# **Medicare rebates for Pregnancy and Perinatal Period: Psychology sessions**

The following frequently asked questions aim to address some of the key questions about accessing Medicare-funded psychological services under the Pregnancy support counselling Medicare scheme.

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**What is the pregnancy support counselling Medicare item?**

This psychology service (Medicare Item 81000) offers pregnancy support counselling to assist clients who have any personal concerns related to a current or recent pregnancy (within the past 12 months), whether it has been full-term or part-term (including a planned termination). The pregnancy support counselling Medicare Item covers up to three 30 minute+ sessions with a psychologist per pregnancy.

**What is pregnancy support counselling?**

Pregnancy support counselling offered by psychologists is supportive, non-judgmental, confidential and unbiased.

Psychologists using this Medicare item are trained to support clients through pregnancy-related issues, and to provide information about the options and services relevant to their pregnancy concerns.

Psychologists who provide pregnancy support counselling are specifically trained in:

* non-directive counselling skills
* pregnancy-related counselling issues
* pregnancy-related information resources.

**Am I eligible to receive pregnancy support counselling?**

Pregnancy support counselling through the Medicare scheme is available for clients with a current or recent pregnancy (within the last 12 months) who have any concerns, such as decisions about the future, adjustment following the pregnancy, or general issues related to a pregnancy. The partner of the client can also attend the counselling session, if appropriate.

**When is pregnancy support counselling helpful?**

Clients find pregnancy support counselling helpful for a number of pregnancy-related issues, such as:

* making decisions and exploring possible options about the pregnancy
* coming to terms with unexpected outcomes (e.g., stillbirth, miscarriage, genetic conditions, problems at birth, cot death)
* dealing with a variety of feelings related to the pregnancy, birth or early months of being a parent
* discussing the pregnancy with others (e.g., partner, children, parents, religious or cultural groups).

**How do I organise to receive pregnancy support counselling?**

A referral to this service results from a GP assessing that a female has concerns that would benefit from sessions with a psychologist who is eligible to provide pregnancy support counselling services. The referral may be a letter or note to the psychologist (GPs are not required to use a specific form or plan). To find a psychologist in your area who is eligible to provide pregnancy support counselling, please use the APS [Find a Psychologist](https://psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist) service.

A range of fees could be charged by psychologists, please visit the [Medicare website](http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/) for the exact rebate that a client will receive.

**What is the difference between the pregnancy support counselling item and mental health Medicare items?**

There are important differences between pregnancy support counselling and mental health psychological services under Medicare.

* The pregnancy support counselling referral is not specifically for a mental health disorder, but can be for parenting, health or relationship concerns.
* The pregnancy support counselling rebate only covers 3 sessions, although you may continue working with the psychologist as a private patient, or be referred again under another appropriate initiative. Speak to your GP about the suitability of other Medicare services.

Pregnancy support counselling may also help clients identify issues for which they may need help from professionals other than a psychologist. For example, it might be identified that the client needs to see medical, social services, legal or financial professionals to address concerns about pregnancy care, living arrangements, leaving/returning to work, childcare arrangements, or finances. The psychologist may help you develop strategies or identify services to access these supports.

**Find a pregnancy support counselling psychologist**

The Australian Psychological Society has two options for finding a psychologist who can provide pregnancy support counselling services.

* APS [Find a Psychologist Service](https://psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist) website  
  (N.B. After selecting an issue (e.g., depression) and searching for a psychologist by your preferred location, you will need to refine your search further by clicking on Medicare – Non-Directive Pregnancy Support Counselling Medicare Provider which is located on the left of the screen.)
* Phone the APS Find a Psychologist Service on: 1800 333 497 (Freecall)