



COVID-19 Bulk-billing incentives Frequently Asked Questions

Last updated: 18 September 2020

- Commencing 13 March 2020 and extending until 31 March 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.
- 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.
- The temporary GP and OMP bulk billing incentive items for patients who are vulnerable to COVID-19 and the temporary doubling of all Medicare bulk-billing incentive fees ceased as of 1 October 2020.

Why are the changes being made?

The Government has extended its national COVID-19 emergency health response for a further six months, to 31 March 2021. This will ensure that patients continue to have access to key health initiatives, including Medicare-subsidised telehealth services.

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.

What changes are being made?

From 1 October 2020:

- GPs and OMPs providing COVID-19 telehealth services are not required to bulk bill their patients.
- Temporary MBS COVID-19 bulk billing incentive items 10981 (for GPs) and 10982 (for OMPs) ceased.
- The temporary doubling of fees for MBS bulk billing incentive items 10990, 10991, 10992, 64990, 64991, 74990 and 74991 ceased.

Can the regular MBS bulk-billing incentives be claimed with COVID-19 telehealth and telephone consultation items?

Yes. MBS bulk billing incentive items 10990, 10991, 10992 can be claimed for COVID-19 telehealth services provided to Commonwealth concession card holders and children under 16 years of age.



Who can claim a bulk billing incentive for a telehealth service?

Only GPs and OMPs can claim a bulk billing incentive for a telehealth service. More information about provider eligibility is available at <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/organisations/health-professionals/topics/education-guide-claiming-bulk-bill-incentive-items/33011>.

Do geographic restrictions apply to bulk billing incentives claimed with COVID-19 telehealth and telephone consultation items?

Yes. Under changes introduced on 1 January 2020 to the classification system that determines the level of the bulk billing incentive payments, the higher rural bulk billing incentive of \$9.80 per bulk billed service is only payable to practitioners in areas classified as *regional*, *rural* and *remote* under the Modified Monash Model (MMM) classification system (MMM 2 – 7 locations).

Practitioners in metropolitan (MMM 1) areas receive the standard bulk billing incentive payment of \$6.50 per bulk billed service.

Further 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. 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.

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.