

## Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) referrals for Medicare funded Physiotherapy

For people with chronic conditions and complex care needs, a Medicare rebate is available for a maximum of 5 allied health services per patient each calendar year (if you are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent you may be eligible for 5 additional sessions). To be eligible, patients must have a GP Management Plan and Team Care Arrangement prepared by their GP, and a referral from their GP. Residents of an Aged care facility are also eligible for a multidisciplinary care plan.

A chronic medical condition is one that has been (or is likely to be) present for six months or longer, for example, asthma, cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, musculoskeletal conditions and stroke. There is no list of eligible conditions. GPs determine whether the patient's chronic medical condition would benefit from allied health services. Physiotherapy has high levels of evidence of effectiveness for a range of chronic conditions such as arthritis, respiratory conditions or continence.

Active Physiotherapy Mackay offer Bulk Billing plus a low administration fee of \$5 for patients that hold an aged pension card or a disability pension card. This consultation is limited to 30 minutes duration.

Patients without a pension card can use their EPC instead of private health insurance. The government does not allow both EPC and insurance to be claimed for the same appointment. There will be a gap fee for the service. As at 30 January 2017 the government pays \$52.95, our typical 45 minute initial consultation is \$99, leaving a gap of \$46.05 (out of pocket expense). Continence consultations attract higher fees.

### Making the most of your consultation

Many clients with an EPC will have multiple health conditions and possibly also have multiple complaints that could be addressed with physiotherapy. It is important to prepare for your physiotherapy consultation by considering *which issue is causing you the most limitation to activity*. This condition should be prioritized during the initial consultation. During subsequent consultations you may choose to direct the physiotherapist to alternative ailments.

The most effective physiotherapy and 'value for fee' service involves a plan-action-monitor process, as an example:

- Appointment 1: Assess your health in general, and your ailment in detail. This may involve hands on assessment and treatment or may be limited to interview and advice discussion.
- Appointment 2: Exercise prescription and possible hands-on treatment with more in depth advice revision.
- Appointment 3: After a period of time of you practicing your exercises at home and following advice, the physiotherapist will re-assess how effective the intervention has been for you. Adjustments to exercise and advice can be made.
- Appointment 4 & 5: The above process can be repeated over a longer duration or a second ailment can be addressed if there are sufficient improvements and EPC consultations.

Your GP may allocate sessions to alternative Allied Health Practitioners (eg. Dietician, Podiatrist, Occupational therapist). A referral is valid for the stated number of services. For many clients, 5 appointments or less, for a 12 month period, is not sufficient to manage their ailment. You are allowed to continue to attend physiotherapy as a private client and do not require an initial consultation or another referral.

Please arrive 15 minutes before your initial consultation. EPC consultations can involve a lot of information, and if you are running late your appointment will be required to be shortened.