

# let's talk

## mental health professionals



If you're worried about your mental health and thinking of talking to a professional, it can be overwhelming to realise how many services are out there. It can help to know where to go, how to get there and who does what.

Here's a few details about some common mental health professionals to get you started...

### GPs

General practitioners (GPs) are a good place to start if you're worried about your mental health. They look at both your mental and physical health, can talk with you, prescribe medications, develop a Mental Health Treatment Plan and refer you on to other specialised health professionals. They all have a medical degree, and some have extra training.

Anyone can see a GP, you simply call up and book an appointment. These usually last 10-15 minutes, but you can request a long appointment which will last for 20-30 minutes. Costs start at \$40 per session, but depending on the GP, some or all of the fee will be covered by Medicare. If you're worried about costs, you can ask around or call the GP practice to ask about payment options.

### Psychologists

Psychologists provide talking therapies, which can include cognitive behavioural therapies and other evidence-based therapies, to help you work through mental health concerns. They have a psychology degree as well as clinical training.

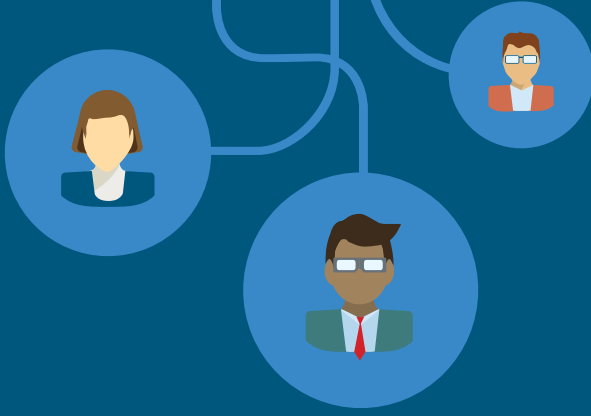
The best way to access a psychologist is to see a GP first. The GP can develop a Mental Health Treatment Plan with you, which may include a referral to a psychologist. That way, some or all of the psychologist's fee will be covered by Medicare. You can make appointments directly with psychologists, without a GP referral, but costs will start at \$100 per session.

### Occupational therapists and social workers

Occupational therapists (OTs) and social workers can provide a range of support depending on their personal qualifications. Some specialise in mental health. They have degrees and you can access them through a referral from a GP or psychiatrist, or through a hospital or community service. Appointments with OTs and social workers are free in public services, and with a GP referral and Mental Health Treatment Plan some are partly covered by Medicare.

### Mental health nurses

Mental health nurses can assist with medication and provide practical support and counselling. They have degrees in nursing and some have extra mental health training. You can access a mental health nurse through a referral from a GP or psychiatrist, but you will usually see them through a hospital or community service.



## Counsellors

Counsellors can provide listening, support and some talking therapies. They may be trained in counselling, social work, psychology or specialised areas, such as grief counselling. You can make an appointment with a counsellor directly. Private counsellor costs start from \$50 per session, however counselling is provided free by some organisations which receive government or charitable funding.

## Psychiatrists

Psychiatrists can prescribe medications, diagnose mental health conditions and provide talking therapies. They have a medical degree with additional psychiatric training. You can access them through a hospital or a referral from a GP. With a GP referral, your appointment will be partly covered by Medicare. It is possible to make appointments directly, with costs starting at \$200 per session, however it is usually best to have a Mental Health Treatment Plan developed with your GP beforehand.

Remember, there may be limited options in regional and rural areas. Sometimes, finding the person you feel comfortable with, who works best with you may be more important than their particular qualifications or profession. You can find out what is available in your area by asking your GP, asking someone you know who has sought help for a mental health concern, or searching online.

*If you're concerned about yourself or someone else's mental health you can call the NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511 for advice. If you or someone else is in immediate danger call 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.*



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