



Additional 10 MBS mental health sessions during COVID-19

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Consumers

The temporary expansion of the Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and General Practitioners through the Medicare Benefits Schedule (Better Access) initiative, to allow people to access 10 additional individual Medicare-subsidised sessions, ceased on 31 December 2022.

This measure ensured Australians whose mental health was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic could access additional treatment and support. The 10 additional sessions were available until 31 December 2022.

Who was eligible to access the 10 additional sessions?

The additional sessions were available to people who had:

- a Mental Health Treatment Plan;
- used all 10 individual Better Access sessions in the calendar year that they sought a referral; and
- a referral from their GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician (patients do not require a referral if their GP delivers the psychological therapy).

How could I access these sessions?

The process for accessing these sessions was consistent with the existing referral process for Better Access.

You would see your GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician (reviewing practitioner). Your practitioner would review your Mental Health Treatment Plan or use another consultation item to refer you for the additional sessions.

Your practitioner would decide how many sessions you could receive in your referral. You were able to access up to 10 additional sessions each calendar year until 31 December 2022. This was a total of up to 20 individual sessions each calendar year until 31 December 2022.

The maximum number of sessions your reviewing practitioner could state on your referral was:

- 10 additional Better Access sessions or
- 6 initial Better Access sessions.

Could I access additional group sessions?

No, this measure was for individual psychological services only.

Could I receive sessions via telehealth?

Yes. More information on telehealth is available [here](#).

The appropriateness of telehealth services is a clinical judgement the health professional will make in consultation with the patient.

What happens if I didn't use all 10 additional sessions before 31 December 2022?

The quota for Better Access sessions resets each calendar year. You can receive up to 10 individual sessions in 2023.

Do I need a new referral from 1 January 2023?

No, you do not need a new referral to access Better Access sessions from 1 January 2023.

If you have a current referral (either for the initial 10 sessions or the additional 10 sessions) and have not used all of the sessions, you can use that referral to access sessions in 2023. However, you cannot receive more than 10 individual sessions in 2023.

Information on the MBS items available for Better Access sessions is available on [MBS Online](#).

Do I need a new Mental Health Treatment Plan from 1 January 2023?

No, you do not need a new Mental Health Treatment Plan to access Better Access sessions from 1 January 2023.

What if I don't have a Mental Health Treatment Plan?

If you don't have a Mental Health Treatment Plan you will need to discuss this with your medical practitioner (GP, psychiatrist or paediatrician). Your medical practitioner can determine if you need a Mental Health Treatment Plan or are otherwise eligible for Better Access sessions.

What services are available *without* a Mental Health Treatment Plan?

A range of other mental health services and supports are available which do not require a Mental Health Treatment Plan.

You can speak with your GP about whether Primary Health Network (PHN) commissioned services may be appropriate in their circumstances. PHNs are funded by the Government to commission a range of mental health and suicide prevention services at a regional level, this includes for people who are underserved by the MBS. Contact details for PHNs are available at health.gov.au/phn.

Head to Health

Head to Health offers mental health support by phone, face to face appointments or their website at headtohealth.gov.au.

Call 1800 595 212 from 8.30am to 5pm on weekdays to get free advice from trained professionals. They'll be able to help refer you to the right mental health support for your needs. This may involve connecting you to your nearest Head to Health service, or another free or low-cost mental health service in your area.

You do not need a prior appointment or GP referral to access Head to Health.

For more information on Head to Health and their services, visit headtohealth.gov.au/supporting-yourself/head-to-health-services.

If you prefer using digital services for support or to complement face-to-face therapies, the Government's digital Head to Health mental health gateway is a consumer-friendly website that aims to help people access information more easily. You can access the Head to Health website at headtohealth.gov.au.