

When a patient doesn't  
want to answer



If a patient objects to the question or says they don't want to answer, they should be assured that their standard of care will not be affected if they choose not to answer.

Patients may not always realise that the Indigenous status question applies to everybody. Sometimes patients skip this question simply because they think it doesn't apply to them. If the question has not been completed on a returned form, this (and any other incomplete or unanswered questions) should be followed up and confirmed with the patient.

## For more information

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's ***National Best Practice Guidelines for collecting Indigenous status in health data sets***, is available free online at **[www.aihw.gov.au](http://www.aihw.gov.au)**

To order printed copies, contact the National Indigenous Data Improvement Support Centre (NIDISC) Helpdesk on:

**Ph:** 1800 223 919

**Email:** [NIDISC@aihw.gov.au](mailto:NIDISC@aihw.gov.au)

For advice and assistance for service providers and data managers on how to implement the Best Practice Guidelines, contact the AIHW's NIDISC Helpdesk on:

**1800 223 919**, or email  
**[NIDISC@aihw.gov.au](mailto:NIDISC@aihw.gov.au)**



Australian Government  
Australian Institute of  
Health and Welfare

One **simple**  
**question**



could help you  
**close the gap...**

For more information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and data issues, and the data collections where Indigenous status is required, go to:  
**[www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/population-groups/indigenous-australians](http://www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/population-groups/indigenous-australians)**



Stronger evidence,  
better decisions,  
improved health and welfare



## Why asking this question is important

The collection of every patient's Indigenous status is necessary for the government and other services to:

- › plan and deliver appropriate health services for all Australians
- › measure the impact of services on particular groups
- › monitor trends and changes in the health and wellbeing of Australians over time.

The most accurate and reliable way to collect Indigenous status is to have patients answer the standard question for themselves.

It is also important to ask because Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients may wish to see an Aboriginal Health Worker, or access specific Medicare services such as a Health Check.

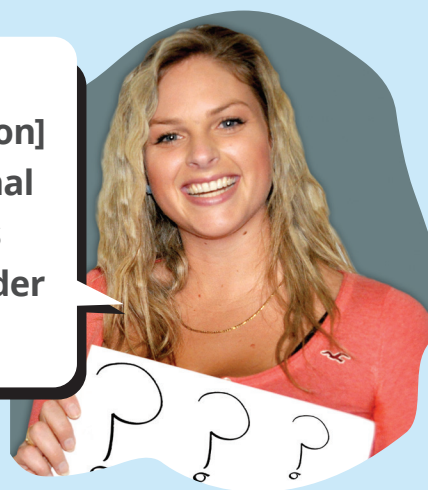
## When to ask the question

The Indigenous status question should be asked at the point of intake, when a patient's other details, such as name, date of birth, and address are being collected.

## How to ask the question

This question should be asked of all patients irrespective of appearance, country of birth, or whether you personally know the patient or their family background:

**'Are you  
[is the person]  
of Aboriginal  
or Torres  
Strait Islander  
origin?'**



Patients may be asked the question in person or over the phone, or asked to complete a form.

It is important that the question is asked exactly as it is worded. Changing the question even slightly has the potential to alter the question's meaning, and this may in turn influence the patient's response.

## How to record the answer

Patients should be provided with at least three response options:

- › No
- › Yes, Aboriginal
- › Yes, Torres Strait Islander

For patients of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin, both 'Yes' boxes should be marked.

Alternatively, you may include a fourth response category:

- › Yes, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander



## When a patient is unable to answer

There are some situations when the patient will be unable to answer the question. In these instances it is acceptable for someone else—a close friend, relative or member of the household—to answer on the patient's behalf. You should verify this response with the patient at a later time if possible.

