

# Cost to see a psychiatrist (Australia)

Psychiatrists are specialist medical doctors. They are experts in diagnosing and treating mental illness.

Psychiatrists first complete a medical degree and then enter the training program for psychiatry. This program covers a range of training experiences over a 5 year period. Once their training is complete, a psychiatrist becomes a Fellow of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (FRANZCP).

You can expect a high level of skill in the services a psychiatrist provides.

## How much does it cost to see a psychiatrist?

If you see a psychiatrist for a private appointment (in their rooms), you may have to pay a fee. This is sometimes called a gap fee or out-of-pocket cost.

If you see a psychiatrist in a public hospital or community health service, you generally won't have to pay.

Psychiatrists, like other medical specialists, set their own fees.

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) provides guidance to medical practitioners about fees. The RANZCP does not provide advice on or set psychiatrists' fees.

### Tips

- Make sure you have a valid referral before making an appointment.
- Check fees by contacting the clinic or checking the psychiatrist's website before your appointment.
- Check if a cancellation fee applies if you cannot attend your appointment.
- You need to pay the full amount for the appointment on the day.

## Can I get a Medicare rebate when I see a psychiatrist?

If you are eligible for Medicare and have a valid referral, Medicare will refund part of your fee.

The amount you receive from Medicare will depend on:

- the type of appointment
- how long the appointment is
- whether you need services not covered by Medicare (for example, insurance or NDIS reports).

Type of appointment	Example fee*	Medicare rebate	Amount you end up paying
Assessment and GP report	\$440	\$384.80	\$55.20
Initial consultation	\$400	\$221.30	\$178.70
Consultation 30 minutes	\$200	\$113.15	\$86.85
Consultation 45 minutes	\$300	\$156.15	\$143.85

*\*The fees listed here are examples only. Please contact your psychiatrist's clinic to find out about their fees.*

## Do psychiatrists bulk-bill?

Some psychiatrists may bulk-bill. This means Medicare covers the cost of the appointment and you have no out-of-pocket fee.

Each psychiatrist has their own criteria for whom they will bulk-bill.

Check the requirements for bulk-billing by calling the clinic before your appointment.

## Can I use my private health insurance?

Private health insurance covers you for hospital admissions.

Appointments with a private psychiatrist (outside a hospital stay) are not covered by private health insurance. This is the same for all medical specialists.

## How many times will I see my psychiatrist?

You may only see your psychiatrist once or twice a year.

In other cases, you may need regular appointments to manage a long-term illness. The Medicare safety nets are there to help you cover ongoing costs.

## I'm having trouble paying – what options do I have?

- Discuss options with your psychiatrist.
- Speak to the clinic receptionist – payment plans may be available.
- Medicare Safety Nets, a Mental Health Treatment Plan and your Primary Health Network may be able to assist.

### Medicare Safety Net

The Medicare Safety Net provides extra rebates once your out-of-pocket medical costs reach \$470 in a calendar year.

### Extended Medicare Safety Net

The Extended Safety Net provides more rebates on top of the standard Safety Net.

If have a concession card or receive Family Tax Benefit A, you qualify when your out-of-pocket medical costs reach \$680.70.

For people who don't have a concession card, the threshold is \$2133.

### Mental Health Treatment Plans

Mental Health Treatment Plans provide up to 10 Medicare-rebated sessions for psychological treatment.

The sessions could be provided by:

- a psychologist
- a mental health-trained GP
- a registered social worker
- another approved professional.

Mental Health Treatment Plans do not cover your appointments with a psychiatrist.

Your GP or psychiatrist can provide you with a Mental Health Treatment Plan.

### Primary Health Network (PHN) mental health care services

PHNs provide a range of services for people with a diagnosed mental illness.

This may include access to a psychologist, nurse, occupational therapist, social worker or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health worker.

Services may be available if you:

- are in hardship
- are living in a remote area
- have suffered serious trauma (for example homelessness, bushfire or earthquake).

Talk to your GP or psychiatrist about services available in your area.

## Remember

- ✓ Psychiatrists are specialist medical doctors who are experts in diagnosing and treating mental illness. You can expect a high level of skill in the services they provide.
- ✓ Call the psychiatrist's clinic to ask about fees before your first appointment.
- ✓ Medicare will cover some of the cost of psychiatrist appointments.
- ✓ There are options if you are having trouble paying to see a psychiatrist.

This fact sheet is also available online at [yourhealthinmind.org](http://yourhealthinmind.org)

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### About us

Psychiatrists are doctors who specialise in mental health. The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists:

- trains and supports psychiatrists
- advocates for better mental health for our communities
- sets standards in psychiatry.



The Royal  
Australian &  
New Zealand  
College of  
Psychiatrists



This is a general guide only, and does not replace individual medical advice. Please speak to your doctor for advice about your situation. The RANZCP is not liable for any consequences arising from relying on this information. Subject matter experts, people with lived experience of mental illness and carers all contributed to this fact sheet.