



45 Year Old Health Check – New MBS Item

On 1 November 2006 a new MBS item for a 45 Year Old Health Check (Item 717) was introduced into the Medicare Benefit Schedule. The aim of the health check is to assist with detection and prevention of chronic disease and to enable early intervention strategies to be put in place where appropriate.

The item can be used by both vocationally registered and non-VR GPs, in either accredited or non-accredited practices.

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 is likely to provide the majority of services in the following 12 months.

Patient Eligibility

The health check is available to people between 45 and 49 years of age (inclusive) who are at risk of developing a chronic disease. The decision about whether an individual is at risk of developing a chronic disease rests with the clinical judgement of the GP, but a specific 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, alcohol misuse
- Biomedical risk factors, such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, impaired glucose metabolism or excess weight; or
- Family history of a chronic disease.

A chronic disease or condition is one that has been or is likely to be present for at least six months (or a terminal condition), including but not limited to asthma, cancer, cardiovascular illness, diabetes mellitus, mental health conditions, arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions. The item does not apply to admitted patients of a hospital or day-hospital facility.

Medicare Rebate

The Medicare rebate is \$100.00 (paid at 100% of the schedule fee). Where the health check is bulk billed and the patient is a Commonwealth concession card holder, the GP is also entitled to claim a bulk billing incentive item.

A Medicare rebate is payable for this item **only once** for each eligible patient. This item is not an annual check. If a GP is unsure whether a patient has already received this service they may call Medicare Australia, with the patient present on 132 011.

Item 717 cannot be claimed in conjunction with another GP attendance item on the same day, except where this is clinically required. In these exceptional cases, the claim for the attendance item should be annotated to indicate that the attendance was not related to the health check.

Activities Included in the Health Check

The health check must include:

- Information collection, including taking a patient history and undertaking relevant examinations and investigations as clinically required;
- Making an overall assessment of the patient;
- Interventions as indicated; and
- Providing advice and information to the patient.

While these elements provide an overall framework for the health check, the item is not prescriptive about specific clinical activities that must be undertaken for each patient.

GP Role

The GP is responsible for the overall health check provided to the patient. The GP is expected to take a primary role in the following activities:

- Reviewing and analysing the information collected
- Undertaking and arranging investigations
- Making an overall assessment of the patient
- Making referrals and identifying appropriate follow-up
- Providing advice to the patient.

Practice Nurse Role

Practice nurses, Aboriginal Health Workers and other health professionals may assist GPs in performing the health check, 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)
- At the direction of the GP, providing patients with information about recommended interventions (such as information about community resources and support services in the local area, referral options, etc).

Full details about the new item number are provided in the November 2006 Medicare Benefits Schedule, pages 52 – 54. Medicare has also produced the following resources to assist practices:

- Fact Sheet
- Questions and Answers sheet
- Sample Checklist.

Copies of these resources can be obtained by contacting the Division or can be downloaded from the Division's website. For further assistance with the 45 year old health check please contact Mary Saunders at the Division.