



Medicare Support for COVID-19 Vaccinations

Last updated: 20 January 2023

- From 1 February 2023 vaccine suitability assessment items will be streamlined and simplified to reflect integration of these services into routine care.
- There will no longer be different item numbers for first, and second and subsequent doses. The booster incentive has been incorporated into the new fee.
- Benefits have been adjusted so that no vaccine suitability assessment service will receive a lower MBS benefit than under the previous arrangements.

What are the changes?

Effective 1 February 2023, there will be a simplified structure for COVID-19 vaccine suitability and associated MBS item numbers. The new structure:

- combines vaccine suitability services for all approved COVID-19 vaccine doses into the corresponding item number that had been for second and subsequent COVID-19 doses (93644 and equivalents),
- benefits have been increased to incorporate the former booster incentive payment into the vaccine suitability assessment item,
- the flag-fall payment for vaccine suitability assessment services paid once for each visit to a residential aged care facility, residential disability facility, or a patient's home will be increased, and
- the descriptors for the in-depth vaccine suitability assessment services have been adjusted in line with the removal of first dose vaccine suitability assessment services, but are otherwise unchanged.

What remains unchanged?

It is important to note that other requirements for vaccine suitability assessment services remain unchanged. In particular:

- COVID-19 vaccine assessment services must be bulk-billed and cannot be contingent on any other service which attracts an MBS benefit. Bulk billing incentives cannot be co-claimed,
- COVID-19 vaccine assessment services 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,

- COVID-19 vaccine assessment services 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,
- the vaccine must be available for administration immediately (though the items can be claimed if the patient is found to be ineligible or chooses not to have a vaccination at that time). Any vaccine administration should be in accordance with ATAGI guidance,
- 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,
- in-depth vaccine suitability assessment services can only be claimed once per patient, and
- there are no changes to the remote supervision items (ie, MBS items 93660 and 93661).

Why are the changes being made?

These changes simplify and streamline the claiming of COVID-19 vaccine suitability and associated services.

What does this mean for providers?

There is no change in the services eligible for MBS benefits but with fewer item numbers, administration of COVID-19 vaccine related services should be simpler. Co-claiming booster incentives will no longer be needed as the MBS benefit will incorporate it.

The flag-fall payment has been increased, so services at a residential aged care facility, residential disability facility, or a patient's home will receive a higher benefit.

How will these changes affect patients?

All Medicare eligible patients are still eligible for COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment services.

COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessments and associated services will still be bulk-billed, with no provider able to charge an additional fee for the service or require another service which has an out of pocket cost.

Can a flu vaccine service be provided at the same time?

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.

A vaccine suitability assessment MBS item would be billed for the COVID-19 vaccination. Influenza vaccine may be administered under the applicable MBS attendance item.

Note: There are no MBS items for administering an influenza vaccine for and on behalf of a medical practitioner.

While a medical practitioner is not required under law to bulk-bill an attendance for 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 requirements of the National Immunisation Program including eligibility criteria for government funded vaccines.

Where can I find more information?

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 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 1973* 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 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.

MBS COVID-19 VACCINE SUPPORT ITEMS

Descriptors are simplified. Medical practitioners should familiarise themselves with the full requirements of MBS items before claiming.

GPs in Modified Monash Area 1 (simplified descriptors)

93644 – suitability assessment service during business hours

93653 – suitability assessment service after-hours

93660 – suitability assessment service on behalf of a GP/OMP by a suitably qualified health professional on their behalf

10660 - in-depth patient assessment, co-claimed with 93644 or 93653

90005 – flag fall for services in a residential aged care facility, residential disability facility or patient's home, co-claimed with 93644, 93653 or 93660

GPs in Modified Monash Areas 2 to 7 (simplified descriptors)

93645 – suitability assessment service during business hours

93654 – suitability assessment service after-hours

93661 – suitability assessment service on behalf of a GP/OMP by a suitably qualified health professional on their behalf

10660 – in-depth patient assessment, co-claimed with 93645 or 93654

90005 – flag fall for services in a residential aged care facility, residential disability facility or patient's home, co-claimed with 93645, 93654 or 93661

OMPs in Modified Monash Area 1 (simplified descriptors)

93646 – suitability assessment service during business hours

93655 – suitability assessment service after-hours

93660 – suitability assessment service on behalf of a GP/OMP by a suitably qualified health professional on their behalf

10661 - in-depth patient assessment, co-claimed with 93646 or 93655

90005 – flag fall for services in a residential aged care facility, residential disability facility or patient's home, co-claimed with 93646, 93655 or 93660

OMPs in Modified Monash Areas 2 to 7 (simplified descriptors)

93647 – suitability assessment service during business hours

93656 – suitability assessment service after-hours

93661 – suitability assessment service on behalf of a GP/OMP by a suitably qualified health professional on their behalf

10661 – in-depth patient assessment, co-claimed with 93647 or 93656

90005 – flag fall for services in a residential aged care facility, residential disability facility or patient's home, co-claimed with 93647, 93656 or 93661

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.

SCENARIOS DEMONSTRATING CHANGES IN BILLING

All scenarios below use MMM1 GP items for in business hours. Equivalent items for after 1 February 2023 for MMM2-7, OMPs and after hours are listed at Attachment 1.

Routine first dose, suitability assessment

Billy is 5 years old and his mother has taken him to see Dr Turner for his first COVID-19 vaccine dose. Dr Turner is a GP who works in MMM1 and the appointment is during business hours.

After 1 February 2023, Dr Turner would claim MBS item 93644 for a suitability assessment service during business hours.

Before 1 February 2023, Dr Turner would have claimed item 93624 for a first dose suitability assessment service during business hours.

Routine booster dose, suitability assessment

Omar is 16 years old and is going for a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Dr Mendez is a GP who works in MMM1 and the appointment is during business hours.

After 1 February 2023, Dr Mendez would claim MBS item 93644 for a suitability assessment service during business hours.

Before 1 February 2023, Dr Mendez would have claimed item 93644 for a second or subsequent dose suitability assessment service during business hours as well as item 93666 for a booster incentive. (Note from 1 February 2023 the total MBS benefit payable will be unchanged).

Booster dose suitability assessments on behalf of a GP at a RACF

A local Residential Aged Care Facility (RACF) has arranged COVID-19 vaccine booster doses for the majority of its residents with a local GP clinic. Mr Anand is a nurse who travels from the local GP clinic to the RACF and provides suitability assessments for 20 patients on behalf of Dr Khatri. Mr Anand is supported and remotely supervised by Dr Khatri.

After 1 February 2023, Dr Khatri would claim one MBS item 90005 as a “flag fall” and 20 MBS item 93660s for suitability assessment services on her behalf.

Before 1 February 2023, Dr Khatri would have claimed one MBS item 90005 as a “flag fall”; 20 MBS item 93660s for the suitability assessment services conducted on her behalf and 20 MBS item 93666s for booster incentives.

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 factsheet is current as of the Last updated date shown above and does not account for MBS changes since that date.