



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

MBS items (10994, 10995) for Pap smears and Preventive Checks taken by a Practice Nurse on behalf of a GP

Medicare item numbers 10994 and 10995 apply to Pap smears and preventive checks provided by a practice nurse on behalf of a general practitioner.

These items are similar to MBS items 10998 and 10999 for a Pap smear taken by a practice nurse on behalf of a medical practitioner. MBS items 10994 and 10995 provide a higher level of rebate for a Pap smear and preventive checks in recognition of the additional work involved in providing this service. Items 10994, 10995, 10998 and 10999 may be claimed by practices in all parts of Australia from 1 November 2006.

Item 10994

Service provided by a practice nurse, being the taking of a cervical smear and preventive checks, if

- a) The service is provided on behalf of, and under the supervision of, a medical practitioner; and
- b) The person is not an admitted patient of a hospital or approved day hospital facility.

Item 10995

Service provided by a practice nurse, being the taking of a cervical smear from a woman between the ages of 20 and 69 inclusive, who has not had a cervical smear in the last 4 years and preventive checks, if;

- a) The service is provided on behalf of, and under the supervision of, a medical practitioner; and
- b) The person is not an admitted patient of a hospital or approved day hospital facility.

What are preventive health checks for the purposes of items 10994 and 10995?

- Items 10994 and 10995 include a Pap smear and preventive checks associated with women's sexual and reproductive health, which would routinely be undertaken in conjunction with a Pap smear. A preventive check is a service which is reasonably necessary and appropriate for preventive care based on evidence of effectiveness and efficacy appropriate to the age of the patient.

Services for items 10994 and 10995 must include a Pap smear and at least one preventive check from the following:

- Checks for sexually transmitted infections (including chlamydia)
- Taking of a sexual and reproductive history
- Advice on contraception
- Breast awareness education
- Advice on post natal issues
- Continence advice and education;

and may also include:

- Smoking, Nutrition, Alcohol and Physical Activity (SNAP) behavioural risk factor assessment
- Blood pressure measurement.

General practices should refer to the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners' (RACGP) *Guidelines for preventive activities in general practice – 6th edition* (Red Book), the RACGP (2004) *SNAP guide: a population health guide to behavioural risk factors in general practice* and National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (NACCHO) 2005 *National Guide to a preventive health assessment in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples* for recommendations on appropriate checks for women in particular age ranges.

Where, in the course of discussion of sexual history and current sexual activity, a practice nurse becomes aware that one of the checks listed for another age group is appropriate, the practice nurse may include that check as part of the service provided.

Item 10994 and 10995 only apply where:

- The practice nurse is appropriately qualified and trained to take cervical smears and provide preventive health checks; and
- The medical practitioner under whose supervision the cervical smear and preventive check is taken retains responsibility for the health, safety and clinical outcomes of the person.

Who can claim items 10994 and 10995?

Items 10994 and 10995 can only be claimed by a GP for a Pap smear and preventive health check that is taken by a practice nurse on behalf of the GP.

All vocationally registered and non-vocationally registered GPs are eligible to claim items 10994 and 10995.

What's the difference between item 10994 and 10995?

Both items 10994 and 10995 are for a Pap smear and preventive checks taken by a practice nurse on behalf of a GP.

Item 10994 can be used by all practices and applies to female patients of any age.

Item 10995 is available to GPs participating in the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) and generates a Service Incentive Payment (SIP). Item 10995 only applies where the Pap smear is taken from a woman between the ages of 20 and 69 inclusive, who has not had a Pap smear in the last 4 years.

Items 10994 and 10995 cannot be claimed with each other or in conjunction with items 10998, 10999, 2497-2509 and 2598-2616.

What qualifications and training are required for a practice nurse to take Pap smears and preventive checks?

It is a requirement of the items that the practice nurse must be appropriately qualified and trained to take Pap smears and preventive checks.

This means that, where credentialling arrangements are in place, the practice nurse should be credentialled as qualified and trained to take Pap smears.

All practice nurses taking Pap smears and preventive checks should have undertaken an accredited course. For information about accredited training for nurses undertaking Pap smears and preventive checks, you should contact the Royal College of Nursing, Australia on **1800 061 660**, the Australian Practice Nurses Association on 1300 303 184, or the Cervical Screening Program in your state or territory on **131556**.

In all cases, the GP (who is responsible for the health, safety and clinical outcomes of the patient) must be satisfied that the practice nurse is appropriately qualified and trained to take Pap smears and provide preventive checks.

The practice nurse must also comply with any relevant legislative or regulatory requirements, including those applying to relevant state and territory disease registers or laboratories.

Quality assurance and continuing professional development

Quality assurance is an important part of cervical screening. Continuing professional development is a compulsory part of the credentialling arrangements and is also recommended for nurses taking Pap smears and preventive checks in jurisdictions where credentialling arrangements are not available.

General practices, where nurses take Pap smears and preventive checks, should also have a written clinical risk management strategy covering issues like clinical roles, pathology follow-up and patient consent.

National and state and territory cervical screening policies

When providing services covered by items 10994 and 10995 the practice nurse should be aware of national and state and territory screening policies for the prevention of cervical cancer and sexually transmitted infections (information on the National Policy is provided on page 21 of the November 2006 Medicare Benefits Schedule Book).

Must the GP see the patient or be present in order to claim item 10994 or 10995?

As the service is being provided on behalf of, and under the supervision of the GP, the GP retains responsibility for the health, safety and clinical outcomes of the patient.

However, this does not mean that the GP is required to see the patient or be present with the practice nurse during the service, to claim item 10994 or 10995.

Where a consultation takes place with the patient, the GP is only eligible to claim a Medicare item for the length of time that the GP spends with the patient. The time the practice nurse spends with the patient to take the Pap smear and to undertake a preventive check is claimed separately under the practice nurse item.

What level of medical indemnity insurance is required?

The GP who claims item 10994 or 10995 will need to ensure that their medical indemnity insurance covers circumstances where a practice nurse takes a Pap smear and preventive checks on their behalf.

Can a practice nurse order the pathology for a Pap smear or preventive check?

Where pathology services are claimed through Medicare for this item, the pathology can only be ordered by a GP. In some jurisdictions, and in specific circumstances, a practice nurse may be able to order pathology through public pathology laboratories.

Do Pap smears taken by a practice nurse count towards the outcomes component under the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) cervical screening initiative?

Yes. Pap smears taken by a practice nurse on behalf of a GP still count towards the PIP practices outcomes component.

What is the level of the Medicare rebate for items 10994 and 10995?

The Medicare rebate for items 10994 and 10995 is paid at 100% of the schedule fee. The Medicare rebate is \$21.25 (from 1 November 2006).

Can items 10994 and 10995 be claimed in conjunction with the bulk billing incentive items 10990 and 10991?

Yes, as long as the Pap smear and preventive check are provided to a Commonwealth concession card holder, or person under the age of 16, and the service is bulk billed.

Further information

For further information, visit the Department of Health and Ageing website at http://www.health.gov.au/internet/wcms/publishing.nsf/Content/health-medicare-health_pro-gp-index.htm or the Medicare Australia website at www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/medicareinitiatives or call Medicare Australia on **132 011**.

Information on these items is also available in the November 2006 Medicare Benefits Schedule Book.