



## CONNECTING CARE

Connecting community to local support, when and where it's needed

## TELEHEALTH FACT SHEET

This information is based on that provided by the Australian Government Department of Health <http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/Factsheet-TempBB>

As part of the Government's response to COVID-19 new **temporary** (13 March – 30 September) MBS telehealth items have been introduced to help patients access essential health services remotely by and reduce their risk of exposure to COVID-19.

### Who is eligible?

- All Medicare cardholders are now eligible to access the new temporary MBS telehealth items for a range of consultations.

### What telehealth options are available?

- Patients can now access MBS telehealth consultations with General Practitioners (GP), Specialists, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners, Audiologists, Chiropractors, Clinical Psychologists, Diabetes Educators, Dietitians, Exercise Physiologists, Mental Health workers, Midwives, Nurse Practitioners, Occupational Therapists, Optometrists, Orthoptists, Osteopaths, Physiotherapists, Podiatrists, Psychologists, Social workers, Speech Pathologists, Other Medical Practitioners (OMP).
- Videoconference services are the preferred approach for substituting a face-to-face consultation. However, health practitioners will also be able to offer audio-only services via telephone if video is not available.

### Do I have a choice if my practitioner suggests a video consultation?

- Yes. If a video consultation is suggested and you do not have the necessary technology, you may request to have the service by telephone. Your health professional may also prefer a face-to-face consultation.

### Can I be charged a fee for this service?

- If you are a Commonwealth concession card holder, a vulnerable<sup>1</sup> patient or a patient under 16 years old, you must be bulk billed for GP or OMP telehealth items. This is a legislative requirement.
- For all other telehealth services, health professionals may set their own fees for the new temporary MBS telehealth items.
- If your service is bulk billed (meaning you will not have an out of pocket cost for the service), you will need to assign the Medicare benefit you would receive to your treating health professional.

### How do I make a telehealth appointment?

- Phone first. When making an appointment with your health professional, you could indicate that you would like your consultation via telehealth. Your health professional may also offer any of your existing appointments as a telehealth appointment.



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### How do I prepare for a telehealth consultation?

- Have details of your current prescriptions for review
- Have a record of any recent clinical measurements (eg weight, blood pressure)
- Make a list of questions for your health professional

### Can I be prescribed medication via telehealth?

- Yes, the medical practitioner can mail or email a prescription to you or your pharmacist.

### Can my treating health professional order me a test? (e.g pathology test)

- Yes. There is no difference between a video and face-to-face consultation in terms of ordering pathology and diagnostic imaging tests. In practice, the arrangements for these tests could vary between email, fax, or mail.

### Can I choose who will be in the room with me when I have the video consultation?

- Yes. Depending on your isolation requirements, you may have support from a friend or family member. This should be discussed with your treating health professional.

### Are there special privacy requirements for video consultations?

- The same privacy requirements that apply to face-to-face consultations will apply to video consultation/telephone consultations. Patients should discuss any concerns with their treating health professional.

*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.*

*Reasonable efforts are made to ensure that this information is accurate. Connecting Care does not accept liability for anything, including injury, loss or damage.*

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<sup>i</sup> A vulnerable patient is classified as one of the following; a person who:

- (a) is required to self-isolate or self-quarantine in accordance with guidance issued by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee in relation to COVID-19; or
- (b) is at least 70 years old; or
- (c) if the person identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent—is at least 50 years old; or
- or
- (d) is pregnant; or
- (e) is the parent of a child aged under 12 months; or
- (f) is being treated for a chronic health condition; or
- (g) is immune compromised; or
- (h) meets the current national triage protocol criteria for suspected COVID-19 infection.



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