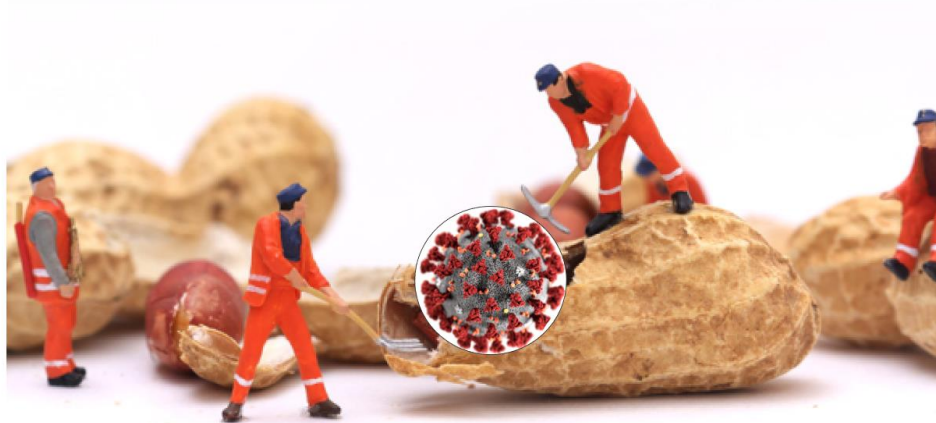


BILLING COVID-19 ITEM NUMBERS

6 APRIL 2020 UPDATE

IN A NUTSHELL



At Medical Billing Experts, our priority is ensuring that all of our clients are minimising their audit risk by billing item numbers appropriately.

As there have been a large number of inquiries from clients about appropriate billing of the new COVID-19 item numbers **and there have been a large number of changes to the item numbers since our previous article on 17 March 2020**, we have put together this **updated** quick guide to explain how and when to bill the item numbers correctly.

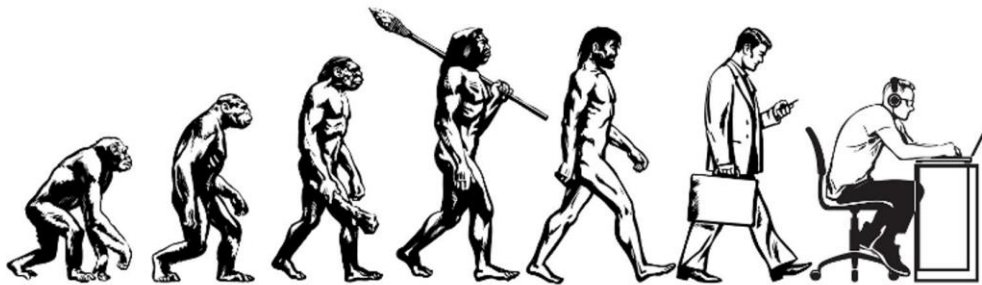
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The COVID-19 item numbers are constantly evolving and we are currently in Stage 5 of the changes.

EVOLUTION OF THE ITEM NUMBERS



STAGE 1

- Release of limited number of TH/Phone item numbers where practitioner required to self-isolate or patient in self-isolation or considered vulnerable. (13 March)

STAGE 2

- TH/Phone items added for midwives. (March 16)

STAGE 3

- Access to TH/Phone item numbers expanded to vulnerable health professionals. (March 23)

STAGE 4

- ITEM NUMBERS AVAILABLE FOR USE WITH ALL PATIENTS. Release of additional item numbers including GP and Medical Practitioner Chronic Disease Management, Eating Disorder Management, GP Mental Health consults, GP After Hours and urgent after hours, paediatric autism intervention services, some AH attendances, pregnancy support. (30 March)

STAGE 5

- In consultation with the Colleges and the professional bodies, Services Australia is identifying item numbers that can appropriately be performed via TH/Phone and additional COVID-19 item numbers will be released in early April.

STAGE 6

- Adjustments to item numbers released in stages 1-5 as the need arises.

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A few important points **and recent updates** before we get into the detail:

- ✓ **Several new specialist COVID-19 item numbers were released on 6 April 2020 including Telehealth/Telephone item number equivalents for items 132, 133, 141 and 143. More COVID-19 item numbers may be released throughout early April.**
- ✓ The COVID-19 Telehealth and Telephone item numbers MUST be bulk billed for dates of service prior to 6 April 2020, as this was one of the elements in all of the COVID-19 item number descriptors until that date.
- ✓ **For dates of service on or after 6 April 2020, the bulk billing requirement has been relaxed but not entirely removed (see detail in later section of this article).**
- ✓ **As at 29 March 2020, the COVID-19 item numbers are available for use to treat ALL Medicare eligible Australians.** All previous limitations of use of the item numbers for vulnerable patients and vulnerable practitioners have been removed for services provided on or after 29 March 2020.
- ✓ There are no geographic requirements for the COVID-19 item numbers but the geographic requirements for the “normal” Telehealth item numbers remains unchanged.
- ✓ The services provided by Telehealth or Telephone must still have appropriate clinical content to qualify as a consultation.
- ✓ Clinical notes are critical so you must document the clinical content of your Telehealth and Telephone consultations.
- ✓ The COVID-19 Telehealth and Telephone item numbers can only be used for outpatients.
- ✓ The item numbers for surgeons and physicians where a time requirement is not stated in the descriptor must be a consultation of at least five minutes in duration.
- ✓ At this point, the item numbers are valid until 30 September 2020.

BULK BILLING REQUIREMENT

As at 6 April 2020, the requirement to bulk bill all COVID-19 item numbers has been changed. For services provided on or after 6 April 2020, the only patients that MUST be bulk billed are Commonwealth concession card holders, children under 16 years of age, and patients who are more vulnerable to COVID-19.

Vulnerable means a patient at risk of COVID-19, so a person who:

- *is required to self-isolate or self-quarantine in accordance with guidance issued by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee in relation to COVID-19; or*
- *is at least 70 years old; or*
- *if the person identifies as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent—is at least 50 years old; or*
- *is pregnant; or*
- *is the parent of a child aged under 12 months; or*
- *is being treated for a chronic health condition; or*
- *is immune compromised; or*
- *meets the current national triage protocol criteria for suspected COVID-19 infection.*

BULK BILLING REQUIREMENT (cont...)

For all other patients, a private fee can now be charged and 85% of the MBS Schedule fee will now be rebated to the patient, as long as informed financial consent has been obtained from the patient prior to the provision of the service.

For any dates of service prior to 6 April 2020, you are still required to bulk bill all of the COVID-19 Telehealth or Telephone the items.

Whilst practitioners are expected to take reasonable steps to obtain a written Assignment of Benefit from patients when bulk billing the COVID-19 item numbers, the normal requirements have been relaxed. For the COVID-19 item numbers only, practitioners can obtain agreement from patients to assign Medicare benefits in writing, by email or verbally.

Verbal authority to assign Medicare benefits can be obtained by providers at the commencement of the Telehealth or Telephone consultation. The verbal agreement of the patient to assign the Medicare benefits **MUST** be clearly documented in the provider's clinical notes.

CLINICAL CONTENT OF CONSULTATION

The services provided by Telehealth or Telephone must still have appropriate clinical content to qualify as a consultation. Clinical notes are critical to document the clinical content of your Telehealth and Telephone consultations. Please contact us at billing@medbill.com.au if you want further information regarding the standards for clinical content for a billable consultation.

TELEHEALTH vs TELEPHONE CONSULTATIONS

Whilst both Telehealth and Telephone COVID-19 item numbers have been made available, Services Australia has stated that videoconference services are the preferred approach for substituting face-to-face consultations. Telephone services should only be provided if video is not available for the patient. Every reasonable effort must be made to provide services via Telehealth prior to resorting to providing patient consultations by telephone.

To access the COVID-19 item numbers for Telehealth or Telephone consultations, a visual or audio link with the patient must occur. This does NOT include online chat box/messaging or email as these do not provide either a visual or audio link to the patient.



TELEHEALTH PLATFORM TO USE

Many practitioners use Facetime or Skype for Telehealth. There are also several secure, cost effective platforms.

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THE COVID-19 ITEM NUMBERS

Below is a brief summary of the item numbers for Surgeons, Physicians and Psychiatrists. Please read the detailed item numbers in the MBS to ensure that you fulfil all aspects of the item numbers before billing them. As with all MBS item numbers, you must fulfil all aspects of the item number before billing the item number.

Item numbers added on 29 March 2020 are highlighted in blue			
Item numbers added on 6 April 2020 are highlighted in yellow			
TELEHEALTH			
EQUIVALENT ITEM #	COVID-19 ITEM #	SHORT DESCRIPTION	BULK BILL BENEFIT
104	91822	Specialist. Initial attendance	\$ 75.05
105	91823	Specialist. Subsequent attendance	\$ 37.70
110	91824	Consultant physician. Initial attendance	\$ 132.30
116	91825	Consultant physician. Subsequent attendance	\$ 66.25
119	91826	Consultant physician. Minor attendance	\$ 37.70
132	92422	Consultant physician. Initial assessment, patient with at least 2 morbidities, prepare a treatment and management plan, at least 45 minutes	\$ 231.35
133	92423	Consultant physician. Subsequent assessment, patient with at least 2 morbidities, review a treatment and management plan, at least 20 minutes	\$ 115.85
137	92141	Specialist of consultant physician early intervention services for children with autism, pervasive developmental disorder or disability	\$ 231.35
141	92623	Geriatrician, prepare an assessment and management plan, patient at least 65 years, more than 60 minutes	\$ 396.80
143	92624	Geriatrician, review a management plan, more than 30 minutes	\$ 248.05
289	92434	Consultant psychiatrist, prepare a treatment and management plan, patient under 13 years with autism or another pervasive developmental disorder, at least 45 minutes	\$ 231.35
291	92435	Consultant psychiatrist, prepare a management plan, more than 45 minutes	\$ 396.80
293	92436	Consultant psychiatrist, prepare a management plan, 30-45 minutes	\$ 248.05
296	92437	Consultant psychiatrist, attendance, new patient (or has not received attendance in preceding 24 month), more than 45 minutes	\$ 228.20
300	91827	Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, not more than 15 minutes, fewer than 50 attendances	\$ 38.00
302	91828	Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, 15 to 30 minutes, fewer than 50 attendances	\$ 75.80
304	91829	Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, 30 to 45 minutes, fewer than 50 attendances	\$ 116.70
306	91830	Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, 45 to 75 minutes, fewer than 50 attendances	\$ 161.00

TELEHEALTH			
EQUIVALENT ITEM #	COVID-19 ITEM #	SHORT DESCRIPTION	BULK BILL BENEFIT
308	91831	Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, more than 45 minutes, fewer than 50 attendances	\$ 186.85
348	92458	Consultant psychiatrist, interview of a person other than patient, in the course of initial diagnostic evaluation of patient, 20 to 45 minutes	\$ 111.10
350	92459	Consultant psychiatrist, interview of a person other than patient, in the course of initial diagnostic evaluation of patient, 45 minutes or more	\$ 153.40
352	92460	Consultant psychiatrist, interview of a person other than patient, in the course of continuing management of the patient, not less than 20 minutes, not exceeding 4 attendances per calendar year	\$ 111.10
90260	92162	Consultant psychiatrist, prepare an eating disorder treatment and management plan, more than 45 minutes	\$ 396.80
90266	92172	Consultant psychiatrist, to review an eating disorder plan, more than 30 minutes	\$ 248.05
135	92140	Paediatrician early intervention services for children with autism, pervasive developmental disorder or disability	\$ 231.35
90261	92163	Paediatrician, prepare an eating disorder treatment and management plan, more than 45 minutes	\$ 231.35
90267	92173	Paediatrician, to review an eating disorder plan, more than 20 minutes	\$ 115.85

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THE COVID-19 ITEM NUMBERS (cont...)

TELEPHONE			
ONLY TO BE USED WHEN VIDEO-CONFERENCING IS NOT AVAILABLE			
		Item numbers added on 29 March 2020 are highlighted in blue	
		Item numbers added on 6 April 2020 are highlighted in yellow	
EQUIVALENT ITEM #	COVID-19 ITEM #	SHORT DESCRIPTION	BULK BILL BENEFIT
104	91832	Specialist. Initial attendance	\$ 75.05
105	91833	Specialist. Subsequent attendance	\$ 37.70
110	91834	Consultant physician. Initial attendance	\$ 132.30
116	91835	Consultant physician. Subsequent attendance	\$ 66.25
119	91836	Consultant physician. Minor attendance	\$ 37.70
132	92431	Consultant physician. Initial assessment, patient with at least 2 morbidities, prepare a treatment and management plan, at least 45 minutes	\$ 231.35
133	92432	Consultant physician. Subsequent assessment, patient with at least 2 morbidities, review a treatment and management plan, at least 20 minutes	\$ 115.85
137	92144	Specialist of consultant physician early intervention services for children with autism, pervasive developmental disorder or disability	\$ 231.35
141	92628	Geriatrician, prepare an assessment and management plan, patient at least 65 years, more than 60 minutes	\$ 396.80
143	92629	Geriatrician, review a management plan, more than 30 minutes	\$ 248.05
289	92474	Consultant psychiatrist, prepare a treatment and management plan, patient under 13 years with autism or another pervasive developmental disorder, at least 45 minutes	\$ 231.35
291	92475	Consultant psychiatrist, prepare a management plan, more than 45 minutes	\$ 396.80
293	92476	Consultant psychiatrist, prepare a management plan, 30-45 minutes	\$ 248.05
296	92477	Consultant psychiatrist, attendance, new patient (or has not received attendance in preceding 24 month), more than 45 minutes	\$ 228.20
300	91837	Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, not more than 15 minutes, fewer than 50 attendances	\$ 38.00
302	91838	Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, 15 to 30 minutes, fewer than 50 attendances	\$ 75.80
304	91839	Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, 30 to 45 minutes, fewer than 50 attendances	\$ 116.70
306	91840	Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, 45 to 75 minutes, fewer than 50 attendances	\$ 161.00
308	91841	Consultant psychiatrist. Consultation, more than 45 minutes, fewer than 50 attendances	\$ 186.85

TELEPHONE			
ONLY TO BE USED WHEN VIDEO-CONFERENCING IS NOT AVAILABLE			
EQUIVALENT ITEM #	COVID-19 ITEM #	SHORT DESCRIPTION	BULK BILL BENEFIT
348	92498	Consultant psychiatrist, interview of a person other than patient, in the course of initial diagnostic evaluation of patient, 20 to 45 minutes	\$ 111.10
350	92499	Consultant psychiatrist, interview of a person other than patient, in the course of initial diagnostic evaluation of patient, 45 minutes or more	\$ 153.40
352	92500	Consultant psychiatrist, interview of a person other than patient, in the course of continuing management of the patient, not less than 20 minutes, not exceeding 4 attendances per calendar year	\$ 111.10
90260	92166	Consultant psychiatrist, prepare an eating disorder treatment and management plan, more than 45 minutes	\$ 396.80
90266	92178	Consultant psychiatrist, to review an eating disorder plan, more than 30 minutes	\$ 248.05
135	92143	Paediatrician early intervention services for children with autism, pervasive developmental disorder or disability	\$ 231.35
90261	92167	Paediatrician, prepare an eating disorder treatment and management plan, more than 45 minutes	\$ 231.35
90267	92179	Paediatrician, to review an eating disorder plan, more than 20 minutes	\$ 115.85

SUMMARY

There have been substantial changes to the COVID-19 item numbers since their inception. There will continue to be changes in the days and weeks ahead. **This article is current as at 6 April 2020.** Please look for further updates on our website www.medbill.com.au.

If you need further information on the COVID-19 item numbers, please email our expert team at billing@medbill.com.au.

Medical Billing Experts is supporting medical practices to keep their medical billing current during the COVID-19 crisis. If you close your rooms or have staffing shortages, you can make short-term arrangements to process your medical billing through outsourcing to us. Our goal is to keep your cash flow stable during the COVID-19 crisis as well as ensuring Medicare compliance.

Please feel free to email me at loryn@medbill.com.au for more information about how Medical Billing Experts can assist you during this period.

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outsourced medical billing!**



**Medical Billing Experts is supporting
medical practices to keep their medical
billing current during the COVID-19 crisis.**

If you close your rooms or have staffing shortages, you can make short-term arrangements to process your medical billing through outsourcing the work to us. Our goal is to keep your cash flow stable during the COVID-19 crisis as well as ensuring Medicare compliance.

- Short-term or long-term medical billing services available
- No setup fee for Genie, Gentu or Shexie users
- Billing can be performed in your software or ours
- Billing of current claims
- **Cleanup of billing and rejections**
- Reasonable fees for all doctors
- Patient data security assured

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