



COVID-19 Temporary MBS Telehealth Services Mental Health Services

Last updated: 8 May 2020

- Commencing 13 March 2020, new temporary MBS telehealth items have been made available to help reduce the risk of community transmission of COVID-19 and provide protection for patients and health care providers.
- The list of telehealth services has continued to expand since 13 March. This is the latest factsheet and provides details on all current telehealth items.
- The new items are available to Mental Health providers.
- A service may only be provided by telehealth where it is safe and clinically appropriate to do so.
- The new temporary MBS telehealth items are for out-of-hospital patients.
- As of 20 April 2020, allied health service providers are no longer required to bulk bill these new telehealth items.
- Providers are expected to obtain informed financial consent from patients prior to providing the service; providing details regarding their fees, including any out-of-pocket costs.

What are the changes?

As part of the Australian Government's response to COVID-19, twenty-four (24) new items have been introduced to ensure continued access to essential health services for all Australians. As of 30 March 2020 these items have become general in nature and have no relation to diagnosing, treating or suspecting COVID-19.

The new items are:

- Group A40, sub-group 3 and Group M18, sub-groups 1-4:
 - 4 new psychological therapy items for clinical psychologist services; and
 - 20 new Focused Psychological Strategies items for services provided by a psychologist, GP, non-specialist medical practitioner, occupational therapist or social worker.

A list of the new telehealth items is provided later in this fact sheet.

Please see fact sheet for specialists, consultant physicians and psychiatrists for additional available psychiatric telehealth and telephone services. A fact sheet for allied health services is also available which contains information on additional psychology telehealth and telephone services. These are available on [MBSOnline](#).



Who is eligible?

The new temporary MBS telehealth items are available to providers of telehealth services for a wide range of consultations. All Medicare eligible Australians can now receive these services.

For allied health services, bulk billing is at the discretion of the provider, so long as informed financial consent is obtained prior to the provision of the service.

What telehealth options are available?

Videoconference services are the preferred approach for substituting a face-to-face consultation. However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providers will also be able to offer audio-only services via telephone if video is not available. There are separate items available for the audio-only services.

No specific equipment is required to provide Medicare-compliant telehealth services. Practitioners must ensure that their chosen telecommunications solution meets their clinical requirements and satisfies privacy laws. To assist providers with their privacy obligations, a privacy checklist for telehealth services has been made available on MBSOnline: <http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/Factsheet-TelehealthPrivChecklist>. Further information can be found on the [Australian Cyber Security Centre website](#).

Why are the changes being made?

The new temporary MBS telehealth items will allow people to access essential Medicare funded health services in their homes and reduce their risk of exposure to COVID-19 within the community.

What does this mean for providers?

The new temporary MBS telehealth items will allow providers to continue to deliver essential health care services to patients within their care.

Providers do not need to be in their regular practice to provide telehealth services. Providers should use their provider number for their primary location, and must provide safe services in accordance with normal professional standards.

The telehealth MBS items can substitute for current face-to-face consultations that available under the MBS when the service/s cannot be provided due to COVID-19 considerations. The MBS telehealth items will have similar requirements to normal timed consultation items.

For additional information on the use of the telehealth items, please refer to the [Provider Frequently Asked Questions](#) document available on MBSOnline.

How will these changes affect patients?

Patients should ask their service providers about their telehealth options, where clinically appropriate.

Allied Health telehealth items do not need to be bulk billed, however, the provider must ensure informed financial consent is obtained prior to the provision of the service.

A [consumer factsheet](#) is available on MBSOnline which provides further information on how these changes will affect patients.



Who was consulted on the changes?

Targeted consultation with stakeholders has informed the new temporary MBS telehealth items. Due to the nature of the COVID-19 emergency, it was not reasonably possible to undertake normal, broad consultations prior to implementation.

How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?

The Department of Health will monitor the use of the new temporary MBS telehealth items. Use of the items that does not seem to be in accordance with the relevant Medicare guidelines and legislation will be actioned appropriately.

Where can I find more information?

COVID-19 National Health Plan resources for the general public, health professionals and industry are available from the [Australian Government Department of Health website](#).

The full item descriptors 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 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 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 Services Australia on the Provider Enquiry Line – 13 21 50.

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.



COVID-19 – TEMPORARY MBS TELEHEALTH ITEMS

MENTAL HEALTH ATTENDANCES

GP mental health attendances and OMP mental health attendances can be located in the GP and OMP factsheet. These services are for out-of-hospital patients.

Service	Existing Items <i>current video-conference items</i> <i>Current geographic restrictions apply</i>	Telehealth items <i>via video-conference</i> <i>Geographic restrictions do not apply</i>	Telephone items – <i>for when video-conferencing is not available</i> <i>Geographic restrictions do not apply</i>
Clinical Psychologists Items introduced 13 March 2020			
Attendance lasting more than 30 minutes but less than 50 minutes	80001	91166	91181
Attendance lasting at least 50 minutes	80011	91167	91182
Psychologists Items introduced 13 March 2020			
Attendance lasting more than 20 minutes but less than 50 minutes	80101	91169	91183
Attendance lasting at least 50 minutes	80111	91170	91184
Occupational Therapists Items introduced 13 March 2020			
Attendance lasting more than 20 minutes but less than 50 minutes	80126	91172	91185
Attendance lasting at least 50 minutes	80136	91173	91186
Social Workers Items introduced 13 March 2020			
Attendance lasting more than 20 minutes but less than 50 minutes	80151	91175	91187
Attendance lasting at least 50 minutes	80161	91176	91188