



45 year old health check (MBS item 717)

Australian Better Health Initiative: A joint Australian, State and Territory government initiative

A new Medicare health check item will be available from 1 November 2006, as part of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) "Australian Better Health Initiative".

The aim of this health check is to assist with the prevention of chronic disease and to enable early intervention strategies to be put in place where appropriate.

Item 717

Attendance by a medical practitioner (including a general practitioner but not a specialist or consultant physician) at a place other than a hospital to undertake a health check for a patient between the age of 45 and 49 (inclusive) who is at risk of developing a chronic disease.

Which patients are eligible for the health check?

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 or alcohol misuse;

- biomedical risk factors, such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, impaired glucose metabolism or excess weight; and
- 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.

Which doctors can claim this item?

This item can be claimed for a service provided by a medical practitioner, including a general practitioner but not including a specialist or consultant physician.

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.

What is the 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 (10990 or 10991).

How often can the item be claimed?

A Medicare rebate is payable for this item **once** for each eligible patient.

If a GP is unsure whether a patient has already received a health check under item 717, he/she may call Medicare Australia, with the patient present, on 132 011.

What must the health check include?

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**.

A sample checklist to assist GPs and health professionals in the practice in undertaking the health check is available at www.health.gov.au/epc

Information collection

The health check must include taking a patient history (if one does not already exist) or updating an existing history.

Relevant examinations and investigations based on information from the patient's medical, social and family history must be undertaken (see the sample checklist).

Assessment of patient

The health check must include an overall assessment of the patient's health, based on the history and the results of any relevant examinations and investigations.

This could also include an assessment of the patient's readiness to make lifestyle changes (see the SNAP Guide).

Interventions

Where appropriate, arrangements need to be put in place for referrals and follow-up of any problems identified.

Advice and information to the patient

The patient must be provided with advice and information as part of the health check. Where appropriate, this should include advice on strategies to achieve lifestyle and behaviour changes, utilising in particular, the Lifescripts resources (see below).

What is the role of the GP?

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.

Role of the practice nurse and other health professionals

Practice nurses, Aboriginal Health Workers and other health professionals may assist GPs in performing the health check, in accordance with accepted medical practice and 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).

Guidelines and resources

In considering and addressing risk factors, GPs are encouraged to utilise relevant guidelines and resources, such as:

- the RACGP publications:
 - “SNAP – a population health guide to behavioural risk factors in general practice”;
 - “Guidelines for Preventive Activities in General Practice” (the Red Book); and
 - “Putting Prevention into Practice” (the Green Book) – This provides guidelines for the implementation of prevention in the general practice setting.
- the National Health and Medical Research Council’s (NH&MRC) publication, “Overweight and Obesity in Adults: A Guide for General Practitioners”.
- the Department of Health and Ageing’s Lifescripts guidelines and evidence cards, assessment tools and prescription pads.

Further information

For Medicare claiming and payment queries, call the Medicare Australia provider enquiry line on 132 150.

Additional questions and answers and a sample checklist can be found at:

www.health.gov.au/epc

Information about item 717 is also available in the 1 November 2006 edition of the Medicare Benefits Schedule Book, which is available at:
www.health.gov.au/mbsonline

The RACGP preventive care publications are available on the College website at:

www.racgp.org.au/redbook
www.racgp.org.au/guidelines/greenbook and
www.racgp.org.au/guidelines/snap

The NH&MRC’s Overweight and Obesity in Adults: A Guide for General Practitioners is available at:

www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/obesityguidelines-guidelines-gp_guide.htm

More information on the Lifescripts resources is at www.health.gov.au/lifescrpts or www.adgp.com.au/site/index.cfm?display=5267

To order a Lifescripts Resource Kit, contact your local Division of General Practice.