



Travelling overseas? Protect your provider number

The *Health Insurance Act 1973* only allows payment of Medicare benefits for services provided in Australia. This applies regardless of whether the services are:

- personally performed by you
- performed by a non-medical health professional supervised by you (supervised services)
- provided in-person or via telehealth.

Medicare benefits cannot be claimed for services provided while you are overseas.

General guidance

A Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) claim made under your provider number(s) tells us that you personally performed or supervised the service. If another health professional provides or supervises a service for your patient while you are overseas, they must use their own provider number for any billing.

Managing provider numbers

As provider numbers identify who performed/supervised a service, it is important you take steps to ensure they are used correctly in MBS claims. Some easy steps to help safeguard your provider number(s) include:

- Maintain good administrative and clinical record keeping, including appropriate training in record keeping practices for practice staff. Ensure correct date of service is entered on claims submitted to Medicare.
- Close provider number(s) you no longer need, particularly if you leave a practice – see www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/manage-your-provider-and-prescriber-numbers
- Regularly check who is allowed to submit claims on your behalf (delegations). You should also review and update delegations if:
 - a person who handles your billing enters or exits employment with your practice
 - you commence or cease work in a particular practice location.
- Depending on how claims are submitted, you can review/update delegations either in:
 - Health Professional Online Services for bulk bill or patient web claims – see www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/manage-delegations-hpos your practice software for other types of claims – consult your software provider.

Before you travel overseas

Protecting your provider number before travelling reduces the risk of incorrect MBS claims. If you intend to provide healthcare while overseas under a private billing arrangement (i.e. not billed to Medicare), you should seek relevant advice before you leave.

Check with your medical defence organisation or professional indemnity insurance provider to see whether your insurance policy operates outside Australia. You should also consider patient privacy risks and the laws of your travel destination and seek appropriate advice.



Frequently Asked Questions

My patient will need healthcare while one of us is overseas. What can I do?

If you are travelling overseas, you can organise for another health professional to take over your patient's care while you are away.

If that is not possible, or your patient is travelling overseas, you can come to an agreement with the patient to privately bill them for the consultation. Medicare benefits are not payable for services provided outside of Australia.

What if I arrange locum cover for my patients while I am travelling overseas?

If your patients will be seen by another health professional, including under a locum tenens arrangement, the other health professional's provider number must be used for any billing.

Can my provider number be used to claim for a service performed by a non-medical health professional, who I normally supervise, while I am overseas?

No. MBS services cannot be supervised from overseas. Supervised services must be claimed under the provider number of the supervising health professional who is in Australia.

The department contacted me about claims for services it believes were provided while I was overseas, but I was in Australia at the time.

Please let us know if you were in Australia on the date a service was performed using the contact details in the letter you received.

My provider number was inadvertently used to claim Medicare benefits for a service performed/supervised by another health professional. How can I correct this?

You should submit a voluntary acknowledgement of incorrect payments form (VA). Once your VA has been processed, the other health professional can claim for the relevant services using their own provider number. To submit a VA, visit

www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/voluntary-acknowledgement-of-incorrect-payments

I think somebody has used my provider number to claim Medicare benefits without my knowledge. What should I do?

First, check your records for administrative errors. If someone else helps with your billing or claiming, ensure they have not inadvertently used your provider number.

If you cannot identify why your provider number was used, let us know via our online form:

www.health.gov.au/about-us/corporate-reporting/report-suspected-fraud/online-form

Alternatively, you can let us know by emailing provider.benefits.integrity@health.gov.au or calling the Provider Benefits Integrity Hotline at 1800 314 808 (open 9 am to 5 pm Australian Eastern Standard Time, Monday to Friday).