



# Continuation of Temporary Item - 61644

Last updated: 12 September 2022

- Due to the continuing supply shortages of radiopharmaceutical thallium-201 (TI-201), temporary item 61644 is being extended to 30 June 2023.

## What are the changes?

From 1 April 2022, Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item 61644 is available as a temporary nuclear medicine diagnostic service. The substitute item is for PET using the radiopharmaceutical fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG) to assist with cardiac viability testing.

The substitute item is a direct substitute for MBS item 61325 when there is a supply shortage of the radiopharmaceutical thallium-201 (TI-201) and item 61325 cannot be used.

Item 61644 will be available from 1 April 2022 to 30 June 2023.

The MBS fee for item 61644 is equivalent to that of item 61325.

## Why are the changes being made?

The purpose of the substitute item is to provide an alternative nuclear medicine diagnostic imaging service that offers an equivalent cardiac investigative function as the service is currently unavailable due to TI-201 supply shortages. The substitute item allows providers of nuclear medicine services to use a different type of equipment and alternative radiopharmaceutical to provide the service.

## What does this mean for requestors?

Specialists and consultant physicians can request item 61644 in circumstances where it is clinically necessary, and the request meets the requirements in the item descriptor. During the shortage, if a provider is unable to perform the service described in item 61325 due to the supply shortage of TI-201, the provider can instead provide item 61644.

## What does this mean for providers?

The substitute item must be provided by a credentialed nuclear medicine imaging specialist. When it is not possible to provide the requested TI-201 based item, 61325, due to supply shortages, a provider can instead deliver the substitute item, 61644.

Providers will be expected to use item 61325 with the resumption of the TI-201 supply.

## How will these changes affect patients?

The substitute item will ensure that patients with certain heart conditions will have access to time-sensitive diagnostic imaging services to determine the correct course of clinical treatment. This will reduce health risks to patients who would otherwise have delayed, or unnecessary, intervention due to service unavailability.

## Who was consulted on the changes?

The Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association, the Australasian Association of Nuclear Medicine Specialists and the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nuclear Medicine were consulted and agreed that it should be extended given the shortage of TI-201.

## How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?

The supply of TI-201 will be monitored and the item 61644 will be continued if shortages continue.

## Where can I find more information?

The full item descriptor can be found on the MBS Online website at [www.mbsonline.gov.au](http://www.mbsonline.gov.au). The item is set out in the *Health Insurance (Section 3C Diagnostic Imaging – Additional Nuclear Medicine Services) Determination 2022* which can be downloaded from the [Federal Register of Legislation website](#).

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 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).

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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.

*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.*