

Navigating the MBS – For Nurse Practitioners

Some may wonder why I'm bothering to write a brief for Nurse Practitioners (NP) on how to navigate the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS). The fact remains that this information isn't taught in any higher education institution, and professional bodies (such as the Australian College of Nurse Practitioners) have bigger and much more important fish to fry.

Understanding how to navigate the MBS is crucial in *helping you understand your worth in the healthcare market*. Whether you work in the private or public sector, knowing how much you're worth in the context of the healthcare system can be used for financial modelling and business plan development, key performance indicators, help identify market gaps where your services might be used to complement the system, and be used as a bargaining chip. This is how I developed the idea of an Ambulatory Blood Pressure Monitoring service for our surgery. Our centre identified there was no MBS reimbursement item for this service, so we undercut the competitors and provided a high quality, one-stop-shop for hypertension management. Knowledge is power. I might as well give you the key if no one else is going to do it.

Step 1 – Go Online

Start your search by going to www.mbsonline.gov.au.

Step 2 – Download an MBS List

One of the first things you should do is become familiar with your own MBS items and the rules behind them. Click on "The MBS" → "Create Publication":



Once you're on the "Create Publication" screen, type in the following:

A screenshot of the 'Create Publication' form. The form has a title 'Create Publication' and a link for 'Create Publication Help'. Below the title, there is a paragraph of instructions and a note that required fields are marked with an asterisk. The form contains two main input fields: '*Item Numbers' with the value '82200-82215, 82220-82225' and '*Email Address' with the value 'your_email@randomdomain.com.au'. Red arrows point from explanatory text to these fields. The text for the first arrow says 'Enter these numbers for your "Professional Attendance" Item Numbers'. The text for the second arrow says 'Enter your email address.'. Below the input fields are two options: 'Include General Explanatory Notes' (checked) and 'Check to create a zipped pdf file (this will reduce the email size)' (unchecked). At the bottom, there are two buttons: 'Create Publication' and 'Reset'.

Shortly after you press the “Create Publication” button you’ll be emailed a document which is very confusing. You’ll be very tempted to delete it. Don’t. If you weren’t religious before, you’ve now found the MBS and this is your Bible. Try not to burn it.

This document contains all the information relevant to the NP Professional Attendance item numbers, including Telehealth Consultations. Unfortunately, the first section contains a lot of drivel (explanatory notes) which are quite confusing, poorly defined and is broadly applicable to all users of the MBS. Even though its drivel, take an hour or two to understand it. Specific sections I would pay particular attention to are:

- G1.3
- G2.1
- G2.2
- G6.1
- G7.1
- G10.1
- G13.1

The second section contains the actual financial information about the NP item numbers that you’re looking for.

Step 3: Understand Where to Quickly Find NP-Specific Items

Another way to find NP-specific information is the following:

The image shows two screenshots of the MBS Online website. The left screenshot shows the homepage with a navigation menu where the 'Search' option is highlighted with a red arrow and the text 'Click here.'. The right screenshot shows the search interface with a red arrow pointing to the 'Advanced Search' link and the text 'Click "Advanced"'. Below this, there is a search input field with the placeholder text 'e.g. knee, 49557' and two radio buttons: 'Search all notes and items' (selected) and 'Search item numbers only'. At the bottom of the search interface, there are 'Search' and 'Reset' buttons. A second screenshot below shows the 'Advanced Search' page with three dropdown menus for 'Category', 'Group', and 'Sub Group'. The 'Category' dropdown is set to '8 - MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES', 'Group' to 'M14 - NURSE PRACTITIONERS', and 'Sub Group' to '1 - NURSE PRACTITIONERS'. A red arrow points to the 'Sub Group' dropdown with the text 'Different options here.'.

What you end up with several boxes, one of them which looks like this:

All NP services are in this category.

Item number. Category 8 - MISCELLANEOUS SERVICES

82200 ⓘ

Group M14 - NURSE PRACTITIONERS
Subgroup 1 - NURSE PRACTITIONERS

Professional attendance by a participating nurse practitioner for an obvious problem characterised by the straightforward nature of the task that requires a short patient history and, if required, limited examination and management.

Reimbursement amount (100%) for DVA patients.

Fee: \$9.60 Benefit: 85% = \$8.20 ← **Reimbursement amount for your "average" patient.**

[C@1b70780

Extended Medicare Safety Net Cap: ⓘ \$28.80

← Previous - Item 82152 Next - Item 82205 →

If you want to see all the NP-specific **pathology tests they can perform at the point of care which results in an MBS reimbursement**, try the following:

Search the MBS

Advanced Search

[Standard Search](#) [Search Tips](#)

Select from the options below to invoke a search at Category, Group or Sub Group level.

*Category

Group

Sub Group

Results 1 to 10 of 21 matches ← **Careful! Not all of these are for NPs!**

Hopefully this helps you begin to understand some of the MBSOnline website. There is a HEAP of information available to you. Good luck!