



# Financial Incentives for Employing a Practice Nurse

## Medicare definition of a practice nurse

The Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) defines a practice nurse as 'a registered or enrolled nurse who is employed by, or whose services are otherwise retained by, a general practice.'

Practice nursing incentives and MBS item numbers relevant to practice nurses provide a rebate to the general practice for the services provided by the practice nurse. This assists in offsetting the cost of employing the practice nurse.

Some MBS item numbers and government incentives, such as the Practice Nurse Incentive Program, are also available to Aboriginal health workers and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners.

## Practice nurse items

A series of MBS items are available to practice nurses who provide a service on behalf of and under the supervision of a medical practitioner. These services are usually claimed using the supervising medical practitioner's Medicare provider number. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners may use their own Medicare provider number where applicable.

The available MBS items include, telehealth items, follow up services to health assessment and chronic disease management items and the bulk billing incentives.

The medical practitioner under whose supervision the service is provided must be satisfied that the practice nurse is appropriately registered, qualified, trained and covered by indemnity insurance to undertake the service.

The medical practitioner also retains responsibility for the health, safety and clinical outcomes of the patient.

For a practice nurse to provide Medicare approved services, he or she must be appropriately qualified and trained to provide that service. This includes compliance with any state or territory requirements. For example, in some states and territories, nurses can only administer a vaccine following an order or direction from a medical practitioner; or additional accredited training may be required to carry out a Pap smear.

MBS services such as health assessments (items 701, 703, 705, 707) and chronic disease management (items 721, 723, 732) may only be claimed by a medical practitioner who has personally attended the patient. However, suitably qualified health professionals such as a practice nurse, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners or Aboriginal health worker employed by the general practice may assist the medical practitioner in performing the service.

Such assistance must be provided in accordance with accepted medical practise and under the supervision of the medical practitioner.

This may include activities associated with:

- Information collection.
- Providing patients with information about recommended interventions at the direction of the medical practitioner.
- Patient assessment.
- Making arrangements for services.

Whilst all care has been taken in preparing this document, this information is a guide only and subject to change without notice.

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## Practice nurse follow up services

Where a patient has undergone a health assessment (MBS item numbers 701, 703, 705, 707, 715) or chronic disease management (items 721, 723, 732), MBS follow up services are available from a practice nurse or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner, on behalf of a medical practitioner.

MBS Item Number	Description	Rebate* (100%)
10987	Follow up service for a person who has received a MBS item 715 Health Assessment - up to 10 services in a calendar year	\$24.00
10997	Monitoring and support for a person with chronic disease management item in place – up to 5 services in a calendar year	\$12.00

## Telehealth

A practice nurse, Aboriginal health worker or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner who provides clinical support to a patient who is participating in a video consultation with a specialist or consultant physician can generate the following on behalf of a medical practitioner:

MBS Item Number	Description	Rebate* (100%)
10983	Service provided by a practice nurse, AHW or ATSI health practitioner on behalf of a medical practitioner	\$32.40
10984	Service provided by a practice nurse, AHW or ATSI health practitioner on behalf of a medical practitioner – residential aged care	\$32.40

## Bulk bill incentives

Bulk bill incentives also apply to these items where the conditions are met:

MBS Item Number	Description	Rebate* (85%)
10991	Bulk bill incentive - less than 16 years of age or a concession card holder in a regional, rural or remote area	\$9.35

## Practice Nurse Incentives Program

The Practice Nurse Incentives Program (PNIP) provides financial incentive payments to support and enhance the role of nurses working in general practice.

Practices accredited under the current Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) Standards for general practices who employ or retain the services of an appropriately trained and qualified practice nurse, Aboriginal health worker or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner for the minimum number of sessions per week can access the PNIP.

There are three types of PNIP payments available to participating general practices. These include:

### Incentive payment

The incentive payment is based on the Standardised Whole Patient Equivalent (SWPE) value and the number of hours worked by practice nurses at the practice.

Payments under the PNIP are calculated quarterly with one incentive equating to:

- \$25,000 per year, per 1000 SWPE where a registered nurse works at least 12 hours 40 minutes per week, and
- \$12,500 per year, per 1000 SWPE where an enrolled nurse or Aboriginal Health Worker works at least 12 hours and 40 minutes per week.

## Department of Veterans' Affairs loading

General practices providing services to Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Gold Card holders will be eligible for a yearly, per veteran payment. There are no limitations on the number of DVA loadings paid per practice.

## Accreditation Assistance Incentive payment

Non-accredited general practices that are registered for accreditation against the RACGP Standards for general practices may also be eligible for the one-off \$5,000 accreditation assistance incentive payment. The practice must also join the PNIP, provide Medicare Australia with proof of registration for accreditation on application and become accredited within 12 months of joining the PNIP.

## Other program support

The program also includes:

- A rural loading of up to 50 per cent based on the Australian Standard Geographical Classification - Remoteness Areas (ASGC - RA) location of the practice.
- A loading for Aboriginal Medical Services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services.
- Support for practices in urban areas of workforce shortage, Aboriginal Medical Services and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services to employ an allied health professional, such as a physiotherapist, dietitian or occupational therapist, instead of, or in addition to a practice nurse and/or Aboriginal health worker.

## Applying for the PNIP

Practices can apply for the PNIP through PNIP Online. PNIP Online is available through Health Professional Online Services (HPOS).

## Nurse assisted item numbers

A practice nurse may also assist a general practitioner in carrying out MBS health assessments (for patients in the at-risk categories) and chronic disease management (patients with an existing chronic disease) item numbers.

The item numbers are:

MBS item number	Description	Rebate * (100%)
701	Health Assessment Brief < 30 minutes	\$59.35
703	Health Assessment Standard 30 – 45 minutes	\$137.90
705	Health Assessment Long 45 – 60 minutes	\$190.30
707	Health Assessment Prolonged > 60 minutes	\$268.80
715	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Health Assessment	\$212.25
721	Preparation of a GP Management Plan	\$144.25
723	Coordinate a Team Care arrangement	\$114.30
729	Contribution to a Multidisciplinary Care Plan provided by another provider	\$70.40
731	Contribution to a Multidisciplinary Care Plan by another provider – for a patient in a residential aged care facility	\$70.40
732	Review of a GP Management Plan Coordinate a review of team care arrangements	\$72.05
900	Completion of a Domiciliary Medication Management Review	\$154.80

## Income generation examples

A practice nurse could potentially generate income by assisting with four health assessments in one session\* and providing the prescribed follow up care. For example:

MBS item number	Description	Rebate * (100%)
705	Practice nurse assists with <b>four</b> Health Assessments (long)	\$761.20

From these four patients, the following could be generated:

MBS item number	Description	Rebate * (100%)
721	<b>Two</b> GP Management Plans	\$288.50
732	<b>Six</b> reviews of GP Management Plans	\$432.30
723	<b>One</b> Team Care Arrangement	\$114.30
732	<b>Three</b> reviews of Team Care Arrangements	\$216.15
900	<b>One</b> Domiciliary Medication Management Review	\$154.80
<b>Total Medicare rebate</b>		<b>\$1,206.05</b>

\* All financial figures are based on the Medicare Benefits Schedule rebate amount. Practices may choose to charge a private fee in addition to this.

## For more information

See additional fact sheets and resources available at [www.practiceassist.com.au](http://www.practiceassist.com.au), including:

- Employing a nurse in the general practice setting
- Practice nurse Medicare Benefit Schedule items
- Chronic Disease Management Items
- Health Assessments
- Medicare Benefits Schedule Telehealth items