



Budget 2020-21

This information is accurate as at 6 October 2020.

COVID-19 Response Package – guaranteeing Medicare and access to medicines – extension

Extension of Temporary COVID-19 Pathology Measures

Some accredited pathology laboratories can get their current accreditation extended. This is if they meet both of the following:

- their accreditation approval period ends during the period 1 October 2020 up to and including 31 March 2021
- they can't proceed with an onsite or remote assessment by the accrediting body.

In these cases, they may be granted a continuation of their current accreditation. This will be for a period of 6 months from when the current approval was going to end.

This change is not subject to the passage of legislation.

Who does this measure affect?

This affects accredited pathology laboratories.

When will this start and finish?

This started on 1 October 2020 and will finish on 31 March 2021.

Extension of Temporary COVID-19 Telehealth Services

This measure extends the temporary Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) telehealth items to 31 March 2021. These items are available to:

- help reduce the risk of community transmission of COVID-19
- provide protection for patients and health care providers.

The temporary MBS telehealth items are available to all of the following:

- General Practitioners
- medical practitioners and specialists
- consultant physicians
- nurse practitioners
- participating midwives
- mental health services
- allied health providers

- dental practitioners in the practice of oral and maxillofacial surgery.

This change is not subject to the passage of legislation.

Who does this measure affect?

This affects medical practitioners, allied health professionals and Australians eligible for Medicare.

When will this start and finish?

This started from 13 March 2020 and will finish on 31 March 2021.

Removal of the specialist registration fee from the Health Insurance Act 1973 (HIA)

This measure will remove the requirement to pay the current prescribed fee as part of the application process in the *Health Insurance Act 1973 (HIA)*. This will support specialists and consultant physicians during the COVID-19 pandemic accessing higher Medicare rebates.

This change is subject to the passage of legislation.

Who does this measure affect?

This affects specialists and consultant physicians.

When will this start and finish?

This starts from July 2021.

Interim system build to support ongoing telehealth

This measure supports our work on the next stage of a basic enrolment system. The system will:

- enable voluntary patient enrolment
- create a link between patient, provider and practice
- enable future primary health care structural reform and support better targeting of telehealth services.

This change is not subject to the passage of legislation.

Who does this measure affect?

This affects all Australians eligible for Medicare, eligible General Practitioners and Australian medical practices.

When will this start and finish?

This started on 1 July 2020.

Temporary Medicare Item for COVID-19 Screening

Pathology testing for the detection of SARS-CoV-2 nucleic acid is extended to include testing of interstate rail crew members. The test also includes aged care and home care workers in Victoria and interstate heavy vehicle drivers.

This change is not subject to the passage of legislation.

Who does this measure affect?

This affects:

- aged care and home care workers in Victoria
- interstate heavy vehicle drivers
- interstate rail crew members.

When will this start and finish?

This started on 28 July 2020. The extension to include interstate rail crew members started on 22 September 2020. The measure will finish on 31 March 2021.