



Eating disorders and Medicare

What is Medicare for eating disorders?

The Australian Government introduced new Medicare subsidies for eating disorder treatment on November 1st 2019. This means that some people with eating disorders will have access to an evidence-based, best practice model of treatment known as an **Eating Disorder Plan (EDP)**, involving Medicare subsidies for 20 sessions with a dietitian and up to 40 sessions with a mental health clinician over a 12-month period.

Medicare subsidies make accessing treatment for an eating disorder more affordable, helping people stay in treatment for longer and supporting them to make a full recovery.

How to access Medicare for eating disorders

An Eating Disorder Plan (EDP) is usually obtained through a GP, but can also be accessed through paediatricians and psychiatrists. When seeing a medical practitioner about an EDP, it is advisable to book a double appointment and mention why you are making the appointment.

For further information about visiting a doctor, please see our '*Preparing to see a GP factsheet*'

Eating Disorder Plan (EDP) eligibility

If your doctor diagnoses you with an eating disorder, the next step is to look at treatment options.

It is important to remember that even though an eating disorder is a serious mental health condition, full recovery is possible. Receiving timely, evidence-based treatment, such as that covered by Medicare, is important for recovery.

Your doctor should then assess you for treatment eligibility under an Eating Disorder Plan (EDP). EDPs are available to:

- ✔ **Patients with a clinical diagnosis of anorexia nervosa;**

Or

- ✔ **Patients who have a clinical diagnosis of either bulimia nervosa, binge-eating disorder or other specified feeding or eating disorder (OSFED), who also fulfil additional criteria as outlined in the Medicare Benefits Scheduling Book (pg 182-195).**

Getting started with treatment

If you are eligible for an Eating Disorder Plan (EDP) you will begin the initial course of treatment. This includes:

- 20 sessions with a dietitian (can be used at any point throughout a 12-month period)
- 10 Eating Disorder Psychological Treatment (EDPT) sessions

Your doctor may give you referrals to these clinicians, or you can contact EDV if you would like additional names of clinicians with experience treating eating disorders.

IMPORTANT: At this point, you should also request that your doctor refer you to a psychiatrist or paediatrician. You will be required to have a psychiatrist/ paediatrician review before you can access more than 20 Eating Disorder Psychological Treatment (EDPT) sessions. As many specialists require a booking months in advance, it is a good idea to make that booking now.

10 session review - GP

After 10 EDPT sessions, you will need to see your GP or other managing practitioner to review your Eating Disorder Plan (EDP). Your doctor will review your progress against the EDP and recommend whether you should continue with the Medicare plan. If recommended, you will be referred for another 10 EDPT sessions.

20 session review - GP & psychiatrist/paediatrician

After 20 EDPT sessions you will need to see both your GP and a psychiatrist or paediatrician. As mentioned, it is recommended that this specialist referral be made at your initial appointment or at the latest at your 10 session review.

Should both practitioners recommend more intensive treatment, you will be referred for another 10 EDPT sessions.

Note: The psychiatrist/paediatrician appointment does not need to take place after the completion of 20 EDPT sessions. It can happen any time before the 20 session review.

30 session review - GP

After 30 EDPT sessions you will need to see your GP or other managing practitioner to review the EDP. If recommended, you will be referred for a final 10 EDPT sessions under the Medicare plan for that year.

FAQs

Who can administer the dietetics sessions?

EDV advise you to see an Accredited Practising Dietitian that is experienced in treating eating disorders. Dietitians are vital in the process of nutritional rehabilitation and the development of healthy eating patterns.

Who can administer the EDPT sessions?

Mental health clinicians who can administer the EDPT sessions include clinical and registered psychologists, mental health social workers and mental health occupational therapists. Practitioners must use specific psychological treatments covered under the Eating Disorder Plan to claim the Medicare rebate for their services. EDV advise that you see a mental health clinician who is experienced in treating eating disorders.

How much will I pay?

As a client, you will pay the entire cost for the session and then you will receive a rebate for part of the cost from Medicare. The amount that isn't covered by Medicare is known as a 'gap' payment.

Gap payments are dependent on the fees set by your treating clinicians. For most clinicians, expect to pay a gap fee between \$50 - \$120 per session. It is important to note that clinicians who specialise in treating eating disorders are highly skilled, with many years of tertiary training.

For more information about item numbers and fees, please see the Eating Disorders MBS item numbers Quick Reference Guide from the Department of Health. For information about EDV's Mental Health Clinic fees, please see our 'EDV Mental Health Clinic' factsheet.

What if I already have a Mental Health Care Plan?

If you still have sessions left on a Mental Health Care Plan (MHCP) under Medicare, you will be required to use the remaining sessions before commencing an Eating Disorder Plan (EDP). You may still want to visit your GP in the lead up to the completion of your Mental Health Care Plan to prepare for potentially moving onto an EDP. The sessions used on the Mental Health Care plan will come off your total entitlement to EDPT sessions on the Eating Disorder Plan (EDP). *ie. If you have used 10x MHCP sessions, you would only get a maximum of 30 EDPT sessions in that 12-month period.*

What if my doctor isn't aware of the Medicare changes for eating disorders?

If your doctor isn't aware of the Medicare services for eating disorders, we encourage them to visit the information on EDV's website,

the National Eating Disorders Collaboration (NEDC) website, or contact EDV's Telehealth Nurse.

What if I'm not eligible for the Eating Disorder plan under Medicare?

An Eating Disorder Plan (EDP) under Medicare may not be a suitable treatment approach for everyone. If you don't receive an EDP, you may still be eligible for a mental health treatment plan or chronic disease management plan (formerly enhanced primary care plan). Some clients – especially those who can't access Medicare – can potentially also claim private health insurance (if included in your cover).

However if your doctor does not diagnose an eating disorder or does not recommend an EDP but you are still concerned about warning signs and symptoms, it is a good idea to get a second opinion. This may be another GP, or a mental health professional such as a psychologist. For help finding a health professional with experience treating eating disorders, please contact the EDV Hub.

