

NT-proBNP Testing for Heart Failure Diagnosis

Now Medicare-rebatable
from 1st November

MBS item number **66829**

From 1st Nov 2024, NT-proBNP testing will be Medicare rebatable when ordered by GPs. These biomarkers have been used primarily by cardiologists and emergency clinicians but **now GPs can request the test** to assess patients for heart failure and the test will attract a Medicare rebate.

NT-proBNP and BNP: important for diagnosis

As Australia's population ages, congestive heart failure (CHF) is becoming an increasingly prevalent condition, particularly among elderly patients, with an estimated 1.5-2% of the population affected. The diagnosis of mild or early CHF has traditionally been difficult due to non-specific symptoms that often overlap with other conditions.

NT-proBNP testing offers a more accessible alternative to chest X-rays and echocardiograms.

NT-proBNP and BNP tests are treated as equivalent by Medicare and our laboratories.

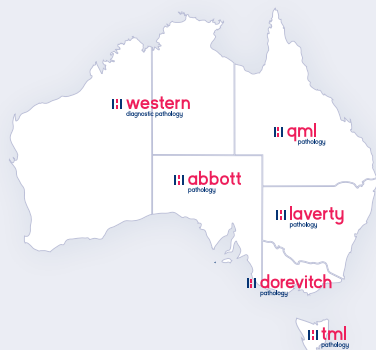
Testing Frequency

BNP or NT-proBNP will attract a Medicare benefit only once per 12-month period.

How it works:

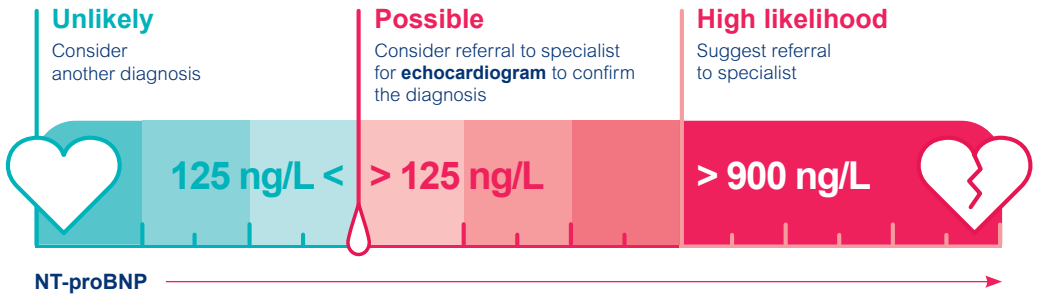
NT-proBNP is released by the heart in response to increased wall stress due to volume overload, a hallmark of heart failure. Very elevated levels of these markers strongly suggest the presence of heart failure, whereas low levels rule out CHF as a cause of the patient's symptoms.

Healius Pathology network:



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Likelihood of heart failure:



*Interpretative reference cut-points are provided according to age.

Request NT-proBNP for patients presenting with:

- **Dyspnea:** Acute or chronic shortness of breath, especially where heart failure is suspected but not confirmed.
- **Oedema:** Peripheral oedema, unexplained fatigue, or elevated JVP.
- **Comorbidity:** A history of lung disease where you are assessing for coexisting heart failure.
- **Risk Factors:** Patients who are at risk of CHF due to age, hypertension, or diabetes but do not yet show clear signs of the condition.

Request NT-proBNP to:

Assess whether a patient presenting with one of the above factors is requiring echocardiography.

Benefits over traditional diagnostic methods:



Accessible: Easier to access compared to echocardiography, especially in non-urban settings.



Specificity: High negative predictive value – a low NT-proBNP level virtually excludes CHF, allowing you to focus on alternative diagnoses.



Time-sensitive: Faster results compared to waiting for imaging.

To order, simply request a BNP panel test.



The Healius Pathology network

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