



GUARANTEEING MEDICARE – MBS TASKFORCE REVIEW – VARICOSE VEIN SERVICES

The Australian Government is making changes to Medicare-funded varicose vein services to ensure they reflect modern best practice, support high-value care, and improve patient experiences and safety. These changes follow recommendations from the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review Taskforce and the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC).

What are the changes?

From 1 November 2021, there will be a number of changes to MBS items for the treatment of varicose veins to align them with contemporary clinical practice, ensure appropriate patient access, and clarify their intended use.

Item descriptors will be amended to include more modern and accurate terminology, ensure the items are used for clinically necessary rather than cosmetic purposes, and support appropriate co-claiming practices.

In addition, the inappropriate and unsafe use of venography, fluoroscopy and angiography services with some varicose vein items will be restricted.

Guidance notes will also be updated to clarify the recommended training and qualification requirements for medical professionals performing these services.

The broader recommendations of the vascular surgery review remain under consideration by the Government and are not progressing to implementation at this time.

Why are these changes being made?

These changes were recommended by the expert Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) and the independent MBS Review Taskforce following a comprehensive review of the MBS items. Both MSAC and the Taskforce included a range of clinicians, health system experts and consumers.

What does this mean for patients?

Patients will benefit from access to more high-value and safer varicose vein services that align with evidence-based best practice, and a reduction in unnecessary treatments.

Patients with a demonstrated clinical need will continue to have access to a range of varicose vein treatments and will benefit from more consistent billing arrangements.

What does this mean for providers?

These changes support contemporary best practice for providers and enable more uniform billing across patients.

Providers will continue to have the flexibility to choose from a range of varicose vein procedures and tailor treatments for patients based on benefits and risks, pathology and patient choice. Clearer item descriptors will support providers in making informed decisions to achieve the best health outcomes for their patients.

The Department will work closely with peak bodies when implementing changes to the MBS items for varicose veins. More detail will be provided to the profession in due course.

Further detail will be available on
www.mbsonline.gov.au