



## Getting the Most out of Medicare

### Key facts

Medicare has been extended a lot in recent years. For many people, it now covers much more than just going to the doctor when you are sick. Read the [Annual health assessments](#) fact sheet to find out about Medicare health checks by GPs. Other new parts of Medicare will also be useful to many people with intellectual disabilities.

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

### The Healthy Kids Check

Every four year old can have a 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

A GP can write a Management Plan for treatment of a chronic or terminal medical condition. Chronic conditions can include ones like diabetes, asthma, and heart disease. If the person also has complex needs, the GP can coordinate a Team Care Arrangement or contribute to a Multidisciplinary Care Plan with other health and care providers.

### Allied health services

Allied health services include dietitians, physiotherapists, speech pathologists, audiologists, psychologists, occupational therapists and Aboriginal health workers.

Medicare covers allied health services for a person who has both a GP Management Plan and a Team Care Arrangement - up to 5 visits each year. You need a GP's referral.

Allied health services are also available under the Better Start for Children with Disability initiative. Better Start covers children with Down and Fragile X syndromes, cerebral palsy and sight or hearing impairments. Medicare covers some allied health services until the child turns 15. The services must be in a treatment plan that is in place before the child turns 13.

**Better Start** also allows children under 6 to receive up to \$12,000 in early intervention services. The services must be finished before the child turns 7. Families in outer regional or remote areas may also be eligible for a one off payment of \$2000. These parts of **Better Start** are managed by the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FAHCSIA).

See the **Better Start** website for more information about how to register and use this program.

### Autism and similar conditions

For children under 13, Medicare covers diagnosis and treatment plans for autism and some similar conditions (called "pervasive developmental disorders"). This work is done by a specialist paediatrician or child psychiatrist.

The specialist can refer the child to allied health professionals for help with the assessment and up to 20 sessions of early intervention. Eligible allied health professionals are audiologists, occupational therapists, optometrists, orthoptists, psychologists, physiotherapists and speech pathologists.



Children and adults who are seriously affected by autism or a similar condition may also be eligible to access the Medicare chronic condition items that are summarised above.

Finally, Medicare pays for ongoing care by a psychiatrist for children and adults who are seriously affected by autism or a similar condition.

### **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**

GP Mental Health Care items apply to people with a “mental disorder”, eg **anxiety or depression**. **The GP can prepare a Mental Health Treatment Plan.** The GP can also refer the person to an allied health professional such as a psychologist or social worker who can be paid by Medicare.

Psychiatrists can also do an assessment and management plan and refer the person to allied health professionals.

### **Dental services**

A person is eligible for Medicare coverage of dental services if their oral health is likely to affect their general health, and they have a GP Management Plan and Team Care Arrangements. See above. Medicare will then pay for most dental services - up to \$4,250 over two calendar years. You need a GP's referral.

Note – The Government is planning to stop Medicare coverage of dental services. Your GP or dentist will know if this has happened.

### **Specialist physicians**

These include paediatricians, adult physicians, neurologists etc. A GP refers patients to them. 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, if the person has a lot of medical expenses, the Extended Medicare Safety Net also may cover some of the cost.

If the person has private health insurance, that may cover some of the services in this fact sheet. However, you cannot claim on both Medicare and private health insurance.

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

*This fact sheet was updated in **December 2011**.*

*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.*