



COVID-19 Temporary MBS Telehealth Services

Nicotine and Smoking Cessation Counselling

Last updated: 23 July 2021

- From 21 July 2021, new items are available for face-to-face and telehealth services related to nicotine and smoking cessation counselling delivered by General Practitioners (GPs) and Other Medical Practitioners (OMPs). These items will be in place until 30 June 2022.
- The introduction of these items aligns with the Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA) decision that, from 1 October 2021, e-cigarettes containing nicotine will be up-scheduled to a prescription only (schedule 4) medicine.
- The new items allow Medicare-benefits to be paid for telehealth health care services relating to nicotine and smoking cessation counselling without the requirement for the patient to have an established clinical relationship with the physician.
- These services are eligible for MBS incentive payments when provided as bulk billed services to Commonwealth concession card holders and children under 16 years of age.
- All providers are expected to obtain informed financial consent from patients prior to charging private fees for services.

Who is eligible?

The temporary MBS items are available to all Medicare eligible patients seeking GP or OMP telehealth services for nicotine and smoking cessation counselling.

What items are available?

There are 18 MBS items for the provision of services by GPs and OMPs related to nicotine and smoking cessation counselling:

Group A45 – Nicotine and Smoking Cessation Counselling

- 6 new face-to-face items for nicotine and smoking cessation counselling services – MBS items 93680, 93681, 93682, 93683, 93684 and 93685.
- 6 new videoconference items for nicotine and smoking cessation counselling services – MBS items 93690, 93691, 93692, 93693, 93694 and 93695.
- 6 new telephone items for nicotine and smoking cessation counselling services – MBS items 93700, 93701, 93702, 93703, 93704 and 93705.

Videoconference services are the preferred approach for substituting a face-to-face consultation. However providers can also offer audio-only services via telephone in some circumstances and where clinically appropriate. 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](#).

What does this mean for providers?

The new temporary MBS items allow providers to deliver essential health care services to patients via telehealth where there may be barriers due to limited service provision.

Providers do not need to be in their regular practice to provide telehealth services, however they must have a formal agreement with a medical practice that provides onsite face-to-face services to patients.

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 are available under the MBS when the service/s cannot be provided due to accessibility considerations. These new MBS telehealth items have the same clinical requirements as a face-to-face service for nicotine and smoking cessation counselling

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

What services can be offered using these items?

These items should be used for services related to nicotine and smoking cessation counselling.

Therapeutic interventions for the cessation of nicotine and smoking, including liquid nicotine, can be prescribed under these items if clinically relevant, subject to state and territory legislation.

Do I have to have seen the patient in the last 12 months?

No, an established clinical relationship with a patient is not required to use these items, however GPs and OMPs may also use these items for consults with existing patients when appropriate.

Does a telehealth consult constitute the establishment of a relationship with a patient?

No, to have a defined established clinical relationship with a patient, the provider, or another provider within the medical practice the provider is located, must have to have seen the patient in-person for a face-to-face consultation within the preceding 12 months. Further information on established clinical relationships can be found at [MBS Online](#).

How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?

The Department of Health continues to monitor the use of the new MBS 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

General Practitioner (GP) Services

Table 1. GP Nicotine and Smoking Cessation Counselling MBS items introduced 21 July 2021

Service	Face-to-face Items	Telehealth items via video-conference	Telephone items – for when video-conferencing is not available
Professional attendance for nicotine and smoking cessation counselling, care and advice by a general practitioner at consulting rooms lasting less than 20 minutes.	93680	93690	93700
Professional attendance for nicotine and smoking cessation counselling, care and advice by a general practitioner at consulting rooms lasting at least 20 minutes.	93683	93693	93703

Other Medical Practitioner (OMP) Services

Table 2. OMP Nicotine and Smoking Cessation Counselling MBS items introduced 21 July 2021

Service	Face-to-face Items	Telehealth items via video-conference	Telephone items – for when video-conferencing is not available
Professional attendance for nicotine and smoking cessation counselling, care and advice by a medical practitioner (not including a general practitioner, specialist or consultant physician) at consulting rooms lasting less than 20 minutes.	93681	93691	93701
Professional attendance for nicotine and smoking cessation counselling, care and advice by a general practitioner by a medical practitioner (not including a general practitioner, specialist or consultant physician) at consulting rooms, in an eligible area, lasting less than 20 minutes. Modified Monash 2-7 area.	93682	93692	93702
Professional attendance for nicotine and smoking cessation counselling, care and advice by a medical practitioner (not including a general practitioner, specialist or consultant physician) at consulting rooms lasting at least 20 minutes.	93684	93694	93704
Professional attendance for nicotine and smoking cessation counselling, care and advice by a medical practitioner (not including a general practitioner, specialist or consultant physician) at consulting rooms, in an eligible area, lasting at least 20 minutes. Modified Monash 2-7 area.	93685	93695	93705