

Getting the most out of Medicare

People with intellectual disability should be involved in all decisions about their health and wellbeing.

Some people can make decisions alone and some people will need support. It is critical that supporters know the person's will and preferences to make sure the right support is provided and the right decision is made.

For many people, Medicare covers much more than just going to the doctor when they are sick.

If you think that items in this fact sheet might be useful for a person with intellectual disability, take this fact sheet with you when you go to the doctor.

The Healthy Kids Check

Every four year old child can have a free health check by a GP. The doctor can identify signs of a disability and provide advice on healthy lifestyles.

GP Management Plans and Team Care Arrangements

For people with a chronic or terminal medical condition, a GP can write a "Chronic disease GP Management Plan" to help with treatment. Chronic conditions include ones like diabetes, asthma, and heart disease.

If the chronic or terminal condition requires ongoing treatment from a multidisciplinary team (nurse, other doctors, allied health therapists) then the GP can also create a "Team Care Arrangement".

Allied health services

Medicare covers allied health services for a person who has a Team Care Arrangement up to 5 visits each year. Allied health services include dietitians, physiotherapists, speech pathologists, audiologists, psychologists, occupational therapists and Aboriginal health workers.

Early intervention for children

Better Start for Children with Disability has provided funding for early intervention and allied health services for children under 6 years old with conditions such as Cerebral Palsy and Down syndrome. The Helping Children with Autism (HCWA) package has provided similar funding for children with autism.

This funding is being phased out with implementation of the NDIS.

Better Start and HCWA also have special Medicare items that allow a paediatrician or psychiatrist to diagnose, review and manage a child and make referrals to allied health services. A management plan needs to be prepared by the child's 13th birthday and up to 20 therapy sessions used by their 15th birthday. These Medicare payments may continue to be available after NDIS implementation.

Group services for people with type 2 diabetes

If a person has a GP Management Plan, the GP can refer the person for group sessions to help manage their diabetes.

Mental health care

The GP Mental Health Treatment Plan and Review services are suitable for people with a mental health issue, the issue must significantly interfere with their social, emotional or cognitive abilities. The GP may use this plan to suggest strategies, such as seeing a psychologist, at a discounted rate. Psychiatrists can also do an assessment and management plan and refer the person to allied health professionals.

Dental services

For adults with a health care card or pension concession card, public dental services are provided free of charge. An 'Oral Health Specialist Referral' form can be completed by your doctor. Two sites are available for adults - Sydney Dental Hospital and Westmead Centre for Oral Health.

Specialist physicians

These include paediatricians, adult physicians, neurologists and psychiatrists, among others. As well as standard consultations, Medicare has special items for a physician:

- Assessing and preparing a treatment plan for a person with intellectual disability and a complex health problem.
- Organising or attending a case conference with a team of health and care workers.

Will Medicare cover the whole bill?

Medicare only covers the full fee if the health professional bulk bills. However, Medicare keeps an eye on costs and once your costs reach the Medicare Safety Net threshold, further Medicare refunds will be at a higher rate (the Extended Medicare Safety Net).

Private health insurance may also allow some costs to be refunded.

Remember that Medicare is for payment of private health professionals. There are also some free health services provided by government.

Language/hearing barriers

For people who are deaf, Auslan interpreters are available for no cost at medical appointments. Bookings need to be arranged in advance. (Phone 1800 246 945)

The Translating and Interpreting Service is for people who do not speak English. Phone interpreting is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week by phoning 131 450.

For more information:

Better Start for Children with Disability www.betterstart.net.au

Helping Children with Autism www.dss.gov.au

This fact sheet was updated in **2019**.

The fact sheet contains general information only and does not take into account individual circumstances. It should not be relied on for medical advice. We encourage you to look at the information in this fact sheet carefully with your health professional to decide whether the information is right for you.