



What do the new Medicare item numbers for cancer gene testing mean for me?

Genetic Services of Western Australia (GSWA) is a state-wide service providing clinical genetic services in Western Australia. GSWA provides a comprehensive state-wide diagnostic and confidential counselling service in clinical genetics. GSWA is a public health service, and there is no charge for accessing our services if you have a valid Medicare card.

What has changed?

From November 1, 2017 some cancer gene tests will be given Medicare item numbers and can be ordered directly by specialists or consultant physicians without a referral to GSWA.

What has not changed?

GSWA continues to provide genetic testing at no cost to people who meet national testing guidelines and have a valid Medicare card.

Who can get free genetic testing?

Criteria for cancer gene testing have not changed, and are consistent with current national guidelines (www.eviQ.org.au):

- People **with breast or ovarian cancer** and greater than 10% risk of having a gene mutation. This risk assessment must be made by your specialist or consultant physician, taking into account the details of your cancer and your family history of cancer.

or

- People with a first-degree relative (parent, child or sibling) with a known gene mutation. This is called “predictive” genetic testing.

How can I get genetic testing?

- **If you meet the national guidelines you can still access free genetic testing through a referral to GSWA for genetic counselling and testing.**
- **Your specialist or consultant physician can order some cancer gene tests that are funded by Medicare.** Genetic counselling is recommended if you have a positive genetic test result, a strong family history of cancer (regardless of the test result), or if you have not had cancer and are having predictive genetic testing.
- **Genetic testing is available to anyone through private providers.** The cost and wait time will depend on the provider. If you choose to have private genetic testing, we recommend using a service that includes genetic counselling.

Depending on your family history, a genetic test result may not change your risk, and you may still need extra cancer screening. Please discuss this with your doctors.