

# Telephone Health Coaching Frequently Asked Questions (Clinicians)

## What is telephone health coaching?

Health coaching utilises the principles of behavioural psychology. The role of a health coach is to guide a person through behaviour change to improve their health. A health coach supports people to make changes in their lifestyle to help them to achieve personal health goals. Health coaches support and assist people to:

- determine their most important health goals
- set goals that can be measured
- identify and overcome any barriers to achieving their goals
- identify useful resources and support to help clients achieve their goals.

## What is the evidence for health coaching?

A number of studies have shown health coaching is effective and improves health outcomes for patients. Dennis. S., et al ( 2013) carried out a review of the published peer reviewed literature and found that telephone coaching can enhance the management of chronic disease, especially for vulnerable groups. O'Hara B., et al (2012) implemented a telephone based coaching intervention to address behavioural risk factors. They found that after the intervention there were improvements in weight, waist, moderate physical activity, fruit, vegetable and takeaway meals consumption that were statistically significant.

## Who benefits from health coaching?

Anyone with a chronic condition can benefit from health coaching. Health coaching encourages people to make small tailored lifestyle changes that help them manage chronic conditions better and improve overall health. In addition people at risk of developing a chronic condition benefit from health coaching programs. Examples include smoking cessation or weight management.

## How does health coaching work?

Health coaching is conducted over the telephone at a time suitable to the patient. The health coach finds out what is important to the patient and tailors a program to suit their needs. The health coach helps a patient to make goals and then supports them through the process of making lifestyle changes and assisting them to develop the knowledge and skills needed to achieve their goals.

## Why would someone need health coaching if they already receive care from their doctor?

A health coaching program does not replace a general practitioner, treating specialist or other health professional but supports a patients between visits to help to meet and maintain identified targets. A health coach will work with an individual's GP and/or other health care provider.

## Who will be delivering health coaching?

Telephone health coaching is delivered by experienced registered nurses, dieticians and other allied health professionals depending on which health coaching program is being undertaken.

## How long does the program last for?

The length of the program depends on which health coaching program is undertaken, it usually continues for about 6 months.

## How soon can someone get a health coach?

This will depend on waiting times for health coaches determined by private health insurers.

## How much does it cost?

The program is free for people with private health insurance at a membership level that covers the program.

### **How do I find out eligibility for a health coaching program?**

The Grampians Medicare Local *Call a Health Coach* tool shows which private health insurance companies provide telephone health coaching services for various conditions or lifestyle risk factors.

### **How can someone be referred to a health coaching program?**

Once a person knows their private health fund provides telephone health coaching services they can refer themselves or be referred by their GP, practice nurse or other health care provider. Referral forms, including forms for most clinical software packages are available in the *Call a Health Coach* tool on the Grampians Medicare Local website. Otherwise referrals can be made directly to the private health insurer by telephone. Eligibility for health coaching depends on the person's private health insurance coverage.

### **Why is the Grampians Medicare Local working with private health insurers?**

Increasing the uptake of health coaching in our region assists people to improve their health.

### **Using health coaches in the preparation of a team care arrangement**

Telephone coaching service providers can be included in the preparation of a team care arrangement for a patient with a chronic or terminal medical condition and complex needs, requiring ongoing care from a multidisciplinary team.

## **References**

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- O'Hara, B. J., Phongsavan, P., Venugopal, K., Eakin, E. G., Eggins, D., Caterson, H., King, L., Allman-Farinelli, M., Haas, M. & Bauman, A. E. (2012). Effectiveness of Australia's Get Healthy Information and Coaching Service: translational research with population wide impact. *Preventive medicine*, 55(4), 292-8.  
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