



New MBS item for N-terminal pro B-type natriuretic peptide (NT proBNP) testing in patients with systemic sclerosis

Last updated: 22 November 2023

- From 1 November 2023, one new pathology item was introduced on the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) for NT-proBNP or BNP testing for patients with systemic sclerosis.
- These changes will save patients money and time.

What are the changes?

Effective 1 November 2023, one new pathology item was introduced for quantification of NT-proBNP or BNP in patients with systemic sclerosis. **Attachment A** to this factsheet lists the new item.

Systemic sclerosis causes hardening or tightening of the skin and other internal organs, including the blood vessels. This can lead to high pressures in the blood vessels between the heart and lungs, which is called pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH).

People with systemic sclerosis are usually checked for PAH every year. Currently, this involves a lung function test and a transthoracic echocardiogram (TTE). TTE is performed by a trained sonographer or cardiologist with specialised equipment and takes about one hour.

NT-proBNP is a blood test that can be used **instead** of TTE.

For private health insurance purposes, item 66585 was listed under the following clinical category and procedure type:

- Private Health Insurance Classification:
- Clinical category: Support List (pathology)
- Procedure type: Type C

Why are the changes being made?

NT-proBNP testing is more effective than the current method (TTE) at accurately identifying patients who do **not** have PAH. NT-proBNP testing may also reduce the number of TTEs and other tests patients would otherwise be required to undergo, saving patients money and time.

The listing of this service was recommended by the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) in July 2022 meeting under [MSAC Application 1689 - Quantification of NT-proBNP](#)

[in patients with systemic sclerosis, and in patients with diagnosed pulmonary arterial hypertension](#). Further details about MSAC applications can be found under [MSAC Applications](#) on the MSAC website ([Medical Services Advisory Committee](#)).

What does this mean for requestors and providers?

Specialists who treat patients with systemic sclerosis are now able to request NT-proBNP testing. Other treating medical practitioners are able to request the test in consultation with a specialist or consultant physician who manages the patient.

To be eligible for Medicare benefits, laboratories providing this service must be accredited according to the pathology accreditation standards specified in the [Health Insurance \(Accredited Pathology Laboratories-Approval\) Principles 2017](#).

How will these changes affect patients?

The changes allow patients to access better testing to rule out PAH and potentially save patients money and time.

Who was consulted on the changes?

Consultation input was received from seven organisations and six individuals, five of whom were specialists and one being a nurse. The Australian Scleroderma Interest Group, Scleroderma Australia, the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand, Australian Rheumatology Association, Public Pathology Australia. The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia and the Lung Foundation Australia.

How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?

All MBS items are subject to compliance processes and activities, including random and targeted audits which may require a provider to submit evidence about the services claimed.

Where can I find more information?

The full item descriptor(s) 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 and Aged Care provides an email advice service for providers seeking advice on interpretation of the MBS items and rules and the *Health Insurance Act 1973* and associated regulations. If you have a query relating exclusively to interpretation of the Schedule, you should email askMBS@health.gov.au.

Private health insurance information on the product tier arrangements is available at www.privatehealth.gov.au. Detailed information on the MBS item listing within clinical categories is available on the [Department's website](#). Private health insurance minimum accommodation benefits information, including MBS item accommodation classification, is available in the latest version of the *Private Health Insurance (Benefit Requirements) Rules*

2011 found on the [Federal Register of Legislation](#). If you have a query in relation to private health insurance, you should email PHI@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 the Services Australia on the Provider Enquiry Line – 13 21 50.

The data file for software vendors when available can be accessed via the [Downloads](#) page.

Attachment A:

New item descriptors (commenced 1 November 2023)

Category 6 – Pathology Services

Group P2 - Chemical

66585

Quantification of laboratory-based BNP or NT-proBNP testing in a patient with systemic sclerosis (scleroderma) to assess risk of pulmonary arterial hypertension.

Maximum of 2 tests in a 12 month period

(See para PN.2.5 of explanatory notes to this Category)

MBS Fee: \$58.50

Benefit: 75% = \$43.90 85% = \$49.75

PN.2.5

NT-proBNP testing under MBS item 66585 should be performed along with a pulmonary function test (PFT) measuring diffusing capacity for carbon monoxide in accordance with the 2012 Australian Scleroderma Interest Group (ASIG) pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH) screening algorithm.

Repeat testing within a 12 month period should only be performed for a patient presenting with new symptoms suggestive of PAH since last assessment or a patient that has a borderline NT-proBNP level between 168-209 pg/mL.

Where MBS item 66585 is requested by a medical practitioner (other than a specialist or consultant physician), the request should be made in consultation with a specialist or consultant physician who manages the treatment of the patient.

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