A fact sheet about

Navigating Australian health services

UnderstandingZoe

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Navigating Australian health services



A how-to guide for neurodivergent adults in Australia. Getting support from hospitals, mental health services and emergency care.

Getting health care can be harder when you are neurodivergent. That word is wide. It takes in Autistic and ADHD people, dyslexia, dyspraxia, PDA, sensory processing and more. The list does not stop there. What helps you will be your own, and asking for it is reasonable.

Know where to get support

Care that works for you. You can ask any hospital or clinic for changes that make care manageable. That might be a quieter wait, or information step by step. Extra time to take things in also counts. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, section 24 covers services. It can be unlawful for a service to refuse reasonable adjustments. The one exception is where meeting them would cause unjustifiable hardship. If a service refuses, you can complain to the Australian Human Rights Commission. What extra disability support a hospital offers varies by state. Before a planned visit, ask that hospital what it can put in place.

Get mental health support

Support for your mental health. Your usual general practitioner (GP) can set up a Mental Health Treatment Plan. So can the practice you are registered with through MyMedicare. Going elsewhere may mean no rebate. The plan gives a Medicare rebate towards up to ten psychology sessions a year. The count resets on 1 January. The first referral covers up to six, and your GP reviews before the rest. The rebate is only part of each session, so there is often a gap. Each state and territory also runs community mental health services. If low mood, anxiety or exhaustion lasts more than two weeks, ask for help. The support lines below are there any time you need them sooner.

If it becomes an emergency. Emergencies are a lot to handle. It helps to tell staff early how you communicate, and what makes things easier. That might be fewer questions at once, or lower noise and light. A short written summary of your needs can speak for you when talking is hard.

If you need to talk to someone now

- Lifeline: 13 11 14, or text 0477 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636
- 13YARN: 13 92 76, for First Nations callers
- In an emergency, always call 000

These lines are open any hour, and the counselling is free. A 1300 number may cost a local call. You do not have to be in crisis to ring.

Make your one-page plan

When you are overwhelmed, explaining yourself is the hardest thing. A short summary you prepare in advance can do the talking for you. Fill this in on a calm day. Keep it in your phone or wallet, and share it whenever it helps.

My health support summary

My name and how I like to be addressed:

How I communicate best (and what makes it harder):

What helps me feel calm and regulated:

Sensory needs, and what to avoid:

Who to contact, and key health information:

You do not owe anyone your whole story. Share the parts that help you get safe, respectful care.

Ask for what helps

Emergencies are overwhelming. It is reasonable to ask for what makes care safer for you. Here is what you can ask for, and what the team can do.

You can ask for

- A quieter space, or the lights turned down
- To keep a comfort or sensory item with you
- Information shown or written, not just spoken
- One thing explained at a time
- A support person to stay with you
- Extra time to answer, and fewer questions at once

The team can

- Bring down noise and bright light where they can
- Tell you what is about to happen before it does
- Explain how a treatment will feel
- Give you a moment between steps
- Check how you would rather communicate
- Keep your support person in the loop

You do not have to explain why. Naming what helps is enough.

Understanding Zoe is the first neuroaffirming AI-powered app that turns every report, observation and moment into an actionable next step, supporting neurodivergent people and those who care about them to thrive.

for more information, you can contact

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