



Medicare Telehealth Services

Consumer information

General Practitioners, Specialists, Nurse Practitioners, Midwives, Practice Nurses and Allied Health Providers

The temporary COVID-19 Medical Benefits Schedule (MBS) telehealth items, introduced on 13 March 2020, have been successful in reducing the risk of COVID-19 community transmission and has provided protection for patients and health care providers alike.

The Australian Government has worked with experts to design telehealth services that will continue from 1 January 2022. Many of the telehealth services that have benefited patients since March 2020 continue in their current form.

Making temporary COVID-19 telehealth services an ongoing part of Medicare will include some changes to align with evidence and expert advice. This will help ensure patients receive high quality, high value telehealth as part of the range of Medicare services they use.

From 1 January 2022:

- Eligible patients all around Australia will continue to have access GP, Specialists, nursing, midwifery and allied health services via telehealth where the health professional deems it clinically appropriate.
- An extended GP telephone consultation item, specifically for people living in remote regions of Australia, will be introduced.

- Specialist telehealth services will more closely align with advice that video services support higher quality consultations than phone. Face-to-face and video services are available for initial and complex consultations, with telephone services also available for subsequent and minor consultations including psychiatry consultations of up to 45 minutes.
- Recognising Australia's high vaccination rates and move toward 'COVID-normal', the GP 'hotspot' telephone consultations and Specialist telehealth services for private hospital patients will cease.
- The expansion of telehealth services across all Australia makes many pre-COVID telehealth services obsolete. These will be progressively removed from the MBS.
- Nurses, Aboriginal Health Workers and Optometrists will continue to be able to provide patient-end-support services when patients are participating in a telehealth consultation with a specialist.
- The Government is including telehealth services in its Medicare compliance rules that deter high-volumes of short duration services. This will give patients assurance that they should expect an equivalent service where telehealth is an appropriate substitute for face-to-face

Eligibility for GP telehealth services

Patients still need to have an existing clinical relationship with their GP telehealth provider to meet eligibility requirements, with limited exemptions to this requirement. This means having had a face-to-face consultation with the same GP or another practitioner at the same practice in the 12-months prior to their telehealth consultation. Patients subject to Public Health Orders, specific GP mental health services, nicotine cessation and sexual and reproductive health services by telehealth are available to all patients, as per current telehealth eligibility requirements (refer www.mbsonline.gov.au).