

It's time to care about ... the health of older Australians

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) is calling on the Federal Government to help GPs and the patients they care for

Did you know?



Older Australians must be supported to spend the necessary time with their GP to stay healthy and active in the community for longer.

Australia's population is rapidly ageing. Around **16%** of the population is aged 65 or over, and this is projected to increase to **21–23%** by 2066.

80% of Australians over the age of 65 have one or more chronic health condition and just **over half** of those aged 65 and older have two or more chronic health conditions.

The RACGP is calling on the Federal Government to:

1 Support regular and continuous general practice care for older people

Establishing a service incentive payment would better support general practice services that help older people through prevention, early identification and ongoing management of ageing-related conditions. Services may include a health assessment for patients over 65 or a general practice management plan with at least one review and a frailty assessment.

A person's health status declines with age. Regular, continuous general practice care can help identify and address common issues associated with ageing, helping older Australians live happily and healthily in the community for longer.

- A frailty assessment would greatly benefit older Australians.
 - Frailty is linked to falls - approximately one in three older people living at home experience a fall annually, and approximately 20% of them require hospitalisation.
 - Falls are Australia's largest contributor to hospitalised injury cases and a leading cause of injury and death. In 2017–18, 42% of hospitalised injury cases and 40% of injury deaths were due to falls.

2 Increase the value of a patient's Medicare rebate for longer consultations by 10%

Older Australians have more complex health needs and higher rates of chronic disease so they often need to spend longer with their GP. Longer consultations are undervalued in the

current system – the Medicare rebate per minute decreases the longer a person spends with their GP. This means older Australians are likely to pay relatively more to see their GP.

3 Reinstitute Medicare rebates for long phone consultations

Older people are likely to be less confident using video technology and are adversely affected by a telehealth model that restricts phone consultations.

- People over the age of 65 are Australia's most digitally excluded group.

4 Introduce a GP follow-up appointment within seven days of an emergency department presentation or hospital admission

A follow-up appointment with their GP soon after a hospital admission reduces the likelihood of a person being readmitted to hospital. This is particularly important for older Australians, as they are significantly over-represented in our hospital system and much more likely to be readmitted to hospital within 28 days.

- Nearly half (46%) of all potentially preventable hospitalisations in Australia involve people aged 65 and over, mostly due to chronic conditions.
- More than one in five aged care residents who enter or re-enter an aged care facility from hospital had an emergency department re-presentation within 30 days.