



## Fact Sheet

The health assessment for refugees and other humanitarian entrants may be completed under MBS Items **701 (brief)**, **703 (standard)**, **705 (long)** or **707 (prolonged)** depending on the length of the consultation which will be determined by the complexity of the patient's presentation.

This health assessment is for refugees and other humanitarian entrants who often arrive in Australia with complex and unusual medical conditions resulting from their area of origin or previous living conditions.

Some refugees or other humanitarian entrants will have little experience of western health care systems and this health assessment provides an opportunity to introduce these patients to preventive health care in Australia, in particular immunisation, maternal and child health care, and breast and cervical screening. Many will have been exposed to war, famine, repression, torture and/or extreme poverty. The health assessment should be undertaken in a manner that is sensitive to the needs of the patient.

### Components of the health assessment for refugees and other humanitarian entrants

The health assessment must include the assessment of the patient's physical, psychological and social functioning and whether preventive health care and education should be offered to the patient to improve their health.

The medical practitioner should keep a record of the health assessment and offer to provide the patient with a written report about the health assessment. Patient consent to the health assessment should be documented in the patient's record.

In addition to the general requirements for health assessments, this assessment should include the development of a management plan to address any issues and/or conditions, including arranging for any necessary interventions or referrals to other health care providers. This plan should be developed in collaboration with the patient, and documented in a written report that is offered to the patient.

The management plan should include:

- initial recommendation of immunisation, diet, vitamins and medications;
- consideration of referrals to allied health professionals, approved professionals and/or specialist clinics to address issues of torture and trauma; and
- consideration of contraception advice and review of pap smear/sexually transmitted disease screening.

Not all refugees arrive in Australia with medical records. For those who have, it may be useful to obtain a copy, such as those of previous health assessments that may have been undertaken pre-departure. For example, some refugees may receive some form of medical records prior to their flight to Australia if their pre-departure health assessment found any health problems, or they had received treatment, or they had signed a "health undertaking" document at the time of the visa grant.

A patient with a "health undertaking" has been assessed as having specific health issues such as hepatitis or inactive tuberculosis that needs to be addressed in Australia. By signing the undertaking, the refugee agrees to report to the Health Undertaking Service and for follow-up with their respective State or Territory health authority.

### Restrictions

The health assessment is a voluntary one-off service and must be provided within twelve months of the person's arrival in Australia. The medical practitioner should not conduct a separate consultation in conjunction with the health assessment on the same day, except where it is clinically required (ie. the patient has an acute problem that needs to be managed separately from the assessment).

## Patient Eligibility

The health assessment is available to people with the following visas:

- Subclass 200 (Refugee) visa
- Subclass 201 (In-country Special Humanitarian) visa
- Subclass 202 (Global Special Humanitarian) visa
- Subclass 203 (Emergency Rescue) visa
- Subclass 204 (Women at Risk) visa
- Subclass 070 (Refugee Pending Bridging) visa
- Subclass 695 (Return Pending) visa
- Subclass 786 (Temporary (Humanitarian Concern)) visa
- Subclass 866 (Protection) visa.

A humanitarian entrant should be able to provide proof of their visa status and date of arrival or residence (date of visa granted) by one of the following documents:

- a travel card known as a Document for Travel to Australia (DFTTA);
- a travel document including a Passport, a Titre de Voyage or a Certificate of Identity; or
- a Visa Evidence Card identified by the numbers PLO56 or M56.

Medical practitioners may telephone Medicare Australia on 132011, with the patient present, to check eligibility.

## Interpreter and Proposer Assistance

An on-site interpreter can be arranged subject to their availability for any location in Australia. Request for an on-site translator must be in writing using a form provided by the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) which can be faxed through on 1300 654 151 or emailed to [tis@immi.gov.au](mailto:tis@immi.gov.au). It is advisable to make the booking with TIS well in advance of the appointment date (4 weeks) to ensure availability of an interpreter.

A proposer is a friend, relative or community organisation who has agreed to assist the person to settle in Australia. Proposers only apply to visa class 202, Global Special Humanitarian. A proposer may be able to provide useful information about the patient on matters such as physical, psychological and social functioning but should not be used as an interpreter.

## Guidelines and Resources

Medical practitioners are encouraged to utilise relevant guidelines and resources, such as:

- Item descriptors and explanatory notes from [www.health.gov.au/mbsonline](http://www.health.gov.au/mbsonline)
- Information about MBS primary care items at [www.health.gov.au/mbsprimarycareitems](http://www.health.gov.au/mbsprimarycareitems) or phone the Medicare Australia provider enquiry line on 132 150.
- Telephone interpreter service: Telephone **131 450**
- Information regarding the 'Health Undertaking Service' from the Department of Immigration and Citizenship website [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au) or phone the national telephone service enquiry line **131 881**
- 'Cultural and linguistic diversity clinical resources at [www.racgp.org.au/cald](http://www.racgp.org.au/cald)
- RACGP Refugee and Asylum Seeker Resource Centre providing useful links to assist with asylum seekers' health needs at [www.racgp.org.au/refugeehealth](http://www.racgp.org.au/refugeehealth)
- Desktop guide to caring for refugee patients in general practice at [www.racgp.org.au/document](http://www.racgp.org.au/document)