



## **OLDER PERSONS HEALTH ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

### **Items 700 to 706**

**These questions and answers must be read in conjunction with the item and explanatory notes for Items 700 to 706 (as set out in the descriptor Medicare Benefits Schedule Book).**

#### **What is the purpose of the older person's health assessment?**

The purpose of the Health Assessment is to inform the GP of risk factors and hazards in elderly patients which may require further health management. In addition to assessing a person's health status, a health assessment is used to identify a broad range of factors that influence a person's physical function, psychological function and social function.

For these items an older patient is 75 years and over (Items 700 & 702), or 55 years of age and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (Items 704 & 706).

#### **Who is eligible for an older person's health assessment?**

People aged 75 years and over, or 55 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are living in the community. These health assessment items are specifically intended to benefit frail aged members of the community who are in greatest need of a regular health check. This age represents the time at which people are most likely to experience the greatest levels of disability and ill-health.

#### **Where can a health assessment be performed?**

A health assessment can take place in the patient's home or in the doctor's surgery.

People living in a Residential Aged Care Facility (RACF) are not eligible for these health assessment items, which are specifically designed to enhance primary care for older people living in the community. Aged care facilities are already funded to provide care for residents. For more information visit [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

A health assessment cannot be provided in a hospital as part of in-patient service, since the inpatient is already receiving the type of care which would cover many of the activities provided in a health assessment. Hospital in-patients may qualify on discharge into the community.

**Can a family carer or a friend be with the patient during the assessment?**

A family carer or friend can attend the health assessment. Generally speaking the GP should encourage patients to have a support person present if this will help the person to feel more comfortable about the assessment.

**What should a GP do if a significant problem is identified during a health assessment?**

If the health assessment reveals that the patient has a significant problem, appropriate follow-up should be arranged. Any follow-up action must be undertaken as a separate and additional appointment.

If, during a health assessment, a problem is detected that requires immediate management due to its nature or urgency, a separate consultation can be claimed. The GP should annotate the patient's bill whenever a separate consultation is carried out on the same day as a health assessment.

**What if potential hazards in the home are identified in the process of a health assessment?**

If the GP has identified a potential hazard and made the patient or legal guardian aware of the problem, then he/she has fulfilled his/her duty of care. There would be no expectation that the doctor ensure the situation is rectified, nor any legal obligation to do so. If doctors have specific concerns about their responsibilities in such circumstances, they should seek their own legal advice.

**How can a GP find out if a patient has had a health assessment in the last twelve months?**

A GP should ask the patient whether he or she has had a health assessment within the last twelve months. If the patient has had a health assessment but is not sure of the date of the assessment the GP may contact Medicare Australia on 132 150, with the patient present. For reasons of privacy, a GP is not permitted to make this inquiry on behalf of the patient.

If the patient has had an assessment within the last twelve months, the GP should advise the patient that Medicare benefits are available for only one health assessment within any twelve-month period, and that the patient would bear the full cost of any additional assessments undertaken within those twelve months.

**Do GPs need to keep a written copy of the health assessment in their files?**

**Yes**, a record of the assessment must be kept on the patient's medical record.

Part of the requirement of the item is to offer the patient a written report of the assessment and to discuss the outcomes of the assessment with the patient.

Giving the patient a copy of the results provides them with information about the assessment and allows the patient to have access to the information in the future. It will also encourage and assist the patient to become more actively involved in any preventive health measures recommended by the GP as a result of the health assessment.

**Do patients need to sign a Medicare voucher for all EPC health assessment items?**

A patient is only required to sign a Medicare form for a service that will be direct billed by the providing GP. The Medicare form cannot be signed until after the service has been rendered, and the other requirements included in the item descriptor have been met. With reference to discharge care plans and case conferences, while it is understood that a patient's absence can pose difficulties in claiming rebates for direct billing services, it is the responsibility of the practice to make arrangements with the patient to sign the form.

**What does the GP need to do before billing for a health assessment?**

For the health assessment to be payable under Medicare, the GP should have:

- Undertaken all the components of a health assessment appropriately, either personally or with the assistance of a third party provider – the GP must see the patient and undertake the medical components of the assessment;
- Discussed the outcomes with the patient;
- Offered a report of the assessment to the patient (and to his/ her carer, if appropriate); and
- Attached a copy of the assessment to the patient's record maintained by the practice.

**How do GPs make payments for health assessments undertaken in part by a third party, where the third party is employed by an external agency?**

The nature of any funding arrangements between a GP and an external agency are the responsibility of the GP providing the service.

**Can the GP charge more than one fee if a health assessment has to be done in several sessions?**

**No**. The fee is inclusive of all activities undertaken in a health assessment, whether they are undertaken together or in segments. The billing date for a health assessment must be the date upon which all requirements for the item have been completed.

**Can a GP undertake a health assessment and prepare a care plan for the same patient on the same day?**

**Yes**, if both services are required and actually delivered, although this is unlikely in practice. Rebates are payable for both items where a GP carries out a health assessment and care plan on the same day. The outcomes of the health assessment may legitimately warrant the development of a care plan for a patient with a chronic condition and multidisciplinary care needs. There is no time interval necessary between conducting a health assessment and preparing a care plan, but they should be carried out as separate consultations.

**Can a GP undertake a health assessment and a full medical/physical examination on the same day, and claim for both items?**

Any medical examination undertaken as part of a health assessment or in the context of obtaining information that contributes to the health assessment should not be claimed under a consultation item. If, during the health assessment, a problem is detected that requires separate management due to its nature or urgency, a separate consultation can be claimed.

If a full medical or physical examination is carried out that is clearly not associated with the health assessment, and does not duplicate the services carried out under a health assessment, it could be claimed as a separate item.

**Further Information**

For more information visit the Department of Health and Ageing's website at [www.health.gov.au/epc](http://www.health.gov.au/epc) or phone the Medicare Australia enquiry line 132 150.