for straightforward care, such as repeat prescriptions and diagnostic referrals; and



- a longer telephone consultation item (six minutes and over) for more complex attendances.

Note: the new telephone items for GPs and OMPs do not trigger patient access to Medicare subsidised follow up services. Patients may only be referred to Medicare subsidised follow up services when an appropriate planning and/or management service has been provided, such as for the development of a GP Management Plan.

Longer telephone items for mental health treatment will continue to be available until 31 December 2021, to ensure timely access to essential mental health services.

The GP video items will continue to mirror the items for face to face services.

GPs and OMPs working in general practice can only perform a telehealth service where they have an established clinical relationship with the patient, with limited exemptions. From 1 July 2021, additional exemptions to this requirement were introduced for patients accessing specific MBS items for pregnancy counselling and blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health.

New items for blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health services have been created to support this activity. A separate fact sheet on these new items is available on MBSOnline.

Additional information and a list of the telehealth items is available from page 6 of this document.

## Who is eligible?

The temporary MBS telehealth items are available to providers of telehealth services for a wide range of consultations. All Medicare eligible Australians can receive these services if they have an established clinical relationship with a GP, OMP, or a medical practice. This requirement supports longitudinal and person-centred primary health care that is associated with better health outcomes.

An *established relationship* means the medical practitioner performing the service:

- has provided at least one face-to-face service to the patient in the 12 months preceding the telehealth attendance; or
- is located at a medical practice where the patient has had at least one face-to-face service arranged by that practice in the 12 months preceding the telehealth attendance (including services performed by another doctor located at the practice, or a service performed by another health professional located at the practice, such as a practice nurse or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health worker); or
- is a participant in the Approved Medical Deputising Service program, and the Approved Medical Deputising Service provider employing the medical practitioner has a formal agreement with a medical practice that has provided at least one face-to-face service to the patient in the 12 months preceding the telehealth attendance.

The *existing relationship* requirement does not apply to:

- children under the age of 12 months;
- people who are homeless;
- patients living in a COVID-19 impacted area;
- patients receiving an urgent after-hours (unsociable hours) service; or



- patients of medical practitioners at an Aboriginal Medical Service or an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service.

AND (from 1 July 2021) patients accessing specific MBS items for:

- blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health consultations (new items); and
- pregnancy counselling services (under MBS Group A40).

Note: A *COVID-19 impacted area* is one where a person's movement is restricted by a State or Territory public health requirement that applies to the person's location. This includes patients subject to quarantine, and other restrictions intended to support infection control.

New patients of a practice and regular patients who have not attended the practice face to face in the preceding 12 months may only claim a face-to-face attendance. Subsequent services may be provided by telehealth, if safe and clinically appropriate to do so.

Note: A patient's participation in a previous telehealth consultation does not constitute a face-to-face service for the purposes of these items.

Practitioners should confirm that patients have received an eligible face-to-face attendance in the preceding 12 months, or meet one or more of the relevant exemption criteria for the service, prior to providing a telehealth attendance. Failure to meet the established relationship requirement may result in incorrect claiming.

Bulk billed GP and OMP services provided using the MBS telehealth items are eligible for MBS incentive payments when provided to Commonwealth concession card holders and children under 16 years of age.

## What telehealth options are available?

Videoconference services are the preferred approach for substituting a face-to-face consultation. However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providers can also offer audio-only services via telephone in some circumstances and where clinically appropriate. There are separate items available for the audio-only services.

No specific equipment is required to provide Medicare-compliant telehealth services. Practitioners must ensure that their chosen telecommunications solution meets their clinical requirements and satisfies privacy laws. To assist providers with their privacy obligations, a privacy checklist for telehealth services has been made available on MBSOnline: <http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/Factsheet-TelehealthPrivChecklist>. Further information can be found on the [Australian Cyber Security Centre website](#).

## What does this mean for providers?

The temporary MBS telehealth items allow providers to deliver essential health care services to their patients while ensuring continued quality is provided by a medical practitioner who knows the patient's medical history.

Providers do not need to be in their regular practice to provide telehealth services, but they must ensure that the established clinical relationship, as defined in the MBS, exists before providing telehealth services to their patient. Only a face-to-face attendance with the patient in the 12 months prior to the date of service of the proposed telehealth consultation satisfies this requirement, with limited exemptions. Attendance via telehealth (video or telephone) does not satisfy the requirement of established clinical relationship.



Providers should use their provider number for their primary location, and must provide safe services in accordance with normal professional standards.

Temporary COVID-19 telehealth MBS services can substitute for current face-to-face consultations that are available under the MBS when the service/s cannot be provided due to COVID-19 considerations. The MBS telehealth items have the same clinical requirements as the corresponding face-to-face consultation items.

Rebates for services provided by GPs and OMPs are paid at 85% of the telehealth item fees - these fee amounts have been increased so that the Medicare rebates paid for the new GP and OMP telehealth services are at the same level as the rebates paid for the equivalent face-to-face services. (Due to the urgency of the new telehealth arrangements, the Department of Health has not been able to amend the legislation that establishes 100% rebates for GP/OMP services.)

For additional information on the use of telehealth items, please refer to the [Provider Frequently Asked Questions](#) document available on MBSOnline.

## How will these changes affect patients?

Patients are eligible for GP and OMP telehealth services if they have an established clinical relationship with a GP, OMP, or a medical practice, with some exceptions. This requirement supports longitudinal and person-centred primary health care that is associated with better health outcomes.

An *established relationship* is defined as the patient having seen the same practitioner for a face-to-face service in the 12 months preceding the telehealth service, or having seen a doctor or other health practitioner (such as a practice nurse or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health worker) at the same medical practice for a face-to-face service during the same period.

This requirement does not apply to people who are homeless; patients receiving an urgent after-hours (unsociable hours) service; children under the age of 12 months; patients of medical practitioners at an Aboriginal Medical Service or an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service; and people living in a COVID-19 impacted area.

From 1 July 2021, exemptions to this requirement will expand to include patients accessing specific MBS items for blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health, and pregnancy counselling.

Note: A *COVID-19 impacted area* is one where a person's movement is restricted by a state or territory public health requirement that applies to the person's location. This includes patients subject to quarantine, and other restrictions intended to support infection control.

A [consumer factsheet](#) is available on MBSOnline which provides further information on how these changes will affect patients.

## Who was consulted on the changes?

Targeted consultation with stakeholders has informed the initial introduction of temporary MBS telehealth items. Due to the nature of the COVID-19 emergency, it was not reasonably possible to undertake normal, broad consultations prior to implementation.

The extension of the temporary COVID-19 telehealth measures until 31 December 2021 was supported by medical experts and key stakeholders within the health sector.



## How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?

The Department of Health continues to monitor the use of the new MBS items. Use of the items that does not seem to be in accordance with the relevant Medicare guidelines and legislation will be actioned appropriately.

## Where can I find more information?

COVID-19 National Health Plan resources for the general public, health professionals and industry are available from the [Australian Government Department of Health website](#).

The full item descriptors and information on other changes to the MBS can be found on the MBS Online website at [www.mbsonline.gov.au](http://www.mbsonline.gov.au). You can also subscribe to future MBS updates by visiting [MBS Online](#) and clicking 'Subscribe'.

The Department of Health provides an email advice service for providers seeking advice on interpretation of the MBS items and rules and the Health Insurance Act and associated regulations. If you have a query relating exclusively to interpretation of the Schedule, you should email [askMBS@health.gov.au](mailto:askMBS@health.gov.au).

Subscribe to '[News for Health Professionals](#)' on the Services Australia website and you will receive regular news highlights.

If you are seeking advice in relation to Medicare billing, claiming, payments, or obtaining a provider number, please go to the Health Professionals page on the Services Australia website or contact Services Australia on the Provider Enquiry Line – 13 21 50.

*Please note that the information provided is a general guide only. It is ultimately the responsibility of treating practitioners to use their professional judgment to determine the most clinically appropriate services to provide, and then to ensure that any services billed to Medicare fully meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the legislation.*

*This sheet is current as of the Last updated date shown above, and does not account for MBS changes since that date.*



## General Practitioner (GP) Services (as of 1 July 2021)

Table 1: Standard GP services introduced on 13 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Attendance for an obvious problem	3	91790	
Attendance less than 20 minutes	23	91800	
Attendance at least 20 minutes	36	91801	
Attendance at least 40 minutes	44	91802	

Table 2: Short and long GP telephone consultations introduced on 1 July 2021

Service	Telephone items
Short consultation, less than 6 minutes	92731
Long consultation, 6 minutes or greater	92734

Table 3: Health assessment for Indigenous People introduced 30 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Health assessment	715	92004	

Table 4: Chronic Disease Management items introduced 30 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Preparation of a GP management plan (GPMP)	721	92024	
Coordination of Team Care Arrangements (TCAs)	723	92025	
Contribution to a Multidisciplinary Care Plan, or to a review of a Multidisciplinary Care Plan, for a patient who is not a care recipient in a residential aged care facility	729	92026	
Contribution to a Multidisciplinary Care Plan, or to a review of a multidisciplinary care plan, for a resident in an aged care facility	731	92027	
Review of a GPMP or Coordination of a Review of TCAs	732	92028	

Table 5: Autism, pervasive developmental disorder and disability services introduced 30 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Assessment, diagnosis and preparation of a treatment and management plan for patient under 13 years with an eligible disability, at least 45 minutes.	139	92142	



Table 6: Pregnancy Support Counselling program items introduced 30 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Non-directive pregnancy support counselling, at least 20 minutes	4001	92136	92138

Table 7: Eating Disorder Management items introduced 30 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
GP without mental health skills training, preparation of an eating disorder treatment and management plan, lasting at least 20 minutes, but less than 40 minutes	90250	92146	
GP without mental health skills training, preparation of an eating disorder treatment and management plan, at least 40 minutes	90251	92147	
GP with mental health skills training, preparation of an eating disorder treatment and management plan, lasting at least 20 minutes, but less than 40 minutes	90252	92148	
GP with mental health skills training, preparation of an eating disorder treatment and management plan, at least 40 minutes	90253	92149	
Review of an eating disorder treatment and management plan	90264	92170	92176
Eating disorder psychological treatment (EDPT) service, lasting at least 30 minutes, but less than 40 minutes	90271	92182	92194
EDPT service, at least 40 minutes	90273	92184	92196

Table 8: Mental Health Services items introduced 13 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS) treatment, lasting at least 30 minutes, but less than 40 minutes	2721 and 2729	91818	91842
FPS treatment, at least 40 minutes	2725 and 2731	91819	91843

Table 9: Mental Health Services items introduced 30 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
GP without mental health skills training, preparation of a GP mental health treatment plan,	2700	92112	



Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
lasting at least 20 minutes, but less than 40 minutes			
GP without mental health skills training, preparation of a GP mental health treatment plan, at least 40 minutes	2701	92113	
Review of a GP mental health treatment plan or Psychiatrist Assessment and Management Plan	2712	92114	92126
Mental health treatment consultation, at least 20 minutes	2713	92115	92127
GP with mental health skills training, preparation of a GP mental health treatment plan, lasting at least 20 minutes, but less than 40 minutes	2715	92116	
GP with mental health skills training, preparation of a GP mental health treatment plan, at least 40 minutes	2717	92117	

Table 10: Urgent After Hours Attendance items introduced 30 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Urgent attendance, unsociable after hours	599	92210	





Table 12: Blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health consultation introduced 1 July 2021

Service	Face to face	Telehealth items via video-conference	Telephone items
Professional attendance for the provision of services related to blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health by a general practitioner of not more than 5 minutes		92715	92731
Professional attendance for the provision of services related to blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health by a general practitioner of more than 5 minutes in duration but not more than 20 minutes		92718	92734
Professional attendance for the provision of services related to blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health by a general practitioner of more than 20 minutes in duration but not more than 40 minutes		92721	92737
Professional attendance for the provision of services related to blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health by a general practitioner lasting at least 40 minutes in duration		92724	92740

## Other Medical Practitioner (OMP) Services (as of 1 July 2021)

Table 13: Standard OMP services introduced on 13 March 2020

Service	Existing Items face to face	Telehealth items via video-conference	Telephone items
Attendance of not more than 5 minutes	52	91792	
Attendance of more than 5 minutes but not more than 25 minutes	53	91803	
Attendance of more than 25 minutes but not more than 45 minutes	54	91804	
Attendance of more than 45 minutes	57	91805	
Attendance of not more than 5 minutes	179	91794	
Attendance of more than 5 minutes but not more than 25 minutes. Modified Monash 2-7 area	185	91806	
Attendance of more than 25 minutes but not more than 45 minutes. Modified Monash 2-7 area	189	91807	
Attendance of more than 45 minutes. Modified Monash 2-7 area	203	91808	

Table 14: Short and long OMP telephone consultations introduced on 1 July 2021

Service	Telephone items
Short consultation, less than 6 minutes	92732



Service	Telephone items
Long consultation, 6 minutes or greater	92735

Table 15: Health assessment for people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent items introduced 30 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Health assessment	228	92011	

Table 16: Chronic Disease Management Items introduced 30 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Preparation of a GP management plan (GPMP)	229	92055	
Coordination of Team Care Arrangements (TCAs)	230	92056	
Contribution to a Multidisciplinary Care Plan, or to a review of a Multidisciplinary Care Plan, for a patient who is not a care recipient in a residential aged care facility	231	92057	
Contribution to a Multidisciplinary Care Plan, or to a review of a multidisciplinary care plan, for a resident in an aged care facility	232	92058	
Review of a GPMP or Coordination of a Review of TCAs	233	92059	

Table 17: Pregnancy Support Counselling program items introduced 30 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Non-directive pregnancy support counselling of at least 20 minutes	792	92137	92139

Table 18: Eating Disorder Management items introduced 30 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Medical Practitioner without mental health skills training, preparation of an eating disorder treatment and management plan, lasting at least 20 minutes, but less than 40 minutes	90254	92150	
Medical Practitioner without mental health skills training, preparation of an eating disorder treatment and management plan, at least 40 minutes	90255	92151	
Medical Practitioner with mental health skills training, preparation of an eating disorder	90256	92152	



Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
treatment and management plan, lasting at least 20 minutes, but less than 40 minutes			
Medical Practitioner with mental health skills training, preparation of an eating disorder treatment and management plan, at least 40 minutes	90257	92153	
Review of an eating disorder treatment and management plan	90265	92171	92177
Eating disorders psychological treatment (EDPT) service, lasting at least 30 minutes, but less than 40 minutes	90275	92186	92198
EDPT service, at least 40 minutes	90277	92188	92200

Table 19: Mental Health items introduced 13 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS) treatment, lasting at least 30 minutes, but less than 40 minutes	283 and 371	91820	91844
FPS treatment, at least 40 minutes	286 and 372	91821	91845



Table 20: Mental Health items introduced 30 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Medical Practitioner without mental health skills training, preparation of a GP mental health treatment plan, lasting at least 20 minutes, but less than 40 minutes	272	92118	
Medical Practitioner without mental health skills training, preparation of a GP mental health treatment plan, at least 40 minutes	276	92119	
Review of a GP mental health treatment plan or Psychiatrist Assessment and Management Plan	277	92120	92132
Medical Practitioner mental health treatment consultation, at least 20 minutes	279	92121	92133
Medical Practitioner with mental health skills training, preparation of a GP mental health treatment plan, lasting at least 20 minutes, but less than 40 minutes	281	92122	
Medical Practitioner with mental health skills training, preparation of a GP mental health treatment plan, at least 40 minutes	282	92123	

Table 21: Urgent After Hours Attendance items introduced 30 March 2020

Service	Existing Items <i>face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Urgent attendance, unsociable after hours	600	92211	

Table 22: Blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health consultation introduced 1 July 2021

Service	<i>Face to face</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i>	Telephone items
Professional attendance for the provision of services related to blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health by a general practitioner of not more than 5 minutes		92716	92732
Professional attendance for the provision of services related to blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health by a general practitioner of more than 5 minutes in duration but not more than 20 minutes		92719	92735
Professional attendance for the provision of services related to blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health by a general practitioner of more than 20 minutes in duration but not more than 40 minutes		92721	92738



Service	Face to face	Telehealth items via video-conference	Telephone items
Professional attendance for the provision of services related to blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health by a general practitioner lasting at least 40 minutes in duration		92725	92741
Professional attendance for the provision of services related to blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health by a general practitioner of not more than 5 minutes. Modified Monash 2-7 area		92717	92733
Professional attendance for the provision of services related to blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health by a general practitioner of more than 5 minutes in duration but not more than 20 minutes. Modified Monash 2-7 area		92720	92736
Professional attendance for the provision of services related to blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health by a general practitioner of more than 20 minutes in duration but not more than 40 minutes. Modified Monash 2-7 area		92722	92739
Professional attendance for the provision of services related to blood borne viruses, sexual or reproductive health by a general practitioner lasting at least 40 minutes in duration. Modified Monash 2-7 area		92726	92742