

What does treatment cost?

The cost of medication treatment will include the cost of visiting your doctor at the first and subsequent visits, plus the cost of the prescription from your pharmacist.

The cost of psychological treatment for depression from a GP, psychiatrist or other mental health professional varies in Australia. Here are some approximate costs:

Australia (as at June 2005)

The following is an approximate guide to treatment costs. Once you reach a certain threshold for your medical costs in one year, Medicare may provide an additional rebate.

- In Australia, many GPs bulk bill so that Medicare will cover the full cost. If they do not bulk bill, Medicare will pay up to 85% of the cost if you visit the GP's surgery. GP care in hospital or an aged care facility will provide patients with 75% cover of the fee from Medicare.
- Seeing a psychiatrist outside of hospital costs approximately \$140. Medicare will cover 85% of the scheduled fee and you pay the balance. Medicare will pay 75% of the cost if you are treated by the psychiatrist whilst a patient in hospital. The care you receive in a hospital emergency department is free.

- Community Mental Health Services run through Health Departments are free clinics where you can see a psychiatrist, psychologist or social worker or other health professional by appointment. Sometimes after-hours crisis care is available.
- Medicare does not cover the cost of treatment if you see a psychologist or social worker who works as a private practitioner. These visits cost between \$60 and \$120 for a one hour session.

The cost may discourage people from getting professional help. However, treatment for depression can help you get better quicker, give you the skills to recognise depression early and possibly prevent depression recurring in the future.

What can I do to assist with treatment?

Research has shown that the greatest contribution to a positive outcome from treatment comes from:

- The person and their health professional developing a trusting relationship and working together to find a suitable treatment
- Identifying and working on factors which appear to have contributed to the depression
- Continuing with treatment for as long as is necessary to deal with the issues causing the depression and to make sure that mood remains stable afterwards without risk of relapse (at least one year, but up to two to three years if there has been previous depression or there are significant risks that it will occur again).

These three factors are more important than the relatively small differences between the treatments outlined on page 15.

Other support during recovery from depression

Maintaining and making good friendships is also very important in recovery from depression. Make the most of family, friends and local community groups. Try not to get isolated.

There are also groups run by people who have experienced a mental illness and who have had successful treatment. These include self-help and mutual support groups or associations, and mental health consumer organisations. Such organisations may run mutual support by telephone or in groups that meet face to face. Some offer website chat rooms. Others provide formal information and referral services for personal support, postal or telephone information for you or for your family or partner, and some may suggest clinics, after-hours crisis lines and information about the treatments available. While not directly treatment services, these organisations may be helpful when you are trying to find the right treatment for you, and may make it easier to remain in treatment to get the best results.