



medicare

Aftercare (post-operative treatment)

This document should be used as a guide only. The Department of Human Services (Human Services) recommends health professionals exercise their own skill and care with respect to its contents.

What is aftercare?

Aftercare is treatment after an operation provided by or on behalf of medical practitioners and includes:

- any attendances necessary for the purposes of the post-operative treatment of the patient, including the final check or examination, regardless of where the attendances happen. For example, the hospital, medical practitioner's surgery or the patient's home.

Any aftercare associated with a cosmetic procedure or non-Medicare service does not attract a Medicare benefit.

Aftercare and the schedule fee

The schedule fee for most surgical items in Category 3—Therapeutic Procedures of the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) includes an amount for routine post-operative treatment, for example MBS Item 35602.

Item	Outline of service
35602	STRESS INCONTINENCE, combined synchronous ABDOMINOVAGINAL operation for; abdominal procedure, with or without mesh, (including aftercare), not being a service associated with a service to which Item 30405 applies.

By billing Item 35602, medical practitioners receive a benefit in advance for providing any routine post-operative services.

There are some cases where aftercare has been excluded from the MBS item descriptor, for example Item 30219.

Item	Outline of service
30219	HAEMATOMA, FURUNCLE, SMALL ABSCESS OR SIMILAR LESION not requiring admission to a hospital—INCISION WITH DRAINAGE OF (excluding aftercare).

Where 'excluding aftercare' or similar is listed, benefits are payable for clinically relevant post operative attendances.

Consultations related to the operation during an aftercare period will not normally be paid.

Aftercare period

- The amount and duration of aftercare may vary between patients for the same operation, as well as for different operations.
- Consultations related to the operation during an aftercare period will not normally be paid.

Consultations not related to aftercare

Human Services will usually reject claims for attendances in the aftercare period unless there is sufficient information on the account to indicate that the service was not for routine aftercare. For example, if an attendance is provided during the aftercare period for a condition unrelated to the operation, or is provided for the treatment of a post-operative complication, then the claim will be processed more readily if the account states that the service was ‘Not normal aftercare’ or includes a brief reasoning for the additional service.

Surgical procedures performed by another medical practitioner

If a patient had a procedure performed by another medical practitioner and the service you provide would be considered aftercare, you are not entitled to Medicare benefits for the service. You should advise the patient that this principle applies whether the patient elects to see you for the service or the medical practitioner who performed the procedure. You may elect to privately bill the patient for the service you provide.

Admitted hospital patients

Private patient in a private or public hospital

No Medicare benefits are paid for aftercare unless the MBS item descriptor excludes aftercare. Where a surgeon assigns aftercare to a patient’s medical practitioner, the Medicare benefit can be shared. For example, 75 per cent for the operation and 25 per cent for the aftercare or 50 per cent for the operation and 50 per cent for the aftercare following treatment of fractures.

Public patient in public hospital

All care directly related to in-patient care, including routine and non-routine aftercare, will be provided free of charge as part of the public hospital service. However, where a public patient independently chooses to consult a private medical practitioner for aftercare, then any clinically relevant service provided will attract Medicare benefits.

For more information

Call 132 150*

Visit humanservices.gov.au then For health professionals > Doing business with Medicare Australia > Online education services mbsonline.gov.au (search T8.4 for more information about aftercare)

*Call charges apply