



**PSYCHOLOGIST & PSYCHOTHERAPIST**

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**INFORMATION SHEET**

**BETTER ACCESS MEDICARE INITIATIVE**

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The “Better Access“ Medicare initiative offers the opportunity for clients to receive a rebate for 6-10 sessions of counselling that use specific psychological techniques. These “Focused Psychological Strategies” include:

Psychoeducation	Motivational Interviewing	Relaxation Strategies
Cognitive Behavioural Techniques	Skills Training	Interpersonal Therapy

If you are eligible, a Medicare rebate is available for up to 10 individual sessions and 10 group sessions in the year starting from the date of the referral.

**Eligibility:**

To be eligible for this rebate, you first need to meet with your doctor before the counselling appointment. Your doctor must decide whether you have ‘an assessed mental disorder’ that significantly interferes with your cognitive, emotional or social functioning, such as:

Generalized anxiety disorders	Depression	Post traumatic stress disorder	Adjustment disorders
Panic disorder	Alcohol and drug disorders	Sleeping problems	Sexual disorders
Bereavement disorders	Phobic disorders	Mixed anxiety and depression	Bipolar disorders

Your doctor may need a longer appointment for this assessment, and will set the fee for this appointment. A Medicare rebate usually applies. Please note that if you can afford to pay for counselling you may not be eligible. Please discuss this with your GP. Please let your doctor know if you wish to be referred to a specific psychologist.

**Referral process:**

If your doctor assesses that you are eligible, they will need to complete a mental health care plan, (Medicare item number 2710) which may be provided to the psychologist. The referral itself can be in the form of a letter or a note, signed and dated by the referring doctor. A psychologist’s report is provided to your doctor after the first six sessions, and you will then need to meet with your doctor for a review. Your doctor will decide whether a further four sessions is necessary.

**Rebates:**

Please pay the session fee in full at the end of each session, then take the receipt to Medicare and submit a claim. The current session fee is \$155, and the minimum rebate for a 1 hr consultation of Focused Psychological Strategies is \$84.80, which leaves a gap fee payable by you of \$70.20. The rebate will be higher if you have reached either of the Medicare safety net thresholds. More information on these thresholds can be found on the Medicare website.

Your GP can also refer you to psychology services under the “Access to Allied Psychological Services” (ATAPS) program. There is no gap fee to eligible clients under the ATAPS program. For more information, please read the ATAPS information sheet. Another Medicare program is the Enhanced Primary Care program (EPC), also called Chronic Disease Management, which offers a small rebate for 5 counselling sessions.