

Finding the right psychiatrist for you

Having a good relationship with your psychiatrist is very important.

Your psychiatrist will encourage you to talk openly about your mental health, personal life and private thoughts.

Having a psychiatrist you are comfortable talking to makes it more likely you'll get better.

Can I choose my psychiatrist?

Usually, your GP (family doctor) will choose a psychiatrist when they write your referral.

But you can also ask your GP to refer you to a psychiatrist of your choice.

If you are seen in a public hospital or community clinic you will be assigned a psychiatrist.

What should I look for in a psychiatrist?

There are a wide variety of psychiatrists.

Some have a special interest or training in the treatment of children, older people or veterans, for example.

Some have a special interest in a particular mental illness.

Before you see a psychiatrist, talk to your GP and take some time to think about:

- practical things like location, cost and clinic opening hours
- the type of person you are most comfortable talking to – think about your preferred age, gender, cultural background and language
- if you need someone with a special interest in your condition
- if you need someone with a special interest in a particular treatment.

How much will it cost?

If you see a psychiatrist in Australia, some of the cost will be covered by Medicare. There is likely to be a 'gap' fee that you will need to pay.

Some psychiatrists will bulk-bill some patients, meaning there is no 'gap' fee.

If you have questions about fees, speak to the clinic's receptionist before your first appointment.

When can I get an appointment?

You may have to wait a few weeks or more for your first appointment with a psychiatrist.

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

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

How do I find a psychiatrist?

Find a Psychiatrist is a free online directory of psychiatrists in Australia. Produced and managed by the RANZCP, it provides the most authoritative and up-to-date information on Australian psychiatrists who you can see outside of the hospital system.

Using the search fields you can look for a psychiatrist who:

- is close to where you live
- treats people with your condition
- is your preferred gender
- speaks a language other than English
- has particular skills or experience
- offers a particular treatment.

➔ Use Find a Psychiatrist to help you.
yourhealthinmind.org/find

What if I don't have many options?

If you don't have the right psychiatrist nearby, you can get help via telepsychiatry.

This is where you have an appointment with a psychiatrist over the internet (for example via Skype).

➤ More about telepsychiatry
yourhealthinmind.org/online

Can I change my psychiatrist?

Talk to your psychiatrist or GP at any time about:

- changing to a new psychiatrist
- getting a second opinion
- problems with your treatment.

Talking to your psychiatrist first is a good idea because:

- if you feel your treatment is not working, there are often other options available
- stopping treatment suddenly can set you back in your recovery
- your psychiatrist can refer you to another doctor.

Remember

- ✓ It's important to have a good relationship with your psychiatrist.
- ✓ You can choose a psychiatrist who suits your needs.
- ✓ Talk to your psychiatrist before changing doctors or stopping treatment.

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.