Heart Health Check
MBS item

From 1 April 2019 two new interim items 699 and 177 are available on the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) to allow General Practitioners (GPs) and other medical practitioners to conduct a Heart Health Check that lasts at least 20 minutes.

What is a Heart Health Check?
A Heart Health Check is the patient-friendly term for comprehensive absolute cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk assessment and ongoing management.

It principally involves gathering information about a patient’s CVD risk factors, calculating and recording their absolute CVD risk using a validated calculator and managing their risk as per guidelines on an ongoing basis.

Who is eligible for item 699 and how often can it be claimed?

- All adults not already known to have CVD who are aged 45 years and above (30 years and above for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples).
- The items can be claimed once per patient in a 12-month period.

Why did we need a dedicated MBS item for absolute CVD risk?

- Assessing and managing absolute CVD risk has the potential to prevent twice as many deaths from coronary heart disease when compared with treating individual risk factors [1].
- Underuse of absolute CVD risk calculators contributes to the under-treatment of high-risk patients. Up to 70% of high-risk Australians aged 45-74 years are not receiving blood pressure and lipid lowering therapy [2].
- Existing Health Assessment items (701, 703, 705, 707 & 715) do not facilitate ongoing assessment and management of patients according to their risk of CVD. Limitations include: age restrictions (exclusion of people 50 – 74 years old), in some cases only offering a one-off service and no specific mention of absolute CVD risk calculation.

What does item 699 involve?
Professional attendance for a heart health assessment by a GP at consulting rooms lasting at least 20 minutes and must include:

a. collection of relevant information, including taking a patient history that is aimed at identifying CVD risk factors, including diabetes status, alcohol intake, smoking status, cholesterol status (if not performed within the last 12 months) and blood glucose
b. a physical examination, which must include recording of blood pressure
c. initiating interventions and referrals to address the identified risk factors
d. implementing a management plan for appropriate treatment of identified risk factors
e. providing the patient with preventative health care advice and information, including modifiable lifestyle factors

See [www.MBSonline.gov.au](http://www.MBSonline.gov.au) for full details on item description, explanatory notes and schedule fee, including information on Heart Health Check item 177 for use by medical practitioners working in general practice.

Absolute CVD risk must be calculated and recorded as per the Australian CVD risk calculator available online at cvdcheck.org.au or via calculators embedded in GP clinical software.
Suggested approach to implementation of the Heart Health Check MBS item in general practice

Identify eligible patients without existing CVD
- Perform records search to identify eligible patients
- Opportunistically identify patients attending practice
- Display Heart Health Check or Heart Age Calculator posters in waiting room to encourage patients to discuss during their consult
- Not for in-patients of a hospital or residential aged care facility

Collect CVD risk factor information
- Explain health assessment process and gain consent
- Patient history to identify risk factors – e.g. diabetes, chronic kidney disease, smoking status, alcohol intake, cholesterol status (if not performed in last 12 months), family history.
- Physical examination including blood pressure recorded
- Practice nurses or Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander health workers may assist GPs in collecting this information

Assess risk, initiate interventions & implement management plan
- GP must see patient
- Conduct and record absolute CVD risk assessment as per Australian guidelines (3, 4)
- Discuss risk and options for management with patient
- Provide lifestyle advice to address modifiable risk factors (practice nurse can assist)
- Recommend interventions and referrals. This includes initiation of blood pressure and/or lipid lowering medicines for higher risk patients
- Implement a plan for ongoing management and assessment of CVD risk
- Implement reminder systems to recall patients as clinically necessary

For more information visit heartfoundation.org.au or call our Helpline on 13 11 12

References