



## Receptionist's guide to the Heart Health Check

Medical receptionists play an important support role in integrating Heart Health Checks into routine care. This section of the toolkit explains how to recall a patient for a Heart Health Check and answers some FAQs.

### Recalling patients for a Heart Health Check

Phone calls can be an effective way to recall patients who are eligible for an annual Heart Health Check. Once eligible patients have been identified, call them and explain...

1. Doctor <insert name> has asked me to call you as you are now <eligible / due / overdue> for a Heart Health Check.
2. It's a check-up that will be at least 20 minutes long to assess your risk of having a heart attack or stroke.
3. The check <is covered under Medicare / costs \$\_\_\_\_\_>.

If the patient wants to know more about the Heart Health Check, you can explain...

During a Heart Health Check, your doctor or nurse will:

- discuss your lifestyle and do some simple checks like measuring your weight, blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels
- calculate your level of risk and then plan with you how to lower your risk
- refer you for a blood test if needed.

You might also refer the patient to the Heart Foundation website. Once on the site, simply search for 'Heart Health Check'. For your own interest, the link is:

[heartfoundation.org.au/heart-health-education/heart-health-checks](http://heartfoundation.org.au/heart-health-education/heart-health-checks)



**TIP:** For any questions about risk factors, refer the patient to the practice nurse or GP.

### Heart Health Check FAQs

#### What is a Heart Health Check?

A Heart Health Check is a 20-minute assessment of a patient's risk of having a heart attack or stroke in the next five years.

#### Why should someone get a Heart Health Check?

Many people may not be aware of their risk factors for heart attack or stroke. Some risk factors like high blood pressure and high cholesterol can be silent.

A Heart Health Check helps patients to understand their risk of having a heart attack or stroke. They will be guided by their GP or nurse to take the first steps to lowering their risk.

#### What does a Heart Health Check involve?

During a Heart Health Check, a GP or nurse will:

- review and update medical and family history
- check blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels
- discuss lifestyle choices such as diet and exercise
- calculate a risk score
- develop a management plan to lower risk, which may include medication and referrals.



### What are the risk factors of heart disease?

Risk factors of heart disease can be classified as modifiable and non-modifiable. GPs will generally focus on modifiable risk factors when providing patients with advice on how to lower their risk.

Non-modifiable risk factors are those that cannot be changed, such as:

- age
- gender
- ethnicity
- family history of heart disease.

Modifiable risk factors are those that can be changed:

- poor diet
- lack of physical activity
- smoking
- alcohol consumption
- unhealthy weight
- high blood pressure
- high cholesterol.

### Who is eligible for a Heart Health Check?

A patient is eligible if they meet all these criteria:

- 45 years or over, or 30 or over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- No known cardiovascular disease (CVD)
- Have not had a health assessment in the last 12 months

### What happens if a patient is not yet eligible for a Heart Health Check?

Patients not eligible for a Heart Health Check should still be encouraged to discuss their heart health with their GP.

### How long does it take?

The assessment will take at least 20 minutes.

### How much does it cost?

Like other health assessments, the Heart Health Check is covered under Medicare, and there will be no out-of-pocket expenses at practices which bulk bill.

### Does the patient need to prepare for the check?

Patients may need a blood test before their Heart Health Check. If a pathology request form is provided, the test will need to occur at the pathology provider at least five days prior to the check.

### Where can I find out more about Heart Health Checks?

Information on Heart Health Checks as well as resources on how to maintain heart health can be found on the Heart Foundation website.

[heartfoundation.org.au/heart-health-education/heart-health-checks](http://heartfoundation.org.au/heart-health-education/heart-health-checks)

