

Information Sheet:

Medicare Benefits for people under 25 years

Medicare is a national body that subsidises primary health care in Australia. Medicare provides a rebate on the cost of seeing a doctor. You can also get specific plans to claim a Medicare rebate to see other kinds of health professionals, like therapists. This information sheet lists the most relevant plans for Autistic people.

- The Chronic Disease Management Plan
- The Better Access to Mental Health Plan
- The Helping Children with Autism Access to Diagnosis and Treatment

Usually, Medicare will only refund part of the cost of service. That means you will have a gap that you need to pay yourself. If you end up paying a lot for medical services in one year, you may reach the Medicare Safety Net. This means you get a higher rebate for Medicare-subsidised services.

When you approach the safety net, Medicare will notify you. You need to register with Medicare, so they know to count the Medicare expenses together. You can call Medicare on 13 20 11 for more information or read about it at:

<https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/medicare-safety-net>

Chronic Disease Management Plan

Previously called an Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) plan

The Chronic Disease Management (CDM) Plan provides:

- Five sessions with an Allied Health Professional per calendar year (see below for a list of professionals who are considered Allied Health Professionals).

Autistic people are eligible for the Chronic Disease Management Plan because Autistic people may require ongoing support from multiple medical practitioners.

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Allied Health Professionals

- Aboriginal Health Workers
- Audiologists
- Chiropractors
- Diabetes Educators
- Dietitians
- Exercise Physiologists
- Mental Health Nurses
- Occupational Therapists
- Osteopaths
- Physiotherapists
- Podiatrists
- Psychologists
- Speech Pathologists



Your General Practitioner (GP) can write the Chronic Disease Management Plan. Autistic people are eligible for 5 sessions every calendar year. Once you have the initial plan, the GP will not need to write a new plan each year, but may review the plan.

Better Access to Mental Health Plan *Also known as Mental Health Care Plan*

This plan provides (per calendar year):

- 10 sessions of individual therapy with a psychologist, occupational therapist or social worker
- 10 group sessions of therapy with a psychologist, occupational therapist, or social worker

The Better Access to Mental Health Care plan is available for anybody (Autistic individuals, parents, siblings, carers etc.). It's for anybody who feels that their wellbeing and mental health is at risk. Mental illness is common. Around 1 in 5 Australians will experience a mental illness at some stage in their lives. Many things may affect your mental health, for example, exposure to trauma, family environments, cumulative stress, and difficult life events.

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Better Access to Mental Health Plan continued

Any family members who are feeling sad, confused, depressed or anxious should see their GP. The GP can refer the person to professionals to support them, such as social workers or counsellors.

Autistic people are more likely than the general population to have a mental health condition, for example, anxiety or depression. Individuals can access the Better Access to Mental Health Care Plan and seek support from the appropriate professionals.

You can use the group sessions for any group run by the listed professionals. These can include social skills groups, play therapy groups, and anxiety groups. The group must be building confidence, self-esteem and ability for the Autistic person.

You're eligible for up to 10 sessions under the Better Access to Mental Health plan every calendar year. You can get a referral from your GP. Make sure you book a long appointment with your doctor. This is to allow enough time to prepare a GP Mental Health Care Plan and discuss your treatment options. A psychiatrist or paediatrician can also write this referral.



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The Helping Children with Autism Access to Diagnosis and Treatment Plan

Sometimes called Medicare Item 135 or Item 137

This plan provides the following:

- Up to 8 appointments for private diagnosis referred by a GP, paediatrician or psychiatrist to an allied health professional (a psychologist, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, audiologist, optometrist, orthoptist or physiotherapist). This is called the 'Helping Children with Autism Increased Access to Diagnosis'
- 20 sessions with a psychologist, speech therapist, occupational therapist, audiologist, optometrist, orthoptist or physiotherapist. This is called the 'Helping Children with Autism Treatment Plan.'
- This plan was previously only available to those under 13 years old. As of March 2023, this plan is now available for those under 25 years old.

Helping Children with Autism - Increased Access to Diagnosis

You have the option of using the Medicare rebate system to help pay for private assessments. Your paediatrician or psychiatrist can diagnose you or your child with autism, in collaboration with the allied health professionals listed above. The rebate allows a total of up to 8 sessions with the professionals (together, not each).

Whilst you can get rebates for a total of 8 sessions, Allied Health professionals can only provide up to 4 sessions before the need for a review. If you require more than 4 sessions to complete your assessment, you must return to the original health practitioner who referred you and they must agree that more sessions are needed.

Helping Children with Autism - Increased Treatment Plan

With a diagnosis of autism, you will be eligible for 20 sessions of therapy with one of the above listed allied health professionals. Your paediatrician or psychiatrist will develop a treatment plan with you. These rebates can only be used once in your life time. The plan for therapy must be written by your 25th birthday and the 20 sessions can only be used before your 25th birthday. If you are near your 25th birthday when you receive your diagnosis, your treatment plan will include alternative services.

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The Medicare Plans: at a glance...

	Chronic Disease Management	Better Access to Mental Health	Helping Children with autism
Number of sessions	5	10 ind and 10 group	20
How often?	Each calendar year	Each calendar year	One-off item
Speech Therapist	✓	✗	✓
Psychologist	✓	✓	✓
Occupational Therapist	✓	✓	✓
Social Worker	✓	✓	✗
Audiologist	✓	✗	✓
Optometrist	✗	✗	✓
Orthoptist	✗	✗	✓
Physiotherapist	✓	✗	✓
Group sessions	✗	✓	✗
GPs write referral	✓	✓	✗
Paediatricians write referral	✗	✓	✓
Psychiatrists write referral	✗	✓	✓
Adults eligible	✓	✓	✓*

*Referrals must be written and sessions used before 25th birthday.

Call the Amaze Autism Advisor service for advice on your individual circumstances.

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Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Can I use all these plans at the same time?

A. Yes!

Q. Can I use the 20 session plan/Item 135 more than once?

A.No, you will receive this plan only once in your lifetime.

Q. Who can write the referrals?

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- o The Better Access to Mental Health referral can also be written by a paediatrician or psychiatrist, but are more commonly written by a GP.
- o The Chronic Disease Management referrals can only be written by your GP.

Q. Are these sessions free of cost?

A. No – you will receive a rebate from Medicare. This rebate does not cover the total cost of the service.

Please check with Medicare the amount you will receive.

Acknowledgements

This information sheet was developed in consultation with Autistic people.

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