How to Discuss ADHD With Your GP in Australia



You may have spent months noticing that everyday tasks take more effort than they seem to for others. Perhaps your child's teacher has raised concerns about concentration, organisation or behaviour, or perhaps you are an adult recognising a long pattern of missed deadlines, overwhelm and emotional reactivity. The decision to discuss ADHD with your GP can be a practical first step towards understanding what is happening and what support may be appropriate.

A GP appointment does not need to begin with certainty. You do not need to prove that you or your child has ADHD. The purpose is to describe the concerns clearly, consider other possible contributors and discuss whether further assessment or support would be helpful.

What your GP can help with

GPs play an important role in coordinating healthcare. They can listen to your concerns, review physical and mental health factors that may affect attention or behaviour, and help determine an appropriate next step. Depending on the situation, this might include monitoring symptoms, addressing sleep or mood concerns, arranging relevant medical checks, developing a Mental Health Care Plan, or making a referral to a psychologist, psychiatrist, paediatrician or another suitable professional.

ADHD can overlap with, or be complicated by, anxiety, depression, learning differences, autism, trauma, sleep difficulties, substance use, thyroid concerns and medication effects. This does not mean your concerns will be dismissed. It means a careful clinical process looks beyond one explanation and considers the whole picture.

For children and adolescents, your GP may also ask about development, school participation, friendships, family circumstances and behaviour across home and school. For adults, they may ask about work, study, relationships, daily responsibilities and whether similar difficulties were present during childhood.

How to discuss ADHD with your GP clearly

It is common to feel flustered in a short appointment, particularly when the topic involves years of frustration or concern for your child. A little preparation can help you communicate the most useful information without having to tell every detail at once.

Start with the reason for the appointment in plain language. For example: “I’m concerned about ongoing difficulties with attention, organisation and emotional

regulation, and I would like to discuss whether an ADHD assessment could be appropriate." If you are attending for a child, you might say: "We have noticed persistent difficulties at home and school, and would like advice about the right assessment pathway."

Then describe specific examples rather than relying only on labels. Mention what happens, how often it occurs, when it began and how it affects day-to-day functioning. Examples might include regularly losing essential items, taking far longer than expected to begin tasks, forgetting instructions, struggling to complete schoolwork, acting before thinking, or becoming overwhelmed by routine demands.

It can also help to explain what has already been tried. Perhaps visual reminders help a little, but not consistently. Perhaps school adjustments have been introduced, or you have changed routines at home. This information gives your GP a clearer sense of the support already in place and the areas where difficulties remain.

Bring a brief written summary

A one-page set of notes can be easier to use than trying to remember everything in the room. Include the main concerns, examples from more than one setting, relevant history and any questions you want answered. Parents may wish to bring observations from a teacher, school reports or copies of previous assessments where available.

For an adult appointment, it may be useful to note childhood experiences as well as current concerns. ADHD assessment usually considers whether patterns of difficulty were present earlier in life, even if they were not recognised at the time. Old school reports can sometimes provide helpful context, but they are not the only source of information.

Questions worth asking at the appointment

The right questions depend on your circumstances, but it may be helpful to ask what type of practitioner is appropriate for assessment, whether a referral is needed, what information should accompany the referral, and whether a Mental Health Care Plan

may be relevant for psychological services.

You can also ask what other factors should be considered alongside ADHD, and whether there are immediate supports for sleep, stress, mood, school or workplace functioning while you pursue further assessment. If medication is part of your question, ask who can assess suitability and manage prescribing in your particular circumstances. In Australia, prescribing arrangements and specialist involvement can vary, so your GP can explain the pathway that applies to you.

If you leave without a formal referral, that does not necessarily mean the concern has reached a dead end. Your GP may recommend gathering school feedback, addressing another health issue first, booking a longer consultation or reviewing progress after a period of observation. Ask what the next review point should be so you know how to proceed.

Understanding assessment and referral pathways

A comprehensive ADHD assessment is more than a checklist or a single conversation. It generally considers the person's developmental history, current symptoms, functioning across settings, health history and possible co-occurring conditions. For children, information from parents and school is often relevant. For adults, input from someone who knew the person in childhood can be useful when available, although circumstances differ.

Psychological assessment can provide a detailed understanding of attention, executive functioning, emotional regulation, learning and related mental health concerns. A psychiatrist or paediatrician may be involved where medical assessment, diagnostic confirmation or medication is being considered. The most suitable pathway depends on age, presentation, existing supports and the reason for seeking help.

Behavioural Neurotherapy Clinic provides comprehensive ADHD assessment, diagnostic support and psychological therapy for children, adolescents and adults. In-person appointments are available in Doncaster, with Australia-wide telehealth consultations available where suitable. Your GP can help determine whether this type

of service fits your needs and what referral documentation may be useful.

Medicare and referral considerations

Some psychological services may attract a Medicare rebate when you have an eligible referral and Mental Health Care Plan from a GP or specialist. Eligibility, the number of rebated sessions and the service provided can vary, so it is sensible to confirm the current arrangements with both your GP and the clinic before booking.

A Mental Health Care Plan is not the same as an ADHD diagnosis, nor does it replace a comprehensive assessment. It is a referral pathway that may support access to specified psychological services. Ask your GP whether it is appropriate for your circumstances and whether the referral should identify particular concerns, such as attention difficulties, anxiety or emotional regulation.

If you worry your concerns will not be taken seriously

Some people have previously been told that they are simply disorganised, stressed, lazy or not trying hard enough. Parents may worry that raising behavioural concerns will be interpreted as criticism of their parenting. These experiences can make a GP appointment feel daunting.

Try to stay focused on patterns and impact. You can say that you understand there may be several explanations, but that the difficulties are persistent and are affecting learning, work, relationships, wellbeing or family life. Requesting an assessment conversation is not asking for a predetermined answer. It is asking for a careful, evidence-based consideration of your concerns.

If the appointment feels rushed, it is reasonable to book a longer follow-up consultation. You can bring your written summary, ask for clarification about the recommended pathway and discuss any barriers such as cost, waiting times, travel or telehealth access. A clear plan is often more helpful than trying to resolve every question in one visit.

A considered next step

Whether you are seeking answers for yourself or your child, the aim of speaking with your GP is to create a pathway based on the person's individual history and needs. Take your observations seriously, write down what you have noticed and use the appointment to ask for a structured next step. Clarity may take time, but a thoughtful conversation can make the process more manageable.

For more information

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