



**THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP  
Minister for Health**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Patient access to new Medicare-subsidised procedures**

The Gillard Government will add three new medical services the Medical Benefits Scheme, providing benefit for hundreds of Australian patients.

Health Minister Tanya Plibersek said the procedures included surgery to insert artificial intervertebral discs for patients with spinal conditions, an endoscopic procedure for patients with pre-cancerous lesions in their oesophagus and a genetic test to detect a hereditary condition associated with retinal and other tumours.

“We are committed to delivering quality health care for Australian patients at the most affordable price,” said Ms Plibersek, “Previously, patients did not have ready access to these services.”

Ms Plibersek said the two procedures and one genetic test, which will be listed on the MBS on November 1, were made possible following the development of new medical technologies.

“As new technologies and procedures give doctors the ability to improve patient treatment, the government will continue to make subsidies available to ensure patients can access these services.”

The new listings will benefit:

- More than 400 people a year who will undergo a new surgical approach to managing cervical spine instability by inserting artificial discs.
  - About 100 people a year who need radiofrequency ablation to treat Barrett’s Oesophagus. This endoscopic procedure will replace the need for an invasive oesophagectomy in patients who have pre-cancerous changes in the lining of the oesophagus and are at risk of developing oesophageal cancer.
  - More than 40 people a year who require a gene test to detect the hereditary mutation of von Hippel-Lindau disease. The disease is associated with tumours of the retina and central nervous system and cysts in various organs.

The three new services have been approved for listing on Medicare based on the recommendations made of the Medical Services Advisory Committee.