



THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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New Health Services From Today

From today, families will have access to a whole range of new health services – including a \$150 voucher for teen dental care; a free health check for kids about to start school; and a guide to kids' health and development for parents.

Items that become available today include:

- \$150 for preventative dental checks for teenagers under Medicare
- Free Healthy Kids Check for kids about to start school
- Get Set 4 Life guide – to help kids develop healthy habits for life
- New Medicare items for children with autism
- New Medicare items to help people at high risk of diabetes
- New medicines on the PBS for people with multiple sclerosis, chronic kidney disease, Alzheimer disease, psoriasis of the scalp, as well as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

The Rudd Government is committed to keeping people well and out of hospital.

With over half a million Australians ending up in hospital every year for conditions that could have been prevented – 50,000 of them for avoidable dental conditions – more needs to be done on prevention.

These new initiatives aim to keep our kids well, and allow for early intervention where it is needed.

MEDICARE TEEN DENTAL PLAN

From today, more than one million teenagers will be eligible for dental care every year under the new Medicare Teen Dental Plan.

The Medicare Teen Dental Plan will make it more affordable for families to keep their children's teeth in good health - with \$150 towards an annual check-up that includes an oral examination and, where required, X-rays, scale and clean, and other preventative services.

Families who receive Family Tax Benefit Part A will be eligible to receive up to \$150 per year for each child aged 12 to 17 years. Teenagers in the same age group receiving Youth Allowance or Abstudy will also be eligible.

Medicare Australia will automatically send a voucher to eligible families and teenagers. Most people will receive their voucher in July or August. Teenagers can receive their annual check-up from their dentist with a rebate available from Medicare Australia. Some dentists may decide to bulk bill the service.

The Medicare Teen Dental Plan encourages teenagers to care for their teeth by getting annual check-ups and to maintain good oral health that will reduce the need for expensive treatment in the future. The program also encourages young adults to continue to look after their teeth once they become independent and move out of home.

Further information about the Medicare Teen Dental Plan is available from Medicare Australia on 132 011 (patients) and 132 150 (dentists).

HEALTHY KIDS CHECK

To make sure kids are happy, healthy and ready to learn, each child starting school will now have access to a free, basic health check through Medicare.

The Healthy Kids Check will be available to all four-year-olds at the request of parents or carers at the time of their four-year-old immunisation, when children are getting ready to start school.

Delivered by GPs and practice nurses, it will help make sure kids are on track for health and wellbeing, and will include such things as height, eyesight and hearing.

GET SET 4 LIFE – HABITS FOR HEALTHY KIDS GUIDE

At the same time as getting the Healthy Kids Check, parents and carers will also receive *Get Set 4 Life - habits for healthy kids* Guide.

This is a practical, user-friendly guide to help parents help their kids develop healthy habits for life.

It will help parents and carers get a better sense of what they would normally expect to see in a four-year-old child, and encourage them to talk to their GP if they have any concerns with their child's health or development.

The guide will have info on key areas of health such as: healthy eating, regular exercise, speech and language, oral health, skin and sun protection, and hygiene.

NEW MEDICARE ITEMS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Children with autism or any other pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) will benefit from new Medicare items for diagnosis and treatment. The initiative is part of the Government's *Helping Children with Autism* package, which involves funding of \$190 million over five years to assist children and their parents and carers.

NEW MEDICARE ITEM TO ASSIST PEOPLE AT RISK OF TYPE 2 DIABETES

Patients aged from 40-49 at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes can now access a new Medicare item to allow doctors to review patients' risk factors and commence early intervention programs.

Diabetes and its complications contribute to poor health, disability and premature death, and place a significant burden on our health system. Modifiable risk factors for type 2 diabetes include excess weight, lack of physical activity, poor diet and nutrition, blood pressure, cholesterol and smoking.

NEW PBS LISTINGS

Newly listed medicines on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) from 1 July 2008 will benefit people with multiple sclerosis, chronic kidney disease, Alzheimer disease, psoriasis of the scalp, as well as the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.

- Natalizumab (Tysabri[®]) will be subsidised for patients suffering from relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis. Natalizumab is an immunological therapy that reduces the relapse rate and slows the progression of the disease. About 2,300 people will begin natalizumab for the treatment of relapsing-remitting multiple sclerosis in the first full year of listing, costing \$370.2 million over the next four years.
- Cinacalcet hydrochloride (Sensipar[®]) will be subsidised and will help manage the kidney disease complication known as secondary hyperparathyroidism. About 2,900 people will begin cinacalcet therapy in the first full financial year of listing, at an expected cost of \$166.4 million over the next four years.
- Many Australians with Alzheimer disease, a degenerative brain disease affecting memory, thinking and behaviour, will be able to access the medicines memantine hydrochloride (Ebixa[®]) for moderate to severe Alzheimer disease and rivastigmine (Exelon[®]) transdermal patches for mild to moderate forms of the condition.
- Calcipotriol (Daivonex[®]) will assist those with chronic plaque-type psoriasis of the scalp.
- Terbinafine hydrochloride (Lamisil[®]) cream is being listed for the treatment of a fungal or yeast infection in an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person.

For media inquiries only, please contact Sean Kelly 0417 108 362

For any general inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220