



New pathology MBS item for antimicrobial drug susceptibility testing for Mycobacterium tuberculosis complex (MTBC)

Last updated: 4 May 2023

- From 1 July 2023, one new item (69505) will be listed on the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) for the whole genome sequencing (WGS) of MTBC to ensure patients with tuberculosis are more effectively treated.
- These changes are relevant for medical practitioners that specialise in or consult on microbiology, and who manage patients with diagnosed MTBC.

What are the changes?

From 1 July 2023, one new item (69505) for WGS for antimicrobial drug susceptibility testing in patients who have an infection caused by a pathogen in the MTBC will be listed on the MBS. **Attachment A** to this factsheet lists the new item.

The new MBS item will be available for patients who have been diagnosed with MTBC or if the infection recurs. The purpose of the test is to detect and characterise antimicrobial resistance in the pathogen genome so that appropriate treatment can be provided.

For private health insurance purposes, the new items will be listed under the following clinical category and procedure type:

- Item 69505:
 - Clinical category: Support List (pathology)
 - Procedure type: Type C

Why are the changes being made?

Currently, usual care in patients with a MTBC infection uses phenotypic antimicrobial drug susceptibility testing, which can take several weeks. WGS of MTBC gives faster and more accurate results compared to the testing currently used.

At its March – April 2022 meeting, the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) supported the creation of a new MBS item for WGS testing for patients at the time of initial diagnosis of MTBC and patients who have recurring symptoms or who fail to respond to treatment within the expected timeframe under MSAC application [1646 – Whole genome sequencing of antimicrobial-resistant pathogens](#).

What does this mean for requesters and providers?

Specialists who manage patients with diagnosed MTBC can request WGS drug susceptibility testing to more accurately and effectively treat the infection.

To be eligible for Medicare benefits, laboratories providing this service must be accredited according to the pathology accreditation standards specified in the [Health Insurance \(Accredited Pathology Laboratories-Approval\) Principles 2017](#).

How will these changes affect patients?

The listing of this service will lead to more rapid identification of antimicrobial resistance markers (resistome) and better targeted treatment, in order to improve patient outcomes.

Who was consulted on the changes?

Consultation was undertaken with the National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO), as amongst Australian-born people tuberculosis occurs at higher rates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations than in the non-indigenous population. Through the MSAC public consultation process, input was also received from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC) and the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ).

How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?

All MBS items are subject to compliance processes and activities, including random and targeted audits which may require a provider to submit evidence about the services claimed.

Where can I find more information?

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

The Department of Health and Aged Care provides an email advice service for providers seeking advice on interpretation of the MBS items and rules and the *Health Insurance Act 1973* and associated regulations. If you have a query relating exclusively to interpretation of the Schedule, or to these changes after they come into effect on 1 July 2023, please email askMBS@health.gov.au.

Subscribe to '[News for Health Professionals](#)' on the Services Australia website to 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.

The data file for software vendors will be available via the MBS Online website under the [Downloads](#) page.

Attachment A: New item descriptor (to take effect 1 July 2023)

Category 6 – Pathology Services

Group P3 - Microbiology

69505

Sequencing and analysis of the genome of mycobacterium tuberculosis complex from an isolate or nucleic acid extract:

(a) to speciate the organism:

(i) at the time of a patient's initial diagnosis and commencement of initial empiric therapy; or

(ii) following recurrence of a patient's symptoms or a patient's failure to respond to treatment within the expected timeframe; and

(b) for the purpose of:

(i) genome wide determination of the antimicrobial resistance markers (resistome) of the isolate; and

(ii) individualising the patient's treatment

Applicable once at initial diagnosis and once per episode of disease recurrence

MBS Fee: \$150.00

Benefit: 75% = \$112.50 85% = \$127.50

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 factsheet is current as of the Last updated date shown above and does not account for MBS changes since that date.