



Navigating the healthcare system with a chronic condition

The Australian healthcare system can be difficult to make sense of - especially when you may be seeing not only your GP, but a variety of specialists and other allied health practitioners.

There are **two important factors** that have a big impact on how well your condition is managed, and on your quality of life:

1

Having a positive relationship with your healthcare providers

2

Having healthcare providers that know your history and are aware of the care you might be receiving from your other healthcare providers. This is known as “continuity of care”

To learn more about the Australian healthcare system, visit www.health.gov.au/about-us/the-australian-health-system



Everyone in Australia has a fundamental right to receive safe, high-quality healthcare

What can you expect from the Australian healthcare system?

In Australia, you have the right to access safe, high-quality healthcare. This includes:

- Access to services and treatment that meets your needs.
- Healthcare that meets national standards, delivered in an environment that is safe and makes you feel safe.
- Being treated with dignity and respect as an individual, and to have your culture, identity, beliefs and choices recognised and respected.
- Making decisions together with your healthcare provider and with anyone else you want to be involved in planning and decision making.
- Being able to ask questions and be involved in open, honest communication.
- Including the people you want to include in planning and decision making.
- Clear information about your condition and the risks and benefits of any tests and treatment, including information about services available, waiting times and costs.
- Access to your health information and assistance, if you need it, to understand and use health information.
- Being told if something goes wrong during your health care, how it happened, how it may affect you, and what is being done to make your care safe.
- Respect for your privacy, and your health information being kept secure and confidential.
- Being able to provide feedback or make a complaint without it affecting the way you are treated.
- Having your concerns addressed in a transparent and timely way.
- Being able to share your experiences to participate in the improvement of quality of healthcare.





Medical costs and accessing help

People living with a chronic condition may have to see a number of different healthcare providers and take a number of medicines. The cost of this can add up.

In Australia, Medicare covers all or part of the cost of some medical services, including doctor or specialist appointments, tests and scans, and most surgeries and procedures by a doctor.

Medicare may also cover part or all of the cost of seeing some allied health practitioners like dietitians, physiotherapists and psychologists, under certain circumstances.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) subsidises the cost of some medications. You can find out more by talking to your doctor.

There are some things you can do to help manage the costs of your medical care:



Ask your healthcare provider how much the appointment will cost, and how much you'll get back from Medicare.



Find out more about the Medicare and PBS safety nets. These government programs may reduce the cost of seeing a doctor, having certain tests done, or buying medicine if you spend more than a certain amount of money in a calendar year.



If you need to buy or run medical equipment, government organisations such as the Department of Veterans Affairs and Services Australia may offer financial help.



Private health insurance

You may be covered for medical costs that aren't covered by Medicare if you have private health insurance. Private health insurers differ in the level of cover they offer, and exclusions on pre-existing conditions, so it's important to speak with your insurer to check what you are covered for.



Accessing support services

There are a number of other types of services that can help people with a chronic condition manage their health. You can search online or ask your doctor for more information to find the right support for you.



A support group can be a good way to meet and speak with others in a similar situation to you. They can be help in-person or online.



Advocacy groups may offer specific services to people with the condition they support.



Coping with a chronic condition can be very difficult, and many people benefit from mental health support.

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