

When Should I See a Psychiatrist?

Many people are unsure whether they need to see a psychiatrist, a psychologist, or continue care with their GP.

This page is designed to help you understand when specialist psychiatric input may be helpful.

What Is a Psychiatrist?

A psychiatrist is a medical specialist in mental health.

Unlike psychologists, psychiatrists:

- Are medical doctors
- Can prescribe and adjust medication
- Assess complex or treatment-resistant conditions
- Provide second opinions on diagnosis
- Assist with WorkCover and medico-legal matters

In many cases, care is shared between:

- Your GP
 - Your psychologist
 - Your psychiatrist
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You May Benefit From Seeing a Psychiatrist If:

1. Your symptoms are not improving despite treatment

- You have tried one or more medications without success
 - You feel “stuck” despite ongoing GP care
 - Your mood or anxiety keeps returning
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2. Your diagnosis is unclear or complex

- Bipolar disorder vs depression
- ADHD with mood instability
- Trauma with emotional dysregulation

- Overlapping anxiety, OCD, or personality factors

Clarifying diagnosis often changes treatment direction.

3. Medication optimisation is needed

- Side effects are limiting treatment
- You are on multiple medications
- You feel over-sedated or emotionally “flat”
- You are unsure whether your medication is appropriate

A psychiatrist can review your current treatment plan and adjust safely.

4. There are safety concerns

- Worsening suicidal thoughts
- Severe mood swings
- Impulsive or high-risk behaviour
- Functional decline (not coping at work or home)

Early specialist input can prevent crisis escalation.

5. WorkCover or medico-legal matters

- Workplace psychological injury
- Capacity assessments
- Independent psychiatric opinion
- Return-to-work planning

Specialist psychiatric reports are often required in these situations.

When Might a Psychologist Be More Appropriate?

If your primary difficulty is:

- Mild–moderate anxiety
- Relationship issues
- Stress management
- Grief
- Behavioural change work

A psychologist may be the best first step.

Many patients benefit from both medication management (psychiatrist) and therapy (psychologist).

What Happens at the First Appointment?

Your initial consultation typically involves:

- Detailed assessment of current symptoms
- Review of past treatments
- Clarification of diagnosis
- Discussion of treatment options
- Communication back to your GP

A comprehensive written report is sent to your referring GP.

Do I Need a Referral?

Yes.

A valid GP referral is required for Medicare rebate eligibility.

If you believe specialist input would be helpful, you can discuss this with your GP and request a referral.

Current Availability

We are currently accepting new referrals.

Approximate waiting time: Can vary depending on demand

Urgent cases may be prioritised at the discretion of the practice.

When to Seek Emergency Help

If you are in immediate danger or feel unable to keep yourself safe:

- Call 000

- Attend your nearest emergency department
 - Contact Lifeline 13 11 14
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