Autism Assessment for Children & Teens in Melbourne

Getting a clear answer about whether your child is autistic is often the first step toward the right support — at school, at home, and through NDIS-funded services. BNC provides comprehensive autism assessments for children and teens, combining structured observation, parent/caregiver history and evidence-based diagnostic tools, in person in Doncaster or via telehealth.

Early Signs of Autism in Children and Teens

Every child develops differently, but some patterns are worth having assessed by a professional, including:

- Limited eye contact or reduced response to their name
- Delayed language development, or unusual patterns of speech
- Repetitive movements or intense, narrow interests
- Difficulty with changes to routine
- Differences in play, such as lining up toys rather than imaginative play
- Sensory sensitivities to noise, textures, light or food

For a fuller list, see our early signs of ASD page.

What a Child Assessment Involves at BNC

A comprehensive autism assessment for a child or teen at BNC typically includes:

- A detailed developmental history interview with parents or caregivers

- Structured behavioural observation using tools such as the ADOS-2
- Standardised rating scales, such as the CARS-2
- Input from teachers or early childhood educators where relevant
- A feedback session and a written report outlining the diagnostic outcome and recommendations

The typical number of sessions varies depending on the responsiveness of parents, teachers and other informants. The total turn around time is around 2 months.

School Funding and NDIS Access

A formal diagnosis can support applications for NDIS funding and school-based support, such as the Disability Inclusion program. Our reports are prepared to meet the documentation requirements for these pathways, and our team can talk you through what's likely to apply in your family's situation.

Support After Diagnosis

A diagnosis is the start of a plan, not the end of one. BNC offers evidence-based intervention and support following diagnosis, including:

- Pivotal Response Therapy (PRT)
- Early Intensive Behaviour Intervention

Telehealth for Families

Child and teen autism assessments are available via telehealth for families across regional Victoria and Australia-wide, using the same standardised tools and diagnostic rigour as our in-clinic assessments.

Assessment Tools We Use

Every child and teen autism assessment at BNC follows the DSM-5-TR criteria and the Australian national guideline for autism assessment. Depending on your child's age and needs, your psychologist will use:

- **ADOS-2** (Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, 2nd Edition): a structured, play- or conversation-based observation of social communication and behaviour.
- **ADI-R** (Autism Diagnostic Interview, Revised): a detailed structured interview with parents or caregivers about your child's development.
- **CARS-2** (Childhood Autism Rating Scale, 2nd Edition): a rating of how strongly autistic traits are present.
- **Adaptive behaviour measures** such as the Vineland or PEDI-CAT: how your child manages everyday tasks at home, at school and in the community.
- **Screening for co-occurring conditions** such as ADHD, anxiety and learning difficulties, with cognitive testing where it is indicated.

What Your Child's Report Covers

At the feedback session your psychologist explains the outcome and gives you a written report. It typically includes:

- whether your child meets the DSM-5-TR criteria for autism, and the level of support indicated
- your child's strengths, communication profile and sensory needs
- any co-occurring conditions identified
- practical recommendations for home, school and therapy

The report is prepared to meet the documentation requirements for NDIS access and school-based support. If your child also needs a functional capacity assessment for the NDIS, see our NDIS autism and ADHD assessments page.

Costs and Medicare Rebates

A child or teen autism assessment typically costs $3,700, including a functional assessment. For children and young people under 25, Medicare rebates are available for up to 8 assessment sessions through the Complex Neurodevelopmental Disorder (CND) item numbers, with a referral from a paediatrician or psychiatrist. Once a diagnosis is confirmed, recommended follow-up therapy may also attract Medicare

rebates. Call reception on (03) 9848 9100 to check what applies to your family.

Autism and ADHD in Children

Autism and ADHD often occur together, and some signs, such as difficulty with attention, emotional regulation or social situations, can look similar. Every BNC autism assessment screens for ADHD so that one condition is not mistaken for the other. If attention and hyperactivity are your main concern, see our child ADHD assessment page.

Frequently Asked Questions

How much does a child autism assessment cost?
Typically it is $3700 including a functional assessment

How long is the wait list?
There is currently only 1-2 weeks wait

At what age can a child be assessed from?
A child can be reliably diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) as early as **18 to 24 months** old, although some signs may be noticed even earlier.

At BNC, we assess children for autism from 3 to 4 years of age.

- **Early Signs:** Parents and health professionals can often spot signs of autism in babies as young as 12 months, especially if there are clear developmental differences.
- **Formal Diagnosis:** Most specialists prefer to wait until around 18 months for a formal diagnosis, since developmental patterns become clearer by then.
- **Starting Therapy:** Early intervention can begin as soon as there are developmental concerns, even before a formal diagnosis. In fact, starting therapy early is shown to have the best outcomes for children.

So, **the sooner concerns are raised, the sooner therapy can start,** sometimes even before the official diagnosis is confirmed. If you notice delays in communication, social engagement, or repetitive behaviors, talk to a

BNCpsychologist right away. Early support really does make a difference.

What Happens After an Autism Diagnosis? A Guide for Parents

1. **Understanding the Diagnosis**
    - Your child's psychologist will meet with you to explain the diagnosis and answer your questions and concerns.
2. **Getting Informed and Supported**
    - You'll receive information about autism and where to find help.
    - Many families find it helpful to join support groups or parent education programs.
    - Please be careful of misinformation on the internet and of well meaning people (including professionals) telling you not to worry and that your child will grow out of it. Early intervention works best.
3. **Early Intervention**
    - Your child may be referred to therapies like speech, occupational therapy, or for behavioural support.
    - Starting early support can make a big difference.
4. **Accessing Funding and Supports**
    - You can apply for NDIS funding (in Australia) to help pay for therapies and supports.
    - The process includes gathering paperwork and assessments.
5. **NDIS Planning**
    - Your psychological report will make recommendations for the NDIS planner for your child's support needs.
    - You'll have a meeting with an NDIS planner to set NDIS goals for your child and decide what supports are most helpful.
    - Once your plan is approved, funding can be used for therapies, support workers, and equipment.
6. **Working with Your Child's GP and School**
    - Share the diagnosis with your child's GP, school or daycare.
    - The school can help with individual learning plans or extra support.
    - The GP can give you both parents and the child help with Medicare rebates

7. **Ongoing Support**
    - As your child grows, you and your psychologist will keep track of their progress and update supports as needed.
    - NDIS plans and therapy goals can be reviewed and changed over time.
    - NDIS requires a progress report each year.

You're not alone in this journey, your psychologist will support and help you every step of the way.

□□ (03) 9848 9100

Do I need a referral?

No. You can book directly by calling (03) 9848 9100. A referral from a paediatrician or psychiatrist is only needed if you want to claim Medicare rebates through the CND item numbers.

Can the assessment be done by telehealth?

Yes, for families across regional Victoria and Australia-wide. Some observation-based parts of the assessment may work best in person at our Doncaster clinic, and your psychologist will advise what suits your child.

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