



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

MEDICARE 45 YEAR OLD HEALTH CHECK

Australian Better Health Initiative:
A joint Australian, State and Territory Government initiative.

MBS item 717

FACTSHEET

This material is a summary only and must be read in conjunction with the Medicare Benefits Schedule Book.

The 45 – 49 (inclusive) Year Old Health Check

The 45 – 49 (inclusive) year old health check is part of the Australian Better Health Initiative (ABHI) announced by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in February 2006. ABHI aims to enhance the capacity of the health system to promote good health and reduce the burden of chronic disease.

A health check at this stage of life can assist patients to make the necessary lifestyle changes to prevent or delay the onset of chronic disease.

Patient Eligibility & Consent

Eligible patients must be aged 45 to 49 years (inclusive) who are at risk of developing a chronic disease. The decision that a patient is at risk of developing a chronic disease is a clinical judgement made by the GP. However, at least one risk factor must be identified. Factors that the GP may consider include, but are not limited to:

- Lifestyle risk factors such as smoking, physical inactivity, poor nutrition or alcohol misuse;
- Biomedical risk factors such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, impaired glucose metabolism or excess weight; and
- Family history of a chronic disease.

The patient must understand what the health check involves and give verbal or written consent for the health check to be undertaken.

Components of the Health Check

The health check must include:

1. Information collection, including taking a patient's history and undertaking relevant examinations and investigations as clinically required;
2. Making an overall assessment of the patient's health, including the patient's readiness to make lifestyle changes (SNAP Guide, see below);
3. Initiating interventions, referrals as clinically indicated; and
4. Providing advice and information to the patient including strategies to achieve lifestyle and behaviour changes (e.g. *Lifescrpts* resources, see below).

Assesment could include the patient's readiness to make lifestyle changes (SNAP Guide). Where appropriate, advice should be provided to the patient on strategies to achieve lifestyle and behaviour changes, using in particular the *Lifescrpts* resource.



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The health check should generally be undertaken by the patient's 'usual doctor', that is the GP who has provided the majority of services to the patient in the past 12 months, or likely to provide the majority of services in the following 12 months. The GP is expected to take a primary role in the following activities:

The Role of the GP

- review and analyse the information collected;
- undertake and arrange investigations;
- make an overall assessment of the patient
- make referrals and identify appropriate follow-up; and
- provide advice to the patient.

The Role of the Practice Nurse and Other Health Professionals

Practice nurses, Aboriginal Health Workers and other health professionals may assist GPs in performing the health check, in accordance with accepted medical practice and under the supervision of the GP. This may include activities associated with:

- identifying eligible patients through examination of patient records and patient information systems used within the practice;
- information collection (such as measuring height, weight, blood pressure and lifestyle risk factors); and
- providing patients with information about recommended interventions, such as information about community resources and support services in the local area, referral options (at the direction of the GP).

Guidelines and Resources

In considering and addressing risk factors, GPs are encouraged to utilise relevant guidelines and resources, such as:

- Medicare Australia enquiry line [132 011](tel:132011)
- 'SNAP'— a population health guide to behavioural risk factors in general practice. www.racgp.org.au/guidelines/snap
- 'Guidelines for Preventive Activities in General Practice'. www.racgp.org.au/redbook
- 'Putting Prevention into Practice'. Guidelines for the implementation of prevention in the general practice setting. www.racgp.org.au/guidelines/greenbook
- 'Overweight and Obesity in Adults: A Guide for General Practitioners'. A National Health and Medical Research Council publication.
- 'The Department of Health and Ageing's *Lifescrpts* guidelines and evidence cards, assessment tools and prescription pads. www.health.gov.au/lifescrpts or www.agpn.com.au/site/index.cfm?display=5267