



# Inclusion of communication time when claiming time tiered MBS items

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Being able to communicate effectively with patients is crucial to achieving clinical outcomes and a key part of a clinical service. A wide range of factors may affect the time needed to communicate effectively with a patient during a consultation. These include, but are not limited to, situations where a language barrier exists between the medical practitioner and patient (including when an interpreter is required), or when a patient has hearing problems, difficulty with speech, an intellectual disability, and/or dementia.

When claiming for time-tiered MBS items, the total consultation time involved includes the time required to communicate effectively with the patient. Should more time than usual be required to communicate effectively with a particular patient, it is considered reasonable to claim a longer attendance item than might otherwise be expected for the service. This applies to both face-to-face and telehealth services.

In such situations, medical practitioners and other providers should make a brief record in the patient's notes including details about why the additional time was required. For example, stating 'consultation extended due to use of interpreter', and if relevant citing the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) job number.

When calculating the duration of a timed attendance item for a consultation, it is important to note that only the time spent with the patient face-to-face, or on the line in the case of telehealth, can be counted.

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## Where can I find more information?

Information about MBS items and other changes to the MBS can be found on the MBS Online website at: [www.mbsonline.gov.au](http://www.mbsonline.gov.au). You can also subscribe to future MBS updates by visiting [MBS Online](#) and clicking 'Subscribe'.

The Department of Health provides an email advice service for providers seeking advice on interpretation of the MBS items and rules and the Health Insurance Act and associated regulations. If you have a query relating exclusively to interpretation of the Schedule, you should email [askMBS@health.gov.au](mailto:askMBS@health.gov.au).

Subscribe to '[News for Health Professionals](#)' on the Services Australia website and you will receive regular news highlights.

If you are seeking advice in relation to Medicare billing, claiming, payments, or obtaining a provider number, please go to the Health Professionals page on the Services Australia website or contact Services Australia on the Provider Enquiry Line – 13 21 50.