

# How to get an appointment

## How do I see a psychiatrist?

If you think you might need to see a psychiatrist, speak to your GP (family doctor).

You usually need a referral from your GP or another medical doctor to see a psychiatrist.

➤ Finding the right psychiatrist for you  
[yourhealthinmind.org/right](http://yourhealthinmind.org/right)

➤ Find a psychiatrist directory  
[yourhealthinmind.org/find](http://yourhealthinmind.org/find)

In an emergency, you may be able to see a psychiatrist at a hospital emergency department or community mental health centre.

## What's a referral and how do I get one?

A referral is a letter from one doctor or professional to another.

In the case of psychiatrists, the referral allows:

- your psychiatrist to get some background information about your symptoms
- your GP or referring doctor to be kept informed about your treatment
- you to get a Medicare rebate for your appointment (Australia) or for the cost to be covered through your District Health Board (New Zealand).

To get a referral you need to first make an appointment with your GP or other doctor. They will ask you some questions and write the letter for you.

## When can I get an appointment?

You might have to wait a few weeks for your appointment with a psychiatrist.

If you need help sooner than that, tell the receptionist when you make the appointment. They can add you to a cancellation list to be seen faster.

Some psychiatrists work after hours or on weekends. This might make it easier to fit your appointments in around work, study or other commitments.

## Where do I go to see a psychiatrist?

Psychiatrists have offices in private consulting rooms, community health clinics and public and private hospitals.

If you live in a remote area you might be able to have your appointment over the internet.

➤ More about seeing a psychiatrist online  
[yourhealthinmind.org/online](http://yourhealthinmind.org/online)

## Remember

- ✓ You usually need a referral to see a psychiatrist in Australia and New Zealand.
- ✓ Your GP or other medical doctor can write a referral for you.
- ✓ In an emergency you can see a psychiatrist at a hospital emergency department or community health centre.

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 &  
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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.