



## **Telephone Consultation Policy**

### **Telephone consultation booking**

Our preference is for patients to attend face-to-face appointments where possible, however, telephone consultation appointments can be made where it is not possible for the patient to attend the practice.

Telephone consultations can be booked online, through HotDoc, or by calling the practice on 02 9178 9031. Patients who would usually be eligible for bulk-billing are recommended to telephone the practice to avoid pre-authorisation of payment requirements (see below).

During holiday periods, when the practice is closed, we sometimes offer limited telephone consultations that can be booked online, via HotDoc, all of which attract a private fee.

### **Telephone consultation fees and payment**

To be eligible to receive a Medicare rebate, or to be bulk-billed (where applicable), the patient must have visited the practice, or provider, for a face-to-face appointment once within the last 12 months. If this does not apply, the consultation will be privately billed, without a rebate (with limited exceptions). New patients to the practice are not able to book a telephone consultation.

Telephone consultations are billed at the same fee as face-to-face appointments, unless otherwise specified by the GP.

Bulk-billing only applies to Dr Mohammed's and Dr Abbas' patients in the following categories:

- Patients aged 12 years and under
- Patients aged 65 years or older who hold a valid Pension Card, issued by Centrelink
- DVA Gold Card holders
- DVA White Card holders, if the consultation is in relation to a specified condition.

When a patient books a telephone consultation via HotDoc, they will be asked to enter their payment card details to pre-authorise a payment up to the value of a standard telephone consultation fee. The payment isn't taken at this stage, but failure to enter their card details within 90 minutes will result in the appointment being cancelled (a reminder SMS will be received after 60 minutes). If there are insufficient funds on the payment card, the appointment will be cancelled.

When a patient books a telephone consultation via our reception team, they will receive a SMS message from HotDoc asking them to enter their payment card details. This will pre-authorise a payment up to the value of a standard telephone consultation fee. The payment isn't taken at this stage, but failure to enter their card details within 90 minutes will result in the appointment being cancelled (a reminder SMS will be

received after 60 minutes). If there are insufficient funds on the payment card, the appointment will be cancelled.

Once the consultation has been completed and the invoice has been finalised, payment will be taken after 10 mins.

In most cases, with your consent, our reception team will be able to process any applicable Medicare rebate on the same day and the rebate should be received within 24 hours. If a rebate is not received, please contact our reception team who will be able to provide a payment receipt for you to use to claim the rebate from Medicare yourself.

If a telephone consultation is cancelled, any pre-authorised payment will be released. The duration of the hold on the funds will vary depending on the patient's banking provider. Patients are encouraged to contact their own bank for further information.

## **The telephone consultation**

The GP will only try to call the patient twice. If the patient does not answer, this will be documented in the patient's health record and be classed as an appointment non-attendance and our 'Practice Cancellation & Debt Collection Policy' will be applied.

In the case that a GP wishes to discuss results with a patient, via a telephone consultation, the GP may:

- Ask the reception team to contact the patient and book a telephone consultation with them.
- Ask the reception team to inform the patient that the telephone consultation can be bulk-billed, with their consent.

## **When telephone consultation fails**

Sometimes telecommunications may fail for a variety of reasons e.g. software bugs, power outages, human mistakes, damage to hardware or network congestion. In events such as these, the telecommunications failure will be documented in the patient's health record and an alternative method of communication will be attempted. This might include:

- Use of an alternative hardware device/network
- Use of video conferencing e.g. Zoom
- Use of email to inform the patient as to what is happening
- An offer to attend the practice for a face-to-face consultation.

## **Telephone consultation for patients with hearing impairment**

Our practice can make adjustments for patients with a hearing or other impairment to allow access to telehealth services. Adjustments may include:

- Longer appointment duration
- Video conferencing to enable lip reading
- Assistance of an Auslan interpreter (further information can be found in our Communication Policy).

## **Telehealth during a public health emergency**

During a declared public health emergency, to help reduce unnecessary risk of community transmission and to provide protection for patients and our practice team, our practice will offer

telehealth services to all patients. Face-to-face consultations will still be undertaken where it is considered the most appropriate method, provided it is safe to do so.

The Practice Manager is responsible for monitoring and adapting procedures associated with telehealth consultations, and the Medicare Benefits Scheme, in addition to monitoring and implementing the advice of the NSW Health department or federal government, as required.

It is also the responsibility of the Practice Manager to ensure all members of the practice team are educated and kept up to date on the telehealth policies of this practice, including making changes as they occur.

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|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Current as of:</b>     | 28/08/2026      | <b>Version:</b>                                                                | 4.0 |
| <b>Amendments</b>         |                 |                                                                                |     |
| <b>Date of amendment:</b> | <b>Version:</b> | <b>Details of amendment:</b>                                                   |     |
| 28/08/2026                | 4.0             | Addition of what to do when telehealth fails.                                  |     |
| 6/8/2026                  | 3.0             | Addition of telehealth during a public health emergency.                       |     |
| 6/8/2026                  | 2.0             | Addition of adjustments for the hearing impaired wishing to access telehealth. |     |
| 20/04/2026                | 1.0             | Original policy                                                                |     |