



## COVID-19 Temporary MBS Telehealth Services

Specialists, consultant physicians, psychiatrists, paediatricians, geriatricians, public health physicians, neurosurgeons and anaesthetists

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 specialists, consultant physicians, psychiatrists, paediatricians, geriatricians, public health physicians, neurosurgeons and anaesthetists.
- 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.
- All providers are expected to obtain informed financial consent from patients prior to charging private fees for COVID-19 telehealth services.

### What are the changes?

As part of the Australian Government's response to COVID-19, eighty (80) items for specialists, consultant physicians, psychiatrists, geriatricians, paediatricians, public health physicians, neurosurgeons and anaesthetists are available to ensure continued access to essential Medicare rebated consultation services.

The new telehealth and telephone items are:

#### Group A40, sub-groups 4-38:

- 4 new items for specialist attendances
- 10 new items for consultant physician attendances
- 2 new specialist and consultant physician early intervention services
- 4 new geriatrician services for assessment and management
- 34 new consultant psychiatrist services including consultations, group psychotherapy and interviews
- 6 new paediatrician services for early intervention and services for treatment of eating disorders
- 8 new services for public health physician attendances
- 10 new services for neurosurgeon attendances
- 2 new items for anaesthesia attendances

A list of the new telehealth items is provided later in this fact sheet.



## Who is eligible?

The new temporary MBS telehealth items are available to providers of telehealth services for a wide range of consultations. All Medicare eligible Australians can now receive these services.

Bulk billing is at the discretion of all providers, so long as informed financial consent is obtained prior to the provision of the service.

## 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 will also be able to offer audio-only services via telephone if video is not available. 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](#).

## 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 does this mean for providers?

The temporary MBS telehealth items allow providers to continue to deliver essential health care services to patients within their care.

Providers do not need to be in their regular practice to provide telehealth services. Providers should use their provider number for their primary location, and must provide safe services in accordance with normal professional standards.

The telehealth MBS items 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 telehealth items have the same clinical requirements as the corresponding face-to-face consultation items.

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 should ask their service providers about their telehealth options, where clinically appropriate.

The MBS specialist and consultant physician telehealth items do not need to be bulk billed, however the provider must ensure informed financial consent is obtained prior to the provision of the service.

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 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 for another six months, until 31 March 2021, was a recommendation of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.

## How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?

The Department of Health continues to monitor the use of the temporary MBS telehealth 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.*



## COVID-19 – TEMPORARY MBS TELEHEALTH ITEMS

<b>SPECIALIST, CONSULTANT PHYSICIAN, PSYCHIATRIST, PAEDIATRICIAN, GERIATRICIAN, PUBLIC HEALTH PHYSICIAN, NEUROSURGEON AND ANAESTHETIST ATTENDANCES</b>			
These services are for out-of-hospital patients			
<b>Service</b>	<b>Existing Items face to face</b>	<b>Telehealth items via video-conference</b>	<b>Telephone items – for when video- conferencing is not available</b>
<b>Specialist Services</b> Items introduced 13 March 2020			
Specialist. Initial attendance	104	91822*	91832*
Specialist. Subsequent attendance	105	91823*	91833*
<b>Consultant Physician Services</b> Items introduced 13 March 2020			
Consultant physician. Initial attendance	110	91824 **	91834 **
Consultant physician. Subsequent attendance	116	91825**	91835**
Consultant physician. Minor attendance	119	91826**	91836**
Items introduced 6 April 2020			
Consultant physician. Initial assessment, patient with at least 2 morbidities, prepare a treatment and management plan, at least 45 minutes	132	92422**	92431**
Consultant physician, Subsequent assessment, patient with at least 2 morbidities, review a treatment and management plan, at least 20 minutes	133	92423**	92432**
<b>Specialist and Consultant Physician Services</b> Items introduced 30 March 2020			
Specialist or consultant physician early intervention services for children with autism, pervasive developmental disorder or disability	137	92141	92144
<b>Geriatrician Services</b> Items introduced 6 April 2020			
Geriatrician, prepare an assessment and management plan, patient at least 65 years, more than 60 minutes	141	92623	92628
Geriatrician, review a management plan, more than 30 minutes	143	92624	92629
<b>Consultant Psychiatrist services</b> Items introduced 6 April 2020			
Consultant psychiatrist, prepare a treatment and management plan, patient under 13 years with autism or another pervasive developmental disorder, at least 45 minutes	289	92434	92474



Consultant psychiatrist, prepare a management plan, more than 45 minutes	291	92435	92475
Consultant psychiatrist, review management plan, 30 to 45 minutes	293	92436	92476
Consultant psychiatrist, attendance, new patient (or has not received attendance in preceding 24 mths), more than 45 minutes	296	92437	92477
Items introduced 13 March 2020			
Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, not more than 15 minutes	300	91827	91837
Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, 15 to 30 minutes	302	91828	91838
Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, 30 to 45 minutes	304	91829	91839
Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, 45 to 75 minutes	306	91830	91840
Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, more than 75 minutes	308	91831	91841
Items introduced 20 April 2020			
Consultant psychiatrist, group psychotherapy, at least 1 hour, involving group of 2 to 9 unrelated patients or a family group of more than 3 patients, each referred to consultant psychiatrist	342	92455	92495
Consultant psychiatrist, group psychotherapy, at least 1 hour, involving family group of 3 patients, each referred to consultant psychiatrist	344	92456	92496
Consultant psychiatrist, group psychotherapy, at least 1 hour, involving family group of 2 patients, each referred to consultant psychiatrist	346	92457	92497
Items introduced 6 April 2020			
Consultant psychiatrist, interview of a person other than patient, in the course of initial diagnostic evaluation of patient, 20 to 45 minutes	348	92458	92498
Consultant psychiatrist, interview of a person other than patient, in the course of initial diagnostic evaluation of patient, 45 minutes or more	350	92459	92499
Consultant psychiatrist, interview of a person other than patient, in the course of continuing management of patient, not less than 20 minutes, not exceeding 4 attendances per calendar year	352	92460	92500
Items introduced 30 March 2020			
Consultant psychiatrist, prepare an eating disorder treatment and management plan, more than 45 minutes	90260	92162	92166



Consultant psychiatrist, to review an eating disorder plan, more than 30 minutes	90266	92172	92178
<b>Paediatrician Services</b> Items introduced 30 March 2020			
Paediatrician early intervention services for children with autism, pervasive developmental disorder or disability	135	92140	92143
Paediatrician, prepare an eating disorder treatment and management plan, more than 45 minutes	90261	92163	92167
Paediatrician, to review an eating disorder plan, more than 20 minutes	90267	92173	92179
<b>Public Health Physician Services</b> Items introduced 20 April 2020			
Public health physician, level A attendance	410	92513	92521
Public health physician, level B attendance, less than 20 minutes	411	92514	92522
Public health physician, level C attendance, at least 20 minutes	412	92515	92523
Public health physician, level D attendance, at least 40 minutes	413	92516	92524
<b>Neurosurgery attendances</b> Items introduced 20 April 2020			
Neurosurgeon, initial attendance	6007	92610	92617
Neurosurgeon, minor attendance	6009	92611	92618
Neurosurgeon, subsequent attendance, 15 to 30 minutes	6011	92612	92619
Neurosurgeon, subsequent attendance, 30 to 45 minutes	6013	92613	92620
Neurosurgeon, subsequent attendance, more than 45 minutes	6015	92614	92621
<b>Anaesthesia Attendances</b> Items introduced 22 May 2020			
Anaesthetist, professional attendance, advanced or complex	17615	92701	92712

\*For all specialties that have an existing arrangement to access consultations at the specialist rate.

\*\*For all specialties that have an existing arrangement to access consultations at the consultant physician rate.