



Heart Foundation: Celebrating over 300,000 Heart Health Checks

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Over 309,000 people have had a life-saving Medicare-subsidised Heart Health Check since the introduction of the temporary Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item numbers in 2019 [1].

From January to May 2022, we saw a 26% increase in Heart Health Check delivery compared with the same period last year, likely attributable to a series of tragic heart events affecting high-profile Australians including Shane Warne, Senator Kimberley Kitching and Rod Marsh. The Heart Foundation ran a national education and awareness campaign during Heart Week in May to encourage Australians to book a Heart Health Check.

What is a Heart Health Check?

A Heart Health Check is a patient-friendly term for cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk assessment and management with a GP. The 20-minute check, designed for people aged 45 years and over (30 years and over for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander Peoples), without existing CVD, assesses a person's risk of having a heart attack or stroke in the next 5 years.

The check involves gathering information about a person's CVD risk factors, calculating and recording their absolute CVD risk using a validated calculator, and providing ongoing management as per guideline recommendations.

What Do We Know About People Who Are (and Aren't) Getting a Heart Health Check?

According to the MBS data:

- There is similar uptake of Heart Health Checks by women and men.

- States that have been least impacted by COVID-19 - Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland - have the highest uptake per eligible population.

Evidence from research studies show that people who may potentially benefit the most, including those who smoke and those experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage, may be less likely to get a check [2].

Where to From Here?

While hitting the 300,000 milestone is an incredible achievement on the part of health professionals and the public, we need to maintain this momentum. Over 8 million people aged 45 years or over are eligible for a Heart Health Check.

The Heart Foundation is calling on the federal government to permanently subsidise the Heart Health Check item numbers, 699 and 177, beyond June 2023. This will ensure they are available and accessible for all eligible people, helping to save more lives from heart attack and stroke.

Our Heart Health Check toolkit is designed to make it easy for health professionals to assess and manage cardiovascular disease (CVD) risk as part of routine care. Find out more: heartfoundation.org.au/bundles/heart-health-check-toolkit.

References

- [1] Australian Government. Services Australia - Statistics - Medicare Item Reports. April 2019 to May 2022. Accessed 18 July 2022. http://medicarestatistics.humanservices.gov.au/statistics/mbs_item.jsp.
- [2] De Waard AKM, Wandell PE, Holzmann MJ, et al. Barriers and facilitators to participation in a health check for cardiometabolic diseases in primary care: A systematic review. *Eur J Prev Cardiol.* 2018;25(12):1326-40. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2047487318780751>.