



Changes to general surgery MBS services factsheet

Last updated: 05 July 2021

- **6 July 2021 update: the general surgery factsheets now include the final item descriptors and fees (inclusive of 1 July 2021 indexation) for the 1 July 2021 changes to general surgery items. Only minor wording changes were made to the item descriptors during the drafting of the legislation, there have been no changes to the clinical intent of the new and amended items.**
- From 1 July 2021, Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items for general surgery services are changing to reflect contemporary practice. These changes are a result of MBS Review Taskforce (Taskforce) recommendations and consultation with stakeholders.
- There will be changes to MBS services pertaining to general surgery categories: Laparoscopy and Laparotomy; Small Bowel Resection; Abdominal Wall Hernias; Oesophageal; Stomach; Liver; Biliary; Pancreas; Spleen; Oncology; Lymph Nodes; Excisions; and Bariatric.
- These changes are relevant for surgeons involved in the performance and claiming of eligible general surgery services; consumers claiming these services; private health insurers; and private hospitals.
- From 1 July 2021, billing practices will need to be adjusted to reflect these changes.

What are the changes?

Changes will be made to MBS services pertaining to general surgery categories: Laparoscopy and Laparotomy; Small Bowel Resection; Abdominal Wall Hernias; Oesophageal; Stomach; Liver; Biliary; Pancreas; Spleen; Oncology; Lymph Nodes; Excisions and Bariatric. The changes include 35 new items, 50 amended items and 71 deleted items.

The changes by surgical category are:

Laparoscopy and Laparotomy

6 new items (**new item numbers 30720, 30721, 30722, 30723, 30724, 30725**). Items 30720 (appendicectomy), 30721 (Laparotomy/laparoscopy), 30722 (Laparotomy/laparoscopy with specified procedures), 30723 (Drainage of an intra-abdominal, pancreatic, or retroperitoneal collection or abscess) and 30724 (Laparotomy/laparoscopy with division of adhesions) will combine services currently provided by separate items. Item 30725 will replace existing item 30379 and provides for laparotomy or laparoscopy for intestinal obstruction or division of extensive adhesions.

12 amended items (**item numbers 30382, 30384, 30385, 30387, 30388, 30390, 30396, 30397, 30399, 30574 30627, 31454**) A number of these Items have been revised to better reflect contemporary best practice. The items for diagnostic laparoscopy have been amended to clarify that they cannot be claimed with intra-abdominal procedures. Item 31454 has been revised to provide for the drainage of bile only, as the drainage of blood or pus is provided by items 30385 and 30723 (new item).



14 deleted items (**item numbers 30373, 30375, 30376, 30378, 30379, 30391, 30393, 30394, 30402, 30571, 30572, 30575, 31450, 31452**) The services in these items have been consolidated under new items 30720, 30721, 30722, 30723, 30724.

Small Bowel Resection

3 new items (**new item numbers 30730, 30731, 30732**) Items 30730 (resection of small intestine) and 30731 (Intraoperative enterotomy for visualisation of the small intestine) will combine services currently provided by separate items. Item 30732 is a new item for peritonectomy surgery that provides a single benefit for the procedures performed as part of this surgery including hyperthermic intra-peritoneal chemotherapy.

4 deleted items (**item numbers 30564, 30566, 30568, 30569**) The services in these items have been consolidated under new items 30730 and 30731.

Abdominal Wall Hernias

5 new items (**new item numbers 30648, 30651, 30652, 30655, 30657**) The hernia repair items have been restructured to grade the items by procedure complexity. Item 30648 (Repair of femoral or inguinal hernia or infantile hydrocele) will combine services currently provided by separate items. Item 30657 is a new item for the reconstruction of an abdominal wall defect. Item 30651 will replace item 30403, and item 30655 will replace item 30405.

1 amended item (**item numbers 30621**) Item 30621 has been amended to provide for an open or minimally invasive approach for hernia repair.

4 deleted items (**item numbers 30403, 30405, 30609, 30614**.) The services in items 30609 and 30614 have been consolidated under new item 30648. New items 30651 and 30655 will replace items 30403 and 30405 respectively.

Oesophageal

7 new items (**new item numbers 30750, 30751, 30752, 30753, 30754, 30755, 30756**) Items 30750, 30751, 30752, 30753, 30754 and 30755 will combine services currently provided for single surgeon and conjoint oesophagectomy surgery. The fees for these items have been adjusted to encourage conjoint surgery for oesophagectomy surgery. Item 30756 will combine services for anti-reflux operations currently provided by separate items.

5 amended items (**item numbers, 31468, 30532, 30560, 30600, 30601**) The items for oesophagogastric myotomy (Heller's operation), repair of an oesophageal perforation and diaphragmatic hernia have been revised to better reflect contemporary best practice. The requirements and restrictions for item 31468 (repair of para-oesophageal hiatus hernia) and item 30600 (repair of a diaphragmatic laceration or hernia) have been clarified.

18 deleted items (**item numbers 30527, 30535, 30536, 30538, 30539, 30541, 30542, 30544, 30545, 30547, 30548, 30550, 30551, 30553, 30554, 30556, 30557, 31464**) The services in items 30527, 30535, 30536, 30538, 30539, 30545, 30547, 30548, 30550, 30551, 30553, 30554, 30556, 30557 and 31464 have been consolidated under new items 30750, 30751, 30752, 30753, 30754, 30755, and 30756. The items for oesophagectomy by trans-hiatal oesophagectomy (30541, 30542, 30544) no longer reflect current best practice, other oesophagectomy item numbers provide more appropriate best practice treatment options for these procedures.



Stomach

4 new items (**new item numbers 30760 30761 30762 30763**) Items 30760 (vagotomy), 30761 (control of bleeding peptic ulcer) and 30762 (subtotal or total radical gastrectomy for carcinoma) will combine services currently provided by separate items. Item 30763 is a new item for removal of a gastric tumour by endoscopic approach.

4 amended items (**item numbers 30515 30517 30520 30526**) Items for treatment of obstructions, removal of gastric tumour (laparoscopic or open technique) and gastrectomy have been revised to better reflect contemporary best practice.

12 deleted items (**item numbers 30496 30497 30499 30500 30502 30503 30505 30506 30508 30509 30523 30524**)
The services in these items have been consolidated under new items 30760, 30761, and 30762.

Liver

2 new items (**new item numbers 30770 30771**) Items 30770 (removal of contents of hydatid cyst of liver) and 30771 (porto-caval, meso-caval or selective spleno-renal shunt for portal hypertension) will combine services currently provided by separate items.

8 amended items (**item numbers 30416 30417 30421 30430 30431 30433 50950 50952**) Items for marsupialisation of liver cysts, extended lobectomy, drainage of liver abscess and destruction of primary malignant tumour have been revised to reflect contemporary best practice.

7 deleted items (**item numbers 30434 30436 30437 30438 30602 30603 30605**) The services in these items have been consolidated under new items 30770 and 30771.

Biliary

1 new item (**new item numbers 30780**) Item 30780 (Intrahepatic biliary bypass of hepatic ductal system) will combine services currently provided by separate items.

13 amended items (**item numbers 30439 30443 30445 30448 30449 30450 30454 30455 30461 30463 30464 30472 31472**) Items including those for cholecystectomy, choledochotomy, radical resection of the porta hepatis and hepatic ducts tumour have been revised to reflect contemporary best practice. The services provided by Item 30472 (repair of a bile duct injury) and item 31472 (revision of previous biliary surgery) have been clarified, these items will be restricted with item 30584 (Whipple's procedure). Item 30450 has been revised to provide for extraction of calculus from the biliary tract only, as removal of calculus from the renal tract is provided under renal item numbers.

3 deleted items (**item numbers 30446 30466 30467**) The services in items 30466 and 30467 have been consolidated under new item 30780. Item 30446 (Laparoscopic cholecystectomy when procedure is completed by laparotomy) is covered by other cholecystectomy items.



Pancreas

3 new items (**new item numbers 30790 30791 30792**) Item 30790 (pancreatic cyst anastomosis to stomach, duodenum or small intestine) will combine services currently provided by separate items. Item 30791 is a new item providing for subsequent pancreatic necrosectomies (existing item 30577 will provide for an initial pancreatic necrosectomy). Item 30792 is a new item providing for distal pancreatectomy with splenectomy (existing item 30583 will provide for distal pancreatectomy with splenic preservation).

3 amended items (**item numbers 30577 30583 30584**) Items 30577 and 30583 revised as per above. Item 30584 (Pancreatico-duodenectomy, (Whipple's procedure)) has been revised to include cholecystectomy, pancreatico, biliary and gastro jejunal anastomosis.

2 deleted items (**item numbers 30586 30587**) The services in these items have been consolidated under new item 30790.

Spleen

1 new item (**new item numbers 30800**) Item 30800 (splenectomy) will combine services currently provided by separate items.

2 deleted items (**item numbers 30597 31470**) The services in these items have been consolidated under new item 30800.

Oncology

1 new item (**new item number 30810**) Item 30810 (Exploration of pancreas or duodenum for endocrine tumour) will combine services currently provided by separate items.

1 amended item (**item numbers 30419**) Item 30419 has been revised to provide flexibility in ablation approach for liver tumours.

3 deleted items (**item numbers 30578 30580 30581**) The services in these items have been consolidated under new item 30810.



Lymph Nodes

1 new item (**new item number 30820**) Item 30820 (biopsy of lymph node of neck) will combine services currently provided by separate items.

2 deleted items (**item numbers 30096 31420**) The services in these items have been consolidated under new item 30820.

Excision

2 amended items (**item numbers 30676 30055**) Item 30676 (excision of pilonidal sinus or cyst, or sacral sinus or cyst) and item 30055 (dressing of wounds under anaesthesia) have been revised to reflect contemporary best practice.

Bariatric

1 new item (**new item number 31585**) Item 31585 is a new item providing for removal of an adjustable gastric band.

1 amended item (**item number 31584**) Item 31584 (surgical reversal of adjustable gastric banding, gastric bypass, gastroplasty (excluding by gastric plication) or biliopancreatic diversion) has been revised to clarify that the item provides for reversal, revision or conversion of a previous bariatric procedure. Item 31584 is restricted with new item 31585 (removal of an adjustable gastric band).

Why are the changes being made?

These changes are a result of a review by the Taskforce, which was informed by the General Surgery Clinical Committee (GSCC) and extensive discussion with key stakeholders. More information about the Taskforce and associated Committees is available in [Medicare Benefits Schedule Review](#) in the consumer section of the [Department of Health website](#). A full copy of the Taskforce's final report can be found at: [2019 - MBS Reviews Taskforce Report on General Surgery Clinical Committee](#)

What does this mean for providers/referrers/other stakeholders?

Providers will need to familiarise themselves with the changes to the general surgery MBS items, and any associated rules and/or explanatory notes. Providers have a responsibility to ensure that any services they bill to Medicare fully meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the legislation.

How will these changes affect patients?

Patients will receive Medicare rebates for general surgery services that are clinically appropriate and reflect modern clinical practice. Additionally, patients should no longer receive different Medicare rebates for the same operations as there should be less variation in the items claimed by different providers. In some cases, the changes will help doctors refer patients for the most suitable test/procedure for them.



Who was consulted on the changes?

The GSCC was established in 2018 by the Taskforce to provide broad clinician and consumer expertise. Feedback from stakeholders including peak bodies, colleges, individual health professionals, and consumers, was considered by the GSCC prior to making its final recommendations to the Taskforce.

The Taskforce undertook public consultation during the review of general surgery services. Once approved by Government, the Department of Health held Implementation Liaison Group meetings with relevant stakeholders including the Royal Australian College of Surgeons (RACS); Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA); Australasian Trauma Society (ATS); Australian & New Zealand Gastro Oesophageal Surgery Association (ANZGOSA); Australian & New Zealand Hepatic, Pancreatic and Biliary Association (ANZHPBA); Australian Medical Association (AMA); and the private hospital and private health insurance sectors to discuss any unintended consequences arising from the proposed changes.

The changes to general surgery services are a result of the Taskforce endorsed recommendations and consultation with stakeholders.

How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?

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

Significant variation from forecasted expenditure may warrant review and amendment of fees, and incorrect use of MBS items can result in penalties including the health professional being asked to repay monies that have been incorrectly received.

The new and amended MBS general surgery items will be reviewed approximately 24 months post-implementation.

Where can I find more information?

For questions relating to implementation, or to the interpretation of the changes to general surgery MBS items prior to 1 July 2021, please email 1july2021MBSchanges.generalsurgery@health.gov.au. Questions regarding the proposed PHI classifications should be directed to PHI@health.gov.au.

If you have a query relating exclusively to interpretation of the Schedule after the changes to the general surgery items have been implemented on 1 July 2021, please email askMBS@health.gov.au.

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.