

Nurse practitioners in the ACT

Frequently Asked Questions for health consumers

This information is for people who see a nurse practitioner (NP) in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT). The ACT Office of the Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer (ACT OCNMO) will update this information if things change.

What is a nurse practitioner (NP)?

Nurse practitioners are expert registered nurses (RNs). The title 'nurse practitioner' means the RN has extensive experience and education. They can:

- assess and diagnose medical conditions
- prescribe medicines
- request and interpret tests (e.g. imaging tests such as X-rays and ultrasounds, blood tests)
- make referrals to a medical and/or allied health specialists.

You can check whether your NP is registered by checking the [national register](#). To find or request more information about NPs, you can visit:

- [ACT Health's webpage](#)
- contact the [Australian College of Nurse Practitioners](#)

What does an NP do?

Nurse practitioners work in many different areas, including diabetes, palliative care, wound care, mental health, walk-in centres, and aged care. They may work in their own stand-alone clinics, or work within larger healthcare teams. They work in both the public and private health sectors.

Each NP has unique skills and expertise. For example, some can perform procedures like skin checks and stitches, and others are excellent at helping you take care of long-term health conditions. If you're unsure if your NP can do something for you – just ask them! They will be more than happy to give you helpful advice.

Can NPs write medical certificates in the ACT?

Medical certificates and sick certificates are two different documents.

NPs in the ACT can issue a sick certificate for people who are unwell and cannot go to work. NPs cannot provide a medical certificate because it can only be written by registered medical practitioners. There is no limit on the number of days an NP can write a sick certificate for, it depends on your illness and the NP employer's policies.

Can NPs fill out my workers' compensation, Comcare or driver's license medical paperwork?

NPs can assess, diagnose, and treat many work-related injuries. However, under ACT law, workers' compensation and Comcare certificates must be completed by a medical practitioner (doctor).

NPs can assess a person's fitness to drive. However, under ACT law driver's license medical forms must be completed by a medical practitioner.

Can NPs prescribe medicines subsidised by the government?

Many medicines are subsidised by the government through the [Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme \(PBS\)](#). Generally, inpatient medicines and those supplied by public hospitals in the ACT are subsidised by the ACT government. Many medicines that are dispensed in community pharmacies are subsidised by the PBS.

Private sector

NPs working in private health services can write prescriptions for [specific medicines](#) that are covered by the PBS. Generally, any medicine listed on the PBS website will be subsidised if prescribed by a doctor. If a medicine prescribed by an NP does not attract a PBS subsidy, you will need to pay the full cost of that medicine. The costs of private medicines will not contribute to your safety net threshold.

Public sector

NPs working in [community-based settings](#) can write prescriptions for [specific medicines](#) that are covered by the PBS. NPs working in ACT [public hospitals or in co-located outpatient departments](#) cannot write prescriptions for medicines covered by the PBS. Any prescriptions written by an NP working in ACT public hospitals or co-located outpatient departments that are filled in community-based pharmacies will be at the full, private costs of those medicines. Medicines prescribed by public sector NPs for inpatients in public hospitals, or supplied in community-based clinics (e.g. walk-in centres) are subsidised by ACT Government.

Can NPs request tests that are subsidised by the government?

Many blood and imaging tests (e.g. x-rays and ultrasounds) requested by NPs are subsidised by the government through hospitals or [Medicare](#). Generally, inpatient testing and those tests performed by public hospitals are subsidised by ACT Government. Many tests that are performed in community-based laboratories or imaging services are subsidised by Medicare.

Private sector

NPs working in the private sector can request diagnostic tests that attract a Medicare subsidy.

Blood Tests: Generally, any blood test that attracts a subsidy when requested by a doctor will be subsidised when requested by an NP.

Imaging: Not all imaging tests requested by an NP in the private sector will be subsidised by Medicare. If an NP requests [these imaging tests](#) they will attract a subsidy. If you choose to see an NP for any other imaging tests you will have to pay the full private cost of those imaging tests. The costs of private imaging examinations will not contribute to your safety net threshold.

Public sector

Imaging and pathology examinations that are requested by NPs that are completed in ACT public hospitals or health centres, are subsidised by ACT government.

Who do I contact if I have a concern about the care an NP has provided?

Nurse Practitioners, like other regulated health practitioners, are responsible for the care they provide. They must follow [national standards and guidelines](#). If you have a concern about the care an NP has provided, it is always best to first raise your concerns with the NP involved. If you do not feel comfortable doing so, then you can contact any of the following for assistance:

1. the NP's employer
2. [ACT Human Rights Commission](#),
3. [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency](#).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

ACT Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land, the Ngunnawal people. ACT Health respects their continuing culture and connections to the land and the unique contributions they make to the life of this area. ACT Health also acknowledges and welcomes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are part of the community we serve.

ACCESSIBILITY

If you have difficulty reading a standard printed document and would like an alternative format, please phone 13 22 81.



If English is not your first language and you need the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS), please call 13 14 50.

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