

Cost to see a psychiatrist (Australia)

Psychiatrists are medical doctors who are experts in diagnosing and treating mental illness. You can expect a high level of skill in the services they provide.

How much does it cost to see a psychiatrist?

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

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

Private medical specialists charge fees because they are running their own practices with all the associated costs this involves.

The RANZCP does not recommend or set a schedule of fees. They are decided by individual psychiatrists.

Call the psychiatrist's clinic to ask about fees **before** your first appointment.

Also check what fees apply if you fail to attend an appointment or cancel at short notice.

Your private psychiatrist can provide you with a copy of their fees before your first appointment. This can be mailed or emailed to you.

- The price you pay will depend on:
- how long the consultation is
- the type of appointment

if you require services not covered by Medicare (for example court reports or firearms reviews).

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

Medicare covers some of the cost of seeing a psychiatrist.

You may be asked to pay the full amount for the appointment on the day.

Often you can claim your Medicare rebate on the spot and have a refund in your bank account the same day (minus the doctor's gap).

According to 2014–2015 Department of Health data, the average psychiatrist fee for a 45–75 minute consultation was \$267. Medicare will rebate \$156.15 of this amount (see table below for examples).

Type of appointment	Example fee*	Medicare rebate	Amount you end up paying
Management plan	\$440	\$384.80	\$55.20
Initial consultation	\$360	\$221.30	\$138.70
Consultation 45 minutes	\$270	\$156.15	\$113.85
Consultation 30 minutes	\$180	\$113.15	\$66.85

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

Some services provided by psychiatrists are not covered at all by Medicare, such as reports for a court.

Do psychiatrists bulk-bill?

Some psychiatrists may bulk-bill. This means you don't have to pay any money for the appointment.

Each psychiatrist has their own criteria for who they bulk-bill. For example, they might bulk-bill people who have Health Care Cards.

Check if you qualify for bulk-billing by calling the clinic before your appointment.

- Find a psychiatrist near you who offers bulk-billing yourhealthinmind.org/find

Does private health insurance cover psychiatrists?

Private health insurance won't cover your private appointment with a psychiatrist.

It may cover you for psychiatrist visits during a stay in a private hospital. It is important to check your level of health cover if your psychiatrist recommends hospital care.

- More about private health insurance yourhealthinmind.org/insurance

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

If you are having trouble paying for psychiatric appointments:

- Tell the clinic receptionist that you are having difficulties – they may be able to organise a payment plan for you.
- Discuss this with your psychiatrist.

Medicare Safety Net

The Medicare Safety Net provides extra rebates once your out-of-pocket medical costs reach \$453.20 in a calendar year. After you spend this amount, Medicare will pay extra rebates.

Once you reach the Safety Net, your cost per appointment might drop.

Extended Medicare Safety Net

The Extended Safety Net provides more rebates on top of what you might already be getting under the standard Safety Net.

If you are a concession card holder or a family receiving Family Tax Benefit A, once your out-of-pocket medical costs reach \$656.30 you will qualify for the Extended Safety Net.

For people who don't qualify for concession, the threshold is \$2056.30.

How many times will I see my psychiatrist?

You might only need to see a psychiatrist once or twice per year.

In other cases, you may need to have regular appointments with a psychiatrist for management of long-term illness. The Medicare safety nets are designed to help you cover these ongoing costs.

Your psychiatrist may also refer you to see a psychologist or allied health professional for psychological treatment. In this case, there are Medicare rebates available through Better Access and ATAPS.

Better Access

Better Access provides Medicare rebates for appointments with allied health professionals. This could be a psychologist, a mental health-trained GP, a registered social worker or other approved professional. It does not cover psychiatrist visits.

A psychiatrist can directly refer you under the Better Access Scheme by writing a referral letter.

Better Access provides up to six Medicare-rebated sessions. You can get four more sessions if your psychiatrist or GP thinks it's necessary.

Access to Allied Psychological Services (ATAPS)

If you have a diagnosed mental illness and are in hardship, living remotely or have suffered serious trauma (for example homelessness, bushfire or earthquake), you may be eligible for the ATAPS program.

ATAPS allows up to 12 treatment sessions per year with a psychologist, nurse, occupational therapist, social worker or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health worker.

Talk to your GP or psychiatrist about this program.

Remember

- ✓ Psychiatrists are 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

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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.



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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.