

INFORMATION FOR WOMEN

Medicare-funded psychology services
for pregnancy support counselling



What is this Medicare Item?

This psychology service (Medicare Item 81000) offers pregnancy support counselling to assist women 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 a woman through pregnancy-related issues, and to provide information about the options and services relevant to her 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 women 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 women can also attend the counselling session with the woman, if appropriate.

How do I organise to receive pregnancy support counselling?

A referral to this service results from a GP assessing that a woman 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 who is eligible to provide pregnancy support counselling, refer to the end of this information brochure.

A range of fees could be charged by psychologists. However, you will receive a rebate of \$58.80 from Medicare as at November 2009 when claiming this item (this amount will be indexed on November 1st, 2010).

When is pregnancy support counselling helpful?

Women 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)

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.

Specifically, women who use the pregnancy counselling services can also receive a rebate for psychological services under Medicare for mental health disorders or chronic diseases, following a GP referral and care plan.

Pregnancy support counselling may also help a woman identify issues for which a woman may need help from professionals other than a psychologist. For example, it might be identified that the women 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 three options for finding a psychologist who can provide pregnancy support counselling services.

1) Psychologist Medicare Provider Lists on the APS website:

www.psychology.org.au/MedicareProvider

2) APS Find a Psychologist Service at:

www.FindaPsychologist.org.au

(N.B. you will need to tick the Pregnancy Support Counselling option)

3) Phone the APS Find a Psychologist Service on:

1800 333 497 (Freecall)

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