



COVID-19 Bulk Billed MBS Telehealth Services Mental Health Services

Last updated: 30 March 2020

- From 13 March 2020 to 30 September 2020 (inclusive), 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 must be bulk billed and are for non-admitted patients.

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.

Who is eligible?

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

All services provided using the new temporary MBS telehealth items must be bulk billed.

The services will be available until 30 September 2020. The continuing availability of these items will be reviewed prior to 30 September 2020.



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. Services can be provided through widely available video calling apps and software such as Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, Duo, GoToMeeting and others.

Free versions of these applications (i.e. non-commercial versions) may not meet applicable laws for security and privacy. Practitioners must ensure that their chosen telecommunications solution meets their clinical requirements and satisfies privacy laws.

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 new temporary telehealth MBS items will substitute current face-to-face consultations that are available under the MBS. The new temporary MBS telehealth items will have similar requirements to normal timed consultation items.

The new temporary telehealth items must be bulk billed, meaning MBS rebates are paid to the provider.

For information regarding the Medicare assignment of benefit, please refer to the [Provider Frequently Asked Questions](#) document available on MBSOnline.

How will these changes affect patients?

The new temporary MBS telehealth items will require providers to bulk-bill, so there will be no additional charge to patients. Patients are required to consent to their service being bulk-billed.

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

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 descriptor(s) 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 to the COVID-19 telehealth MBS items please email COVIDResponse@health.gov.au. For all other queries relating to all other items in the Schedule, please 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 need to be bulk-billed, and are for non-admitted 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			
Attendance lasting more than 30 minutes but less than 50 minutes	80001	91166	91181
Attendance lasting at least 50 minutes	80011	91167	91182
Psychologists			
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			
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			
Attendance lasting more than 20 minutes but less than 50 minutes	80151	91175	91187
Attendance lasting at least 50 minutes	80161	91176	91188