

Your Literally Ausome Autism Assessment Process

There are many ways to have your child assessed for Autism. I've put together a step-by-step guide for your reference, however steps, specialists and procedures may vary. Ask your General Practitioner, Psychologist and/or Paediatrician to outline your individual process so that you can know upfront the timings, costs and expectations prior to proceeding.

Public Health System

1. Your child will require a General Practitioner's referral to see a Psychologist and Paediatrician. Your child will need to be at this appointment.
2. Your initial Psychologist appointment is to determine whether they feel an assessment is required or necessary based on your concerns and your child's presentation. You may require more than one appointment for this to be determined as every child's presentation is unique. (Note: You will obviously talk about your child and your Psychologist will ask your child to wait outside for this, If your child struggles with separation, send the clinic/Psychologist a comprehensive email about your concerns prior to your appointment).
3. The Psychologist will contact your Paediatrician and request 'permission' for your child to undergo assessments. The Paediatrician must 'agree' for them to proceed by way of a referral. (This referral also makes your assessment appointments claimable by Medicare). Book all required appointments for the Autism assessments (ensuring you will see your Paediatrician prior to these appointments as you need their referral).
4. Visit your Paediatrician for them to review your child and refer to your Psychologist's notes and recommendations. A Paediatrician's referral will be provided. Make the next Paediatrician appointment to occur following your diagnosis appointment with your Psychologist. This will be advised by your Psychologist (If not, request this information from them) to ensure reports will be completed and a diagnosis provided in time for this appointment.
5. Autism assessment to commence, which includes:
 - Psychologist Component: Including parent interview (to go over a complete medical and behavioural history of your child), behavioural questionnaires (BASC for parents and teachers to complete), ADOS¹, cognitive assessment* and WISC* and any other assessments based on your Psychologists recommendations following your initial appointment as well as what you have expressed as concerning in your initial appointment.
 - Speech Therapist Component: to assess receptive, pragmatic and expressive language.

¹ ADOS - The Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, Cognitive assessment - to determine general thinking and reasoning abilities, also known as intellectual functioning or IQ, WISC - Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children which determines cognitive strengths and weaknesses, BASC - The Behavior Assessment System.

6. Speech Therapist appointment to go over their report that will highlight any areas of concern with regards to your child's receptive, pragmatic and expressive language. Allow three weeks for this appointment and report. Request that the report be emailed to you².
Note: This appointment may not be required as the speech assessment report may be included with the Psychologist's report.
7. Psychologist appointment to go over their report and provide a diagnosis based on their assessments (speech component may be included in this report). Allow three weeks following your final assessment appointment for the appointment and report. Request that all reports be emailed to you.
8. Provide all reports to your Paediatrician at your next appointment (or email them prior to your appointment). Your Paediatrician will 'sign off' on assessment and provide you with a letter with the diagnosis clearly stated.

Private Health System - Paediatrician and/or Paediatric Psychiatrist

Your General Practitioner may refer you directly to a Paediatrician or Paediatric Psychiatrist. These Doctors are able to do Autism assessments (except for the Speech component which they can refer you to).

Public Health System

A more affordable option for families seeking an Autism assessment is to be referred by your Paediatrician via a developmental paediatrics unit at a hospital. The waiting times for your assessment may be lengthy (up to a year) however the whole assessment process takes about a month (weekly appointments at the hospital with a different specialist each time). The team of specialists will provide the formal diagnosis

Your General Practitioner or Paediatrician may well refer you to other organisations/clinics that undertake Autism assessments in children that are closest to you geographically. Waiting times for assessments etc vary and may take up to a year.

² Your final assessment reports will need to be provided to your Paediatrician, your child's daycare/primary/secondary school and for NDIS access (see page 3) and anywhere else that requires these reports.