

Annual health assessments

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.

People with intellectual disability often find it hard to explain if they are in pain or feeling sick.

People often suffer in silence, or their behaviour changes and other people do not know why. So, it is important for a person with intellectual disability to have a thorough health assessment each year. Medicare pays for these assessments which can show up health problems that no one knew about, for example sight and hearing problems, reflux, side effects from medications and major diseases.

Medicare health assessments

Medicare pays for GPs to do annual health assessments of adults and children with intellectual disability. Medicare item 701 is for a brief assessment (up to 30 minutes), 703 standard (up to 45 minutes), 705 long (up to 60 minutes) and 707 for a prolonged assessment. Medicare says that a person with intellectual disability may need a long or prolonged assessment because of the communication barriers between doctor and patient.

Organising the assessment

- Make an appointment for the person with the GP. Say you want an assessment under Medicare and ask for a long appointment. See if the doctor has a practice nurse who can help with the assessment. Check that the doctor bulk bills.
- If the person agrees, someone who knows them well should go with them to the appointment. For people in supported accommodation, workers should discuss this with their family or advocate. It can make sense for both a family member and a support worker to attend.
- Take the person's health records, personal profile and current medications to the appointment.
- If it will be hard for the doctor to assess the person in the clinic, you can ask the doctor to come to the person's home.

At the appointment the GP will check things like the person's teeth, hearing, eye sight, nutrition, any swallowing problems, immunisations and so on. And then, the GP will advise on preventative health care, treatment and any other medical tests that are needed.

If the person has a chronic medical condition and complex care needs, the GP may decide to follow up with Chronic Disease Management Medicare items. These can allow other health professionals to be paid for by Medicare, for example speech pathologists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

Using the CHAP tool

The CHAP is a tool that can be used to carry out the annual health assessment. CHAP stands for Comprehensive Health Assessment Program. There is a questionnaire for the family, advocate or support worker to fill in with the person. This gives the doctor lots of information about the person's health. The doctor then fills in the second part of the CHAP at the appointment and works out a health action plan with the person and other people present.

Health action plan

It is important that the actions recommended by the doctor are followed up. One person should take responsibility for supporting the person with disability through the necessary actions - for example arranging blood tests and making appointments with specialists and therapists. If you have trouble with this follow through, contact the GP for advice.

The annual assessment can also feed into an individual health care plan.

The plan covers things like a healthy lifestyle, follow through on annual assessments and ongoing support with health problems.

Follow up

Ask the GP about a follow up appointment to talk about the results of any tests and other assessments. The doctor may use these results to give more advice about treatment or monitoring.

For more information

Medicare Benefits Schedule

Health assessment for people with intellectual disability:

Fact sheet

www.health.gov.au

Question and Answer Sheet

www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/mbsprimarycare-qandaintelldisability

CHAP tool

www.qcidd.centre.uq.edu.au/resources/chap

You might be interested in these fact sheets

- **Going to the doctor - tips and tricks**
- **Personal health records**
- **Helping the doctor understand the person**
- **Getting the most out of Medicare**

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.