



# Orthopaedic surgery – minor amendment to MBS item 49706

Last updated: 28 April 2023

- From 1 July 2023, MBS item 49706 for ankle arthrotomy is changing to restore patient access where infection is not indicated.
- This change is relevant for orthopaedic surgeons, patients receiving these services, private hospitals and private health insurers.
- Medical specialists will need to familiarise themselves with the removal of infection as a requirement in the amended item descriptor.

## What are the changes?

Effective 1 July 2023, there will be a revised structure for items for orthopaedic surgery. The new structure includes:

- An amended item (49706) for ankle arthrotomy

For private health insurance purposes, item 49706 will continue to be listed under the following clinical category and procedure type:

- Clinical category: Joint reconstructions
- Procedure type: Type A Surgical

## Why are the changes being made?

On July 2021, changes were made to 599 orthopaedic surgery MBS items in response to the MBS Review Taskforce recommendations and following extensive consultation with key stakeholders.

From 1 July 2023, an additional amendment will be made to one item for ankle arthrotomy (49706) in response to feedback from key stakeholders as part of the early post-implementation review. These amendments restore appropriate access for patients in the absence of an infection, better aligning the items with modern clinical practice.

## What does this mean for providers?

The changes correct an unintended consequence to address patient service gaps arising from the MBS Review Taskforce changes implemented on 1 July 2021.

Providers will need to familiarise themselves with the descriptor changes for item 49706.

## How will these changes affect patients?

Patients will receive Medicare rebates for services that are clinically appropriate and reflect modern clinical practice.

## Who was consulted on the changes?

This change is being made in response to feedback from the Australian Orthopaedic Association (AOA) and the Australian Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Society (AOFAS) as part of an early post-implementation review following the introduction of the broader orthopaedic changes on 1 July 2021. The early-post implementation review was established following discussions with the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and the Australian Orthopaedic Association (AOA). The Department is continuing to work with the AOA and the orthopaedic sub-specialty societies to consider feedback regarding the 1 July 2021 changes.

## 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](http://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](mailto:askMBS@health.gov.au).

Private health insurance information on the product tier arrangements is available at [www.privatehealth.gov.au](http://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](mailto:PHI@health.gov.au).

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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.

# Amended item descriptor (to take effect 01 July 2023)

## Category 3 – THERAPEUTIC PROCEDURES

### Group T8 – Surgical Operations

#### Subgroup 15 - Orthopaedic

#### 49706

Arthrotomy of joint of ankle, ~~for infection~~, including removal of loose bodies and joint debridement, including release of joint contracture (if performed) (H) (Anaes.) (Assist.)

- Private Health Insurance Classification: (No change)
- Clinical category: Joint reconstructions
- Procedure type: Type A surgical

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.