



COVID-19 Temporary MBS Telehealth Services

Dental Practitioners in the practice of oral and maxillofacial surgery

Last updated: 27 April 2021

- Commencing 13 March 2020 and extending until 31 December 2021, temporary MBS telehealth items have been made available to help reduce the risk of community transmission of COVID-19 and provide protection for patients and health care providers.
- The temporary MBS telehealth items are available to dental practitioners in the practice of oral and maxillofacial surgery.
- A service may only be provided by telehealth where it is safe and clinically appropriate to do so.
- The temporary MBS telehealth items are for out-of-hospital patients.
- The telehealth items are not required to be bulk billed.
- The Department continues to review the ongoing role of telehealth to support the pandemic response in consultation with peak medical professional groups.

What are the changes?

As part of the Australian Government's response to COVID-19, four (4) items for dental practitioners in the practice of oral and maxillofacial surgery have been introduced to ensure continued access to essential Medicare rebated consultation services.

The telehealth items are:

Group O1, sub-group 1:

- items 54001 and 54003 for an initial attendance
- items 54002 and 54004 for subsequent attendance.

A list of the new telehealth items is provided later in this fact sheet.

Who is eligible?

The temporary MBS telehealth items are available to providers of telehealth services for a wide range of consultations. All Medicare eligible Australians can receive these services.

Why are the changes being made?

The Government has extended its national COVID-19 emergency health response for a further six months, to 31 December 2021. This will ensure that patients continue to have access to key health initiatives, including Medicare-subsidised telehealth services.



The temporary MBS telehealth items allow people to access essential Medicare funded health services in their homes and reduce their risk of exposure to COVID-19 within the community.

Bulk billing is at the discretion of the dental practitioner, so long as informed financial consent is obtained prior to the provision of the service.

What telehealth options are available?

Videoconference services are the preferred approach for substituting a face-to-face consultation. However, in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, providers will also be able to offer audio-only services via telephone if video is not available. There are separate items available for the audio-only services.

No specific equipment is required to provide Medicare-compliant telehealth services. Practitioners must ensure that their chosen telecommunications solution meets their clinical requirements and satisfies privacy laws. To assist providers with their privacy obligations, a privacy checklist for telehealth services has been made available on the [MBSOnline website](#). Further information can be found on the [Australian Cyber Security Centre website](#).

What does this mean for providers?

The temporary MBS telehealth items allow providers to continue to deliver essential health care services to patients within their care.

Providers do not need to be in their regular practice to provide telehealth services. Providers should use their provider number for their primary location, and must provide safe services in accordance with normal professional standards.

The telehealth MBS items can substitute for current face-to-face consultations that are available under the MBS when the service/s cannot be provided due to COVID-19 considerations. The MBS telehealth items have the same clinical requirements as the corresponding face-to-face consultation items.

For additional information on the use of telehealth items, please refer to the [Provider Frequently Asked Questions](#) document available on MBSOnline.

How will these changes affect patients?

Patients should ask their service providers about their telehealth options, where clinically appropriate.

The dental practitioner (oral and maxillofacial surgery) telehealth items do not need to be bulk billed, however the provider must ensure informed financial consent is obtained prior to the provision of the service.

A [consumer factsheet](#) is available on MBSOnline which provides further information on how these changes will affect patients.



Who was consulted on the changes?

Targeted consultation with stakeholders has informed the temporary MBS telehealth items. Due to the nature of the COVID-19 emergency, it was not reasonably possible to undertake normal, broad consultations prior to implementation.

The extension of the temporary COVID-19 telehealth measures for another six months, until 31 December 2021, was a recommendation of the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee. The further extension will provide additional time for the Department to assess telehealth adoption rates, patterns of use and impact of patient outcomes to inform any future telehealth reform policies.

How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?

The Department of Health continues to monitor the use of the temporary MBS telehealth items. Use of the items that does not seem to be in accordance with the relevant Medicare guidelines and legislation will be actioned appropriately.

Where can I find more information?

COVID-19 National Health Plan resources for the general public, health professionals and industry are available from the [Australian Government Department of Health website](#).

The full item descriptors and information on other changes to the MBS can be found on the [MBS Online website](#). You can also subscribe to future MBS updates by visiting [MBS Online](#) and clicking 'Subscribe'.

The Department of Health provides an email advice service for providers seeking advice on interpretation of the MBS items and rules and the Health Insurance Act and associated regulations. If you have a query relating exclusively to interpretation of the Schedule, you should email askMBS@health.gov.au.

Subscribe to '[News for Health Professionals](#)' on the Services Australia website and you will receive regular news highlights.

If you are seeking advice in relation to Medicare billing, claiming, payments, or obtaining a provider number, please go to the Health Professionals page on the Services Australia website or contact Services Australia on the Provider Enquiry Line – 13 21 50.

Please note that the information provided is a general guide only. It is ultimately the responsibility of treating practitioners to use their professional judgment to determine the most clinically appropriate services to provide, and then to ensure that any services billed to Medicare fully meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the legislation. This sheet is current as of the Last updated date shown above, and does not account for MBS changes since that date.



COVID-19 – TEMPORARY MBS TELEHEALTH ITEMS

Table 1. Oral and maxillofacial surgical services introduced 22 May 2020

Service	Existing Items face to face	COVID-19 Telehealth items via video- conference	COVID-19 Telephone items – for when video- conferencing is not available
Dental practitioner (oral and maxillofacial surgery only), initial attendance	51700	54001	54003
Dental practitioner (oral and maxillofacial surgery only), subsequent attendance	51703	54002	54004