



Medicare Support for COVID-19 Vaccinations

FAQ last updated: 13 April 2022

This FAQ describes the 22 Medicare items that have been introduced to support the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. These items:

- Include vaccine suitability assessments, in-depth assessments, a flag fall item for suitability assessments conducted outside consulting rooms, and a vaccine booster incentive payment.
- Are to be used for assessing the vaccine suitability for all doses and age cohorts in accordance with current clinical guidelines.
- Must be bulk-billed. Bulk billing incentives cannot be claimed in association with COVID-19 vaccine support items.
- Can only be accessed by General Practitioners (GPs) and Other Medical Practitioners (OMPs) working at or from a medical practice that is participating in the Government's COVID-19 vaccination roll-out. GPs or OMPs providing services to individuals at or from a practice that is not participating in the roll-out are not eligible to use the COVID-19 vaccine items or to provide COVID-19 vaccinations.
- Can only be used by GPs, OMPs and suitably qualified health professionals who are appropriately qualified and trained to provide an immunisation to the patient. This includes having completed any mandatory Commonwealth training associated with the delivery of COVID-19 vaccination services, as well as meeting any state or territory legislative requirements.

An overview of all of the items is provided, followed by a section, starting on page 5, providing answers to frequently asked questions. Guidance on co-claiming of COVID-19 vaccine support items and other MBS items, including for the co-administration of influenza vaccines, is provided.

The associated scenarios document provides examples of how the MBS COVID-19 vaccine support items can be used.

Note: OMPs includes specialist medical practitioners and consultant physicians working in a general practice setting in their capacity as OMPs.

Activities associated with the claiming of the MBS items may also be undertaken by a suitably qualified health professional, including a registered nurse, who is working within their scope of practice.

“Suitably qualified health professional” refers to a person registered in a health profession regulated under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law. More information about suitably qualified health professionals is available from the website of the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency at <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/>.

Overview

MBS Vaccine Suitability Assessment

- 18 MBS items are available to enable GPs, OMPs and suitably qualified health professionals to assess patients for their suitability to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. These items are to be used to assess vaccine suitability for all patients eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine in accordance with current clinical guidance for doses given as part of a primary schedule and boosters.



Medicare Support for COVID-19 Vaccinations

Frequently Asked Questions

- The COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment items can only be billed to Medicare if the vaccine is available to be provided immediately to a patient who is assessed as being suitable. This means that the vaccine must be available for all patients who receive the MBS vaccine suitability assessment service. This includes patients who are assessed as being not suitable, or who elect not to receive a vaccination after receiving the suitability assessment service.
- Note: in situations where a COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment service is provided and the patient elects to be vaccinated, but the vaccination cannot be delivered due to unforeseen circumstances, the patient may return to the medical practice at a later date to receive their vaccination. A further vaccine suitability assessment service would also need to be provided, to ensure that the patient can still receive the vaccine safely. Circumstances that may lead to this kind of delay include unanticipated staff absences leading to reduced capacity to vaccinate all patients on the day of service.
- The MBS COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment items are categorised by:
 - Practitioner (GP/OMP, including services provided on behalf of the GP/OMP outside of consulting rooms)
 - Location (metropolitan/non-metropolitan)
 - Time Period (business/after-hours)
 - Dose (first dose/second or subsequent dose) (see **Table 1**).
- Note: MBS items 93660 and 93661 have been created in recognition that it is not always possible for medical practitioners to attend patients outside their consulting rooms. These permit the service to be provided by a suitably qualified health professional on behalf of the GP/OMP.
- MBS items 93644, 93645, 93646, 93647, 93653, 93654, 93655, 93656, 93660 and 93661 are available to assess patients' suitability for a third dose in severely immunocompromised populations and all booster doses. A list of identified conditions when a patient should have a third dose as part of their primary dose schedule can be found in the relevant ATAGI statement at: www.health.gov.au/news/atagi-statement-on-the-use-of-a-3rd-primary-dose-of-covid-19-vaccine-in-individuals-who-are-severely-immunocompromised.
- Note: a booster dose is any dose of COVID-19 vaccine that is not a primary dose as specified by ATAGI for the relevant vaccine and population cohort www.health.gov.au/news/atagi-statement-on-defining-up-to-date-status-for-covid-19-vaccination.
- Note: While MBS items 93660 and 93661 can be used to assess patients' suitability for a third or booster dose, the items cannot be co-claimed with MBS item 93666 (vaccine booster incentive payment).
- Services rendered under the COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment items will only attract a Medicare rebate where the service is billed in the name of the supervising GP or OMP, who must be present at the location at which the vaccine suitability assessment service is undertaken (except for MBS items 93660 and 93661), and in all cases the GP or OMP must accept full responsibility for the service.
- The vaccine suitability assessment service is free to patients, the MBS items must be bulk-billed, and the vaccine suitability assessment service cannot be linked to or be contingent on any other fee or service.



- Participating practices are encouraged to book a patient's COVID-19 MBS vaccination suitability assessment as a stand-alone appointment. Where this is not appropriate COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment items may be co-claimed with other MBS items, including when co-administering influenza vaccines.
- Note: There are no MBS items for administering an influenza vaccine for and on behalf of a medical practitioner.
- In order for a vaccine suitability assessment service to be billed to Medicare, the patient must receive a face-to-face attendance from the GP, OMP or suitably qualified health professional.
- Patients are expected to receive the MBS vaccine suitability assessment service in relation to each dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- The vaccine can be administered by a GP, OMP, a registered nurse or other suitably qualified health professional registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law.

Flag-Fall payments for services provided outside consulting rooms

- GPs and OMPs assessing people to receive a COVID-19 vaccination outside of their consulting rooms may claim a flag-fall payment, including when undertaken by a suitably qualified health professional on behalf of a GP/OMP, in recognition of the increased costs in providing this service outside consulting rooms. The flag-fall is paid in addition to the vaccine suitability assessment items and can be claimed once for each visit to a residential aged care facility, residential disability facility, or a patient's home, regardless of how many patients are assessed for COVID-19 vaccination.
- MBS item 90005 may be co-claimed with a vaccine suitability assessment service provided as an initial attendance at a residential aged care facility (RACF), residential disability facility setting or a patient's place of residence, on one occasion.
The flag-fall is applicable only to the first patient seen and must be billed in association with one of MBS items 93624, 93625, 93626, 93627, 93634, 93635, 93636, 93637, 93644, 93645, 93646, 93647, 93653, 93654, 93655, 93656, 93660 or 93661.

In-Depth Patient Assessment

- Two Medicare items are available to GPs and OMPs providing the COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment to patients where additional assessment and advice is required, including in relation to the patient's individual risks and benefits associated with receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. These items are the equivalent of current Level B GP and OMP general attendance items and must be bulk-billed. The in-depth patient assessment cannot be linked to or be contingent on any other fee or service. That includes, but is not limited to:
 - patient registration fees for patients new to a practice;
 - book-keeping or registration fees for the appointment;
 - general health checks (these should be incorporated into the bulk-billed patient eligibility assessment or bulk-billed in-depth patient assessment); or
 - any other billed service which the practice or practitioner requires before any COVID-19 MBS item.
- There should be no cost to patients for any aspect of receiving a COVID-19 vaccination.
- MBS item 10660 may be used to bill an in-depth patient assessment in conjunction with one of MBS items 93624, 93625, 93634, 93635, 93644, 93645, 93653 or 93654.



Medicare Support for COVID-19 Vaccinations Frequently Asked Questions

- MBS item 10661 may be used to bill an in-depth patient assessment in conjunction with one of MBS items 93626, 93627, 93636, 93637, 93646, 93647, 93655 or 93656.
- MBS items 10660 and 10661 must be provided in-person (face-to-face) by the GP or OMP who is responsible for the patient's vaccine suitability assessment service.
- A patient may only ever receive one in-depth patient assessment service in their lifetime, billed to either MBS item 10660 or MBS item 10661.
- Note: Suitably qualified health professionals providing vaccine suitability assessment services away from consulting rooms on behalf of a medical practitioner (MBS items 93660 and 93661) are not permitted to provide an in-depth patient assessment using MBS items 10660 or 10661. The in-depth patient assessment items can only be billed to Medicare where the service has been provided to the patient in-person (face-to-face) and for more than 10 minutes by the GP or OMP who is responsible for the patient's vaccine suitability assessment service.

Vaccine Booster Incentive Payment

- A temporary MBS item is available to support medical practitioners providing vaccine suitability assessment services to patients who receive a booster dose of a COVID-19 vaccine (that is, any dose not included in a primary dose schedule for the particular vaccine and patient cohort as specified by ATAGI). This incentive cannot be claimed for doses that constitute part of a primary dose schedule.
- MBS item 93666 provides an incentive payment of \$10 per eligible vaccine suitability assessment service to patients receiving a booster dose of a COVID-19 vaccination.
- MBS item 93666 will be paid in conjunction with MBS COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment service items 93644, 93645, 93646, 93647, 93653, 93654, 93655 and 93656 (for second/subsequent doses), when a patient receives a booster dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- The item is payable for patients receiving any booster dose, but is not payable for any dose that is part of a primary dose schedule.
- MBS item 93666 is also payable in conjunction with MBS item 90005 provided the above eligibility condition is met and the vaccine suitability assessment service is delivered to a patient at an eligible location outside consulting rooms.

Note: Practices and providers that are not participating in the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out, or participating practices at which a vaccine is not available to be provided, should consider the appropriate general attendance items for discussion of COVID-19 vaccination with their patients.

Details of the item descriptors and an Explanatory Note are available from the MBS Online website at <http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/Home>, by searching for "COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment", "flag-fall arrangements for COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment services", and "in-depth patient assessment for a COVID-19 vaccine".

Co-administering a COVID-19 vaccine and influenza vaccine

- ATAGI has advised that a COVID-19 vaccination and an influenza vaccination can be administered at the same time. These services may be provided during the same attendance.



Medicare Support for COVID-19 Vaccinations

Frequently Asked Questions

- A vaccine suitability assessment MBS item would be billed for the COVID-19 vaccination. Influenza vaccine services are typically administered with standard MBS attendance items.
- Note: There are no MBS items for administering an influenza vaccine for and on behalf of a medical practitioner.
- While a medical practitioner is under no obligation to bulk-bill a patient receiving an influenza vaccination, a patient who also receives a COVID-19 booster vaccination as part of the same occasion of care must be bulk-billed for the MBS COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment component of the overall service.
- Patients should be informed of any potential out of pocket costs before any service is provided, preferably when they book their appointment.
- Medical practitioners administering influenza vaccinations should be aware of the rules around the National Immunisation Program.

Summary of MBS Vaccine Support Items

Table 1 – Summary of claimable MBS Items for each dose

	1 st dose	2 nd or 3 rd primary dose	Booster dose
<u>Dose 1 suitability assessment items</u> 93624, 93625, 93626, 93627, 93634, 93635, 93636 or 93637	✓		
<u>Dose 2 and subsequent dose suitability items</u> 93644, 93645, 93646, 93647, 93653, 93654, 93655 or 93656		✓	✓
<u>Remote supervision vaccine assessment</u> 93660 and 93661	✓	✓	✓
<u>Flag fall</u> 90005	✓	✓	✓
<u>In depth patient assessment items</u> 10660 and 10661 *	✓	✓	✓
<u>Booster incentive</u> 93666			✓

*Items 10660 and 10661 may only be claimed once per patient.

Frequently Asked Questions

Below you will find answers to the following questions:

1. How do the MBS items work?
2. Who is eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine support services?
3. Who is eligible to provide the COVID-19 vaccine support services?
4. Who is eligible to provide a COVID-19 vaccination to a patient who has been assessed as suitable?
5. What do the arrangements mean for medical practitioners?
6. How will the MBS COVID-19 vaccine support items be billed?



7. Will the COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment service attract incentive payments under the Practice Incentive Program?
8. Can I provide more than one vaccine suitability assessment service to the same patient for the same dose?
9. Can a patient receive more than one vaccine suitability assessment service on the same day?
10. What happens if a patient is assessed as being unsuitable or decides not to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?
11. Can a COVID-19 vaccine and flu vaccine be co-administered?
12. What are the record keeping and reporting requirements?
13. Can I co-claim the COVID-19 vaccine support items with other general attendance items?
14. What are the co-claiming restrictions for the COVID-19 vaccine support items?
15. Are there any exceptions to the co-claiming rules?
16. Are the COVID-19 vaccine support items included under the 80/20 rule?
17. How do Medicare ineligible patients access COVID-19 vaccines?
18. Are there limitations on the services?
19. How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?
20. What is the legislative basis for the items?
21. Where can I find more information?

1. How do the MBS items work?

- The MBS COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment items allow GPs, OMPs and suitably qualified health professionals to assess if a patient is suitable to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.
- The vaccine suitability assessment may include a short patient history, and limited examination and management, where this is clinically relevant.
- A GP, OMP or a suitably qualified health professional is expected to use their clinical judgement to decide if a patient meets the eligibility criteria for receiving a COVID-19 vaccination. Eligibility criteria for receiving a vaccination is available on the Australian Government Department of Health website at <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19vaccines/information-for-covid-19-vaccination-providers>.
- In cases where a patient is assessed as not being suitable (and does not receive a vaccination) or otherwise chooses not to receive a vaccination, the GP or OMP would still be able to bill Medicare for the vaccine assessment service, using the appropriate COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment MBS item number.
- Note: COVID-19 vaccine-related items do not attract a bulk-billing incentive and cannot be co-claimed with the regular MBS bulk-billing incentive items.
- MBS items 10660 or 10661 for in-depth patient assessments for the COVID-19 vaccine may only be claimed once per patient, and must be provided in conjunction with the relevant vaccine suitability assessment item only.
- MBS items 10660 and 10661 must be provided in-person (face-to-face) by the GP or OMP who is responsible for the patient's vaccine suitability assessment service.
- MBS item 90005 may only be billed once, for the first patient attendance during a single visit to a RACF, residential disability facility setting or a patient's place of residence. The item works in the same manner as the



GP RACF flag-fall items 90001. MBS item 90005 cannot be co-claimed with any other MBS flag-fall item or bulk-billing incentive item.

- MBS item 93666 can only be paid in conjunction with a vaccine suitability assessment service provided for the purpose of assessing a patient's suitability for any booster dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Note: MBS item 93666 cannot be claimed in conjunction with a vaccine suitability assessment service undertaken to assess a patient's suitability for a dose that is part of a primary schedule of a COVID-19 vaccine as recommended by ATAGI for the relevant vaccine and population cohort.

2. Who is eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine support services?

- All MBS items relating to COVID-19 vaccination can be provided to any patient who is eligible for Medicare.
- Please note: People who are not eligible for Medicare can still receive a free COVID-19 vaccination service. (See COVID-19 vaccines for Medicare ineligible patients).

3. Who is eligible to provide the COVID-19 vaccine support services?

- The vaccine suitability assessment items are available to a GP or OMP, and the services may be delivered by a suitably qualified health professional on their behalf.
- Only GPs and OMPs working at or from practices that are participating in the Government's COVID-19 vaccination roll-out can access the MBS vaccine support items. GPs or OMPs providing services to individuals at or from a practice that is not participating in the roll-out are not eligible to use the COVID-19 vaccine items or to provide COVID-19 vaccinations.
- Services rendered under MBS items 93624, 93625, 93626, 93627, 93634, 93635, 93636, 93637, 93644, 93645, 93646, 93647, 93653, 93654, 93655 or 93656 will only attract a Medicare rebate where the service is billed in the name of the supervising GP or OMP, who must be physically present at the location at which the vaccine suitability assessment service is undertaken and must accept full responsibility for the clinical outcome of the service.
- For services rendered under MBS items 93660 and 93661, provided at a location other than consulting rooms by a suitably qualified health practitioner on behalf of the supervising medical practitioner, the GP/OMP is not required to be physically present at the location at which the vaccine suitability assessment services are undertaken but retains full responsibility for the clinical outcome of the service.
- MBS items 10660 and 10661 can only be provided face-to-face by a GP or OMP.

4. Who is eligible to provide a COVID-19 vaccination to a patient who has been assessed as suitable?

- Vaccination of a patient who has received a vaccination suitability assessment service can be provided by a GP, OMP or a health professional who is appropriately qualified and trained to provide immunisations. This includes having completed any mandatory Commonwealth training associated with the delivery of COVID-19 vaccines, and meeting any state or territory legislative requirements.
- For example, a vaccination may be provided by an endorsed enrolled nurse employed by a general practice where the endorsed enrolled nurse:
 - is also under the supervision of a registered nurse; and



- has completed mandatory COVID-19 training.
- Note: In order to bill Medicare for a vaccine suitability assessment service provided by another health professional, including an enrolled nurse, it remains a prerequisite that a GP or OMP provide overall, on-site supervision to the health professional undertaking the service for all items except 93660 and 93661.
- Only the MBS vaccine suitability assessment items (93624 to 93656, 93660 and 93661), in-depth patient assessment items (10660 and 10661), flag fall (90005), and vaccine booster incentive payment (93666) can be claimed in conjunction with the administration of a COVID-19 vaccine to a patient.

5. What do the arrangements mean for medical practitioners?

- The COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment items can only be claimed by practices who have been selected to participate in the Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccination roll-out.
- GPs or OMPs providing services to individuals at a practice that has not been selected to receive the COVID-19 vaccine for administration to patients are not eligible to use the COVID-19 vaccine support items or to provide COVID-19 vaccinations.
- Practices and providers not participating in the COVID-19 vaccination roll-out, or participating practices at which a vaccine is not available to be provided, can bill the appropriate general attendance items for discussion of COVID-19 vaccination with their patients, provided all other requirements of the general attendance item are met. For example, this may include tailored advice in relation to a patient's current management of health risks.
- All COVID-19 vaccination services must be bulk-billed. These items cannot be co-claimed with bulk billing incentives.
- COVID-19 vaccination services for Medicare eligible cannot be made contingent on any other service or fee. That includes, but is not limited to:
 - Patient registration fees for patients new to a practice;
 - Book-keeping or registration fees for the appointment;
 - General health checks (these should be incorporated into the bulk-billed patient eligibility assessment or bulk-billed in-depth patient assessment); or
 - Any other service which the practice or practitioner requires before any COVID-19 MBS item.
- It is a requirement that a supply of the vaccine be available for immediate administration to all patients receiving the vaccine suitability assessment service. This includes patients who are subsequently assessed as being not suitable or who elect not to receive a vaccination after receiving the suitability assessment service. General practices that do not have supplies of vaccine available for immediate administration to all patients receiving the vaccine suitability assessment service cannot provide a service using these items.
- If a patient is assessed as being suitable to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, it is expected the vaccine will be administered to the patient a short time after the assessment, on the same day. However, in situations where a patient is assessed and elects to be vaccinated, but the vaccination cannot be delivered due to unforeseen circumstances, the patient may return to the medical practice at a later date to receive their vaccination.
- Patients receiving a vaccine must be observed for a period of time after vaccination to ensure there is no immediate adverse reaction, in line with recommended clinical practice.



- The GP or OMP must be present on-site at the location at which the vaccine suitability assessment service is undertaken (with exception of MBS items 93660 and 93661), and subsequent vaccination of the patient, and must accept full responsibility for the service. This includes any time in which the patient is under observation for adverse reactions following the administration of a vaccine. General practices are expected to have adequate resources on hand to manage adverse reactions to a vaccine.

6. How will the MBS COVID-19 vaccine support items be billed?

- The MBS COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment items can only be billed to Medicare by a GP or OMP.
- For the service to be valid one, a COVID-19 vaccine must be available for immediate delivery to the patient. This includes patients who are subsequently assessed as being not suitable or who elect not to receive a vaccination after receiving the vaccine suitability assessment service.
- The rebate for a first-dose vaccine suitability assessment service is higher than the rebate for a second or subsequent dose service. This difference recognises that GPs, OMPs and suitably qualified health professionals may need to spend more time obtaining the patient's consent and providing information about the vaccine before delivering the first dose.
- The values of the rebates for MBS items 93660 and 93661, for a vaccine support service provided in a patient's home by a suitably qualified health professional, are set at a higher rate than the MBS items for treatment in consulting rooms provided on behalf of a medical practitioner by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner or practice nurse (MBS item 10988, 10989 and 10997). This recognises the additional burden of remote supervision services.
- MBS items 10660 and 10661, the in-depth patient assessment items, may be claimed in conjunction with either a first-dose or second or subsequent dose vaccine suitability service. These items are equivalent to 100% of the rebate for a Level B GP or OMP general attendance (i.e. MBS item 23 or 185).
- MBS item 90005, the flag-fall for vaccine suitability assessment services provided at a RACF, residential disability facility setting or a patient's place of residence, is paid at a level equivalent to the flag-fall rate for a GP or OMP general attendance provided in a RACF. It applies only to the initial attendance undertaken during a visit to the patient's place of residence, RACF or residential disability setting. MBS item 90005 is paid only once per visit in a residential setting, regardless of the number of patients seen in the course of the visit.
- Note: Rebates for vaccine suitability assessments and in-depth patient assessments are paid at 85% of the item fees. These fee amounts have been increased so that the Medicare rebate paid each service is at the same level as the equivalent GP and OMP general attendances. Due to the urgency of the vaccine roll-out, the Department of Health has not been able to amend the legislation that establishes 100% rebates for GP and OMP services.
- Note: COVID-19 vaccine support items must be bulk billed and bulk billing incentives are not payable in relation to these items. However, where a vaccine support item is co-claimed with another MBS item (e.g. general attendance item) the usual bulk billing rules (including eligibility for bulk billing incentives) apply to the co-claimed item.

7. Will the COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment service attract incentive payments under the Practice Incentive Program?



Medicare Support for COVID-19 Vaccinations Frequently Asked Questions

- Yes. General practices that are accredited and enrolled in the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) will be eligible to receive an incentive payment if a GP, OMP or a suitably qualified health professional working at the practice has provided a first- and second-dose vaccine suitability assessment service to the same patient.
- To be eligible for the PIP incentive payment, it is only necessary for the first- and second- dose vaccine suitability assessment services to be provided at the same practice to the same patient. It is not necessary for the same GP, OMP or suitably qualified health professional to have delivered both services.
- General practices are reminded to ensure that a GP, OMP or suitably qualified health professional working at the practice providing vaccine suitability assessment services is registered with the practice through the PIP.
- Only services that have been billed to Medicare by a GP or OMP are included under these arrangements, and all requirements of the MBS items must have been fulfilled.
- The PIP COVID-19 Vaccine Incentive payment is set at \$10 per eligible patient, payable only once (that is, incentive payments will not be paid multiple times for services provided to the same patient).
- The PIP incentive cannot be paid more than once per patient, even if more than two vaccine suitability assessments are required.

8. Can I provide more than one vaccine suitability assessment service to the same patient for the same dose?

- Yes. A GP or OMP can bill Medicare for more than one MBS COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment service for the same patient for the same dose.
- For instance, a patient who is assessed as suitable to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, but who continues to have concerns about the vaccine and wants time to consider if they should receive it, may receive a suitability assessment service without choosing to have a vaccination. In this situation, even though the patient has not received a vaccination, the appropriate MBS COVID-19 suitability assessment item may be billed.
- If the patient returns at a later date, having decided that they do wish to receive a vaccination, a further suitability assessment would need to be undertaken, and billed to Medicare using the relevant item number.
- Note: in situations where a COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment service is provided and the patient elects to be vaccinated, but the vaccination cannot be delivered due to unforeseen circumstances, the patient may return to the medical practice at a later date to receive their vaccination. A further vaccine suitability assessment service would also need to be provided, to ensure that the patient can still receive the vaccine safely. Circumstances that may lead to this kind of delay include unanticipated staff absences leading to reduced capacity to vaccinate all patients on the day of service.
- For an MBS COVID-19 vaccine suitability service to be a valid service, a COVID-19 vaccine must be available for immediate delivery to the patient. Not having a supply of vaccine immediately on hand to vaccinate patients receiving vaccine suitability assessment services is therefore not a valid reason for requesting a patient to return on another day to be vaccinated. In addition, practices are expected to roster sufficient staff to provide vaccinations to all patients who receive vaccine suitability assessment services.
- The in-depth patient assessment items may only be claimed once per patient. If a patient has received an in-depth patient assessment in conjunction with a previous vaccine suitability assessment, another in-depth patient assessment cannot be claimed.

9. Can a patient receive more than one vaccine suitability assessment service on the same day?



- Minimum recommended intervals must be observed between doses of multiple-dose COVID-19 vaccines. Patients are therefore not expected to receive multiple vaccine suitability assessment services on the same day.
- However, in some very limited circumstances, a patient who has incorrectly been found unsuitable or who declined a vaccination may return to the general practice on the same day and receive another vaccine suitability assessment service.
- The clinical basis for exceptional circumstances of this kind must be recorded in the patient's notes.

10. What happens if a patient is assessed as being unsuitable or decides not to receive a COVID-19 vaccine?

- If the vaccine suitability assessment has been completed, the appropriate MBS item(s) can be claimed.
- Where the patient returns at a later date, another assessment service would need to be undertaken to determine if the patient is now suitable for a COVID-19 vaccine. The appropriate vaccine suitability assessment MBS item would be billed for this service.
- The in-depth patient assessment items may only be claimed once per patient. If a patient has received an in-depth patient assessment in conjunction with a previous vaccine suitability assessment, an additional in-depth patient assessment cannot be claimed.

11. Can a COVID-19 vaccine and flu vaccine be co-administered?

- ATAGI has advised that a COVID-19 vaccination and an influenza vaccination can be administered at the same time. These services may now be provided during the same attendance.
- Note: while a medical practitioner is under no obligation to bulk-bill a patient receiving an influenza vaccination, a patient who also receives a COVID-19 booster vaccination as part of the same occasion of care must be bulk-billed for the MBS COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment component of the overall service.
- Note: There are no MBS items for administering an influenza vaccine for and on behalf of a medical practitioner.

12. What are the record keeping and reporting requirements?

- Whenever an MBS COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment service is provided, it is essential that the general practice record the reasons for the patient's attendance and the outcomes of the consultation, including whether or not the patient received a COVID-19 vaccine.
- In order to substantiate a Medicare service, a patient or clinical record should be completed at the time a service is provided, or as soon as practicable afterwards. The record needs to:
 - clearly identify the name of the patient;
 - contain a separate entry for each attendance by the patient for the vaccination suitability assessment service and the date(s) on which the service was provided;
 - record the patient's consent to receive the vaccine;
 - provide clinical information adequate to explain the service;
 - be sufficiently comprehensible that another GP or OMP, relying on the record, can effectively undertake the patient's ongoing care as it relates to COVID-19 vaccinations.



- The vaccination status of a patient who has received a COVID-19 vaccine following a vaccination suitability assessment service must be updated on the Australian Immunisation Register portal within two (2) working days.
- Information about the requirements for updating patient information on the portal is available from the Australian Government Services Australia website at:
<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/organisations/healthprofessionals/services/medicare/australian-immunisation-register-health-professionals/managing/help-usingair-online>.

13. Can I co-claim the COVID-19 vaccine support items with other general attendance items?

- Yes, but only where this action is clinically indicated by the health needs of the patient.
- Note: where both a COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment and administration of an influenza vaccine are undertaken relevant MBS items associated with the administration of the influenza vaccine may be co-claimed.
- The purpose of the COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment services is to assess a patient's suitability for a vaccination.
- Where a patient attends a medical practice to address multiple clinical matters, one of which is a request for information and advice about COVID-19 vaccinations, it may be appropriate to address these matters in the course of a normal general attendance service.
- Where a patient attends a medical practice for a COVID-19 vaccination, there may be some circumstances where deferral of treatment for other clinical matters is not feasible or in the patient's best interests; these include clinical matters where treatment cannot be deferred or opportunistic treatment for other conditions.
- Depending on the seriousness of the clinical matters raised by the patient, it may be appropriate to encourage them to book a separate consultation.
- Patients must be informed if any other service that they receive on the same occasion will be bulk-billed or will be subject to a patient co-payment before the service is provided.
- Patients cannot be triaged or screened using existing MBS items before receiving a vaccine suitability assessment service.
- Standard MBS multiple same-day attendance rules apply to the COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment services.
- Payment of benefits may be made for more than one attendance on a patient on the same day by the same GP/OMP, provided the subsequent attendances are not a continuation of the initial or earlier attendances. Examples of other GP/OMP services include but are not restricted to: a standard consultation for a different presenting problem; provision of time-tiered health assessment service; or completion or review of a chronic disease management plan.
- When seeking to co-claim for an unrelated attendance at the same time as a vaccine suitability assessment service, it is recommended that GPs/OMPs include a note stating that "The additional service [MBS item...] is clinically relevant but not related to the vaccine suitability assessment service [MBS item...]."
- Before an additional attendance is provided to the patient, the practice must obtain and document the patient's informed financial consent to ensure that they understand there is no cost associated with the suitability assessment and/or the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine.



Medicare Support for COVID-19 Vaccinations Frequently Asked Questions

13. What are the co-claiming restrictions for the COVID-19 vaccine support items?

Table 2 – Restrictions for co-claiming the MBS COVID-19 Vaccine Support Items

MBS Items	Must be co-claimed	May be co-claimed	Cannot be co-claimed
93624, 93625, 93626, 93627, 93634, 93635, 93636, 93637		90005 10660, 10661	10990, 10991, 10992, 75855, 75856, 75857, 75858 10988
93644, 93645, 93646, 93647, 93653, 93654, 93655, 93656		90005 10660, 10661 93666*	10990, 10991, 10992, 75855, 75856, 75857, 75858 10988
93660, 93661		90005	10990, 10991, 10992, 75855, 75856, 75857, 75858 10988 10660, 10661 93666
90005	93624, 93625, 93626, 93627, 93634, 93635, 93636, 93637, 93644, 93645, 93646, 93647, 93653, 93654, 93655, 93656, 93660, 93661	10660, 10661 93666	10990, 10991, 10992, 75855, 75856, 75857, 75858
10660	93624, 93625, 93634, 93635, 93644, 93645, 93653, 93654	90005	10990, 10991, 10992, 75855, 75856, 75857, 75858 93660, 93661
10661	93626, 93627, 93636, 93637, 93646, 93647, 93655, 93656	90005	10990, 10991, 10992, 75855, 75856, 75857, 75858 93660, 93661
93666*	93644, 93645, 93646, 93647, 93653, 93654, 93655, 93656	10660, 10661	10990, 10991, 10992, 75855, 75856, 75857, 75858 93660, 93661

*93666 can only be co-claimed for booster doses

Key

MBS Item	Service
93624, 93625, 93626, 93627, 93634, 93635, 93636, 93637, 93644, 93645, 93646, 93647, 93653, 93654, 93655, 93656	Vaccine suitability assessment
93660, 93661	Vaccine suitability assessment provided by a health professional
90005	Vaccine suitability assessment flag-fall
10660, 10661	In-depth patient assessment
93666	Vaccine suitability assessment booster incentive



- In addition, MBS item 10997 (for monitoring and support for a person with a chronic disease by a practice nurse or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner) must not be co-claimed for any purpose associated with the provision of a suitability assessment or subsequent vaccination. It may only be billed for a service that is required to manage the patient's existing chronic medical condition.
- No additional MBS attendance item(s) can be used to bill Medicare for the time spent administering a vaccine following a suitability assessment service.

15. Are there any exceptions to the co-claiming rules?

- In almost all cases, co-claiming will only be permitted where another GP or OMP service is provided that is unrelated to the vaccine assessment item. However, where a patient suffers a significant adverse reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine, the GP or OMP is permitted to provide another MBS-rebateable service in order to provide appropriate treatment.
- Note: where both a COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment and administration of an influenza vaccine are undertaken relevant MBS items associated with the administration of the influenza vaccine may be co-claimed.
- To avoid doubt, the vaccine assessment item cannot be linked to or be contingent on the patient (Medicare eligible or Medicare ineligible) receiving the unrelated service.
- A significant adverse reaction includes, but is not limited to systemic reactions such as syncopal episodes and severe allergic reactions, such as anaphylaxis. Severe adverse reactions are expected to be rare.
- A significant adverse reaction may also include a strong, adverse mental/emotional reaction to the vaccination.
- Where a patient suffers a significant adverse reaction, the medical practitioner may provide treatment under an appropriate MBS item. In most cases, it is anticipated that treatment will be provided using the standard MBS general attendance items, but specific treatment items may also be used in line with the GP's or OMP's clinical assessment of the patient's condition.
- The GP or OMP who undertakes or supervises the vaccine suitability assessment service and delivery of a subsequent vaccination is responsible for providing treatment to a patient who experiences a significant adverse reaction. While a suitably qualified health practitioner may assist, the GP or OMP must attend the patient in person and retains clinical responsibility for any treatment provided.
- Services provided to a patient suffering a significant adverse reaction should be bulk-billed.
- Whenever a GP or OMP treats a patient for a significant adverse reaction to a COVID-19 vaccine, this information should be provided to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) by the treating GP/OMP and recorded in the patient's notes. Health professionals are reminded that it is a requirement under public health legislation in some states and territories to notify adverse events following immunisation to their state or territory health department.
- Note: A service provided to a patient who returns to either their usual practice or the medical practice where the vaccination was provided after more than 24 hours (i.e. not on the same day) due to concern that they are experiencing an adverse reaction to the vaccination, is not subject to the MBS multiple same-day attendance rule. In this situation, the GP or OMP would attend and treat the patient using the appropriate MBS item. The GP or OMP is still expected to inform the TGA of the patient's reaction and record the information in the patient's notes.



16. Are the COVID-19 vaccine support items included under the 80/20 rule?

- No, the new vaccine support items are not included in the range of MBS items that count toward the proscribed pattern of service threshold (the 80/20 rule).

17. How do Medicare ineligible patients access COVID-19 vaccines?

- The vaccine will be available free of charge to everyone within Australia regardless of Medicare or visa status. This includes refugees, asylum seekers, temporary protection visa holders, bridging visas and those whose visas have been cancelled.
- Non-citizens who have overstayed their visas can also access the COVID-19 vaccines for free.
- Individuals who do not have a Medicare card can access free vaccinations at:
 - Commonwealth Vaccination Clinics
 - State or territory vaccination clinics
 - Community Pharmacies.
- General practice providers can supply COVID-19 vaccines to individuals who do not have a Medicare card, but cannot bill for this service (Medicare or otherwise). The vaccine will be delivered free of charge. Individuals without Medicare cards can contact their usual practice to check if it is providing vaccinations for individuals without Medicare cards.

18. Are there limitations on the services?

- The MBS COVID-19 vaccine support items only apply to a professional attendance where a dose of COVID-19 vaccine is immediately available for administration to the patient who will receive the suitability assessment at the practice location.
- Note: it is a requirement that the vaccine be available for all patients who will receive a vaccine suitability assessment service, regardless of the outcome of the assessment.
- A service using the COVID-19 vaccine support items cannot be provided as part of an episode of hospital treatment or hospital-substitute treatment.

19. How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?

- The Department of Health will monitor the use of the MBS COVID-19 vaccine support items.
- Any use of the items that does not seem to be in accordance with relevant Medicare guidelines, the COVID-19 vaccine program and legislation will be actioned appropriately.

20. What is the legislative basis for the items?

- The MBS vaccine suitability assessment items are established under *Health Insurance (Section 3C General Medical Services – General Practice Attendance for Assessing Patient Suitability for a COVID-19 Vaccine) Determination 2021*, which is available from the Federal Register of Legislation website at <https://www.legislation.gov.au/>

21. Where can I find more information?



Medicare Support for COVID-19 Vaccinations

Frequently Asked Questions

- The MBS COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment items, including item descriptors and explanatory note, are available from MBS Online at <http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/Home>, by searching for “COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment”.
- You can also subscribe to future MBS updates by visiting MBS Online and clicking ‘Subscribe’.
- COVID-19 National Health Plan resources for the general public, medical and health professionals, and industry are available from the Australian Government Department of Health website at <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-national-health-plan-resources>
- 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 to receive regular news highlights at <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/organisations/health-professionals/news/all>.
- 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 at <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/organisations/health-professionals> or contact Services Australia on the Provider Enquiry Line – **13 21 50**.



Medicare Support for COVID-19 Vaccinations Frequently Asked Questions

Attachment 1

MBS COVID-19 VACCINE SUPPORT ITEMS

MBS Item Number	GP/OMP	Dose and Time Period	Modified Monash Area
93624	GP	First-dose – Business Hours	1
93625	GP		2 to 7
93626	OMP		1
93627	OMP		2 to 7
93634	GP	First-dose – After-hours	1
93635	GP		2 to 7
93636	OMP		1
93637	OMP		2 to 7
93644	GP	Second or subsequent dose – Business Hours	1
93645	GP		2 to 7
93646	OMP		1
93647	OMP		2 to 7
93653	GP	Second or subsequent dose – After-hours	1
93654	GP		2 to 7
93655	OMP		1
93656	OMP		2 to 7
93660	Suitably qualified health professional on behalf of the GP/OMP	Off-Site Remote Supervision	1
93661	Suitably qualified health professional on behalf of the GP/OMP	Off-Site Remote Supervision	2-7
93666	GP/OMP	Vaccine Booster Incentive	All locations
10660	GP	In-Depth Patient Assessment	All locations
10661	OMP	In-Depth Patient Assessment	All locations



Medicare Support for COVID-19 Vaccinations

Frequently Asked Questions

90005	GP/OMP/suitably qualified health professional	Services Outside Consulting Rooms - Flag-Fall	Residential aged care facility Residential disability facility Patient's home
-------	---	---	---

Services rendered in business hours:

- after 8am or before 8pm on a weekday;
- after 8am or before 1.00pm on a Saturday.

Services rendered after-hours:

- on a public holiday.
- on a Sunday.
- before 8am, or after 1pm on a Saturday.
- before 8am, or after 8pm on any day other than a Saturday, Sunday or public holiday.

A locator map to identify a general practice's Modified Monash location is available from the DoctorConnect website at: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/health-workforcelocator/health-workforce-locator>

Please note that the information provided is a general guide only. It is ultimately the responsibility of treating GPs 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.