

Autism Diagnostic Assessments

Information for Parents and Caregivers

Who is an Autism Assessment For?

An autism assessment is suitable for children, adolescents, or adults where there are concerns about:

- Social interaction or communication
- Sensory differences
- Emotional regulation or repetitive behaviours
- Differences in play, learning, or behaviour
- Masking, burnout, or difficulties coping in daily settings

Many individuals referred for assessment may already be neurodivergent or may experience co-occurring conditions such as ADHD, anxiety, or learning differences.

Benefits of an Autism Assessment

- Clarity and self-understanding
- Access to supports, accommodations, or NDIS funding
- Guidance for schools, families, and therapists
- A foundation for self-advocacy and strength-based intervention
- Better understanding of how the person experiences the world

Supporting You Through the Process

We understand that undergoing an autism assessment can bring up a range of emotions. You might feel relief, worry, uncertainty—or a mix of all three. This is completely normal. Our clinicians aim to provide a safe, non-judgmental space where you feel heard and supported. We encourage open communication—please share any concerns, questions, or goals you may have. This process is not only about diagnosis—it's about better understanding your child, and connecting with the tools, services, and insights that will help them thrive.

Who can Refer to Empower for Autism Assessments

A medical health professional—such as a paediatrician, psychiatrist or your GP—is often a good place to start, especially if they are familiar with you or your child's medical history. To access Medicare rebates during the assessment process Medicare referrals are required to be obtained. Your medical health professional can generate MBS items that are available for assessing, diagnosing and treating patients with a Complex Neurodevelopmental Disorder, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder or an eligible disability under the following referral. [**Complex Neurodevelopmental Disorders and eligible disabilities**](#)

Allied health clinicians, including psychologists, speech pathologists, and occupational therapists, can also provide recommendations and prepare referrals or reports to support the assessment process. Educators and Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) from your child's daycare or school may also suggest seeking further information or an autism assessment if they observe relevant signs

or behaviours. These reports are helpful to take to any medical health appointment to obtain your referral for assessment with Empowr.

What to Expect During the Assessment

Our assessments are comprehensive and tailored to the individual's age, developmental level, and communication style. The assessment process may include:

- A clinical intake interview (with parent/caregiver or individual)
- Semi-structured interaction-based assessments (e.g. MIGDAS-2, ADOS-2)
- Developmental and psychosocial history
- Questionnaires and rating scales from caregivers and/or educators
- Cognitive testing, if appropriate
- A written diagnostic report with feedback and recommendations

Our Approach

At our clinic, we use a neurodiversity-affirming, person-centred approach to autism assessment. We recognise that autism is not a deficit but a difference in how someone experiences, communicates, and navigates the world. Our process is designed to:

- Honour the individual's communication style, strengths, and identity
- Understand how autism traits may present differently across development, gender, and cultural backgrounds
- Reduce stress and anxiety around testing, especially for those who mask or camouflage traits
- Involve collaboration with families, schools, and health professionals
- Provide practical, respectful, and strengths-based recommendations

We tailor the assessment process based on age, language, support needs, and whether the person has co-occurring conditions (e.g. ADHD, anxiety, trauma). Our clinicians are trained in gold-standard tools (such as ADOS-2 and MIGDAS-2) and apply a developmental and functional lens to every case.

Talking to Your Child About the Assessment

Explain the assessment in calm, simple language.

For example:

- "You're going to do some talking, puzzles, and maybe games with someone who wants to understand how your brain works."
- "There's no right or wrong—it's just a way for us to learn how to support you best."
"Some kids are chatty, some are quiet. Some like lots of movement or quiet time. It's all okay."

The goal is to create a space where your child feels safe to be themselves.

Before Your Appointment:

- A confirmation email will be sent with details of your appointments
- Parent/caregiver questionnaires and/or self-report forms will be provided for completion before the first appointment

We recommend:

- Reflecting on your child's early years (e.g. language milestones, play preferences, interactions with others)
- Reviewing any relevant medical or developmental records
- Gathering school reports or therapy notes that provide helpful background

Your detailed responses during the interview help ensure the assessment captures your child's unique profile and support needs. Please don't hesitate to share your insights or ask questions during the process

Appointment 1 – Clinical Developmental ADI-R Interview (90 mins)

Who attends: Parent(s)/caregiver(s) or the adult client - Your child does not attend this session

What to expect:

This session involves a structured caregiver interview (e.g. ADI-R), where a psychologist will gather a detailed developmental history, focusing on early / current behaviours, language, social engagement, and patterns of play. This provides essential context for understanding how your child's traits have emerged over time.

Similarly in an adult assessment, this information is also gathered either from self-reports and/or from a caregiver

Appointment 2 – ADOS-2 or MIGDAS-2 Assessment Session (60–90 mins)

Who attends: Person being assessed, Child or Adult client

What to Expect:

During this session, a trained clinician will engage in a series of structured activities and social interactions designed to observe communication, social skills, play, and behavioural patterns. These tasks may involve:

- Engaging in activities e.g. play, objects of interest
- Engaging in conversation
- Responding to questions or instructions
- Participating in imaginative or collaborative tasks

The clinician will closely observe how your child (or adult) responds, including their use of language, gestures, eye contact, emotional expression, and social engagement. The activities are intentionally naturalistic, helping us understand how they interact in everyday situations.

How long does it take?

The ADOS typically takes 60 to 90 minutes to complete, depending on age, developmental level, and engagement on the day. This time allows the clinician to make thoughtful and accurate observations across multiple settings and behaviours.

Parents' Role and How to Prepare:

You can help your child by ensuring they are:

- Well-rested and have eaten beforehand
- Aware of what to expect (e.g. “You’ll be spending time with someone who wants to see how you play, talk, and explore”)

The clinician will let you know whether your presence is needed during the session. You may be asked to share further observations about your child’s communication, interests, and behaviours. It’s completely normal to feel nervous as a parent—we’re here to support both you and your child. The ADOS is designed to gather meaningful, affirming information that helps us provide the right diagnosis, supports, and recommendations for your child’s individual needs.

Appointment * – Additional Observation or Cognitive Testing (if required 60–90 mins)

Optional: This step is most often required for individuals with higher support needs or where more detailed assessment is necessary (e.g., executive functioning, social cognition, or problem-solving skills).

Purpose:

- Observe specific behaviours or skill areas in different environments (School, home etc)
- Conduct further structured interviews or
- Complete formal cognitive testing WISC, WIAT, WAIS, WPPSI

Between Sessions – Questionnaires

What happens: We will ask you/parent/carers to complete additional rating scales or request input from other people involved in your/ your child’s care (with your consent):

- Rating scales completed by caregivers/teachers
- Adaptive behaviour and sensory profiles will also be sent out for completion
- These questionnaires will predominantly be sent electronically for you to complete online

Appointment 3 – Report and Feedback Session (60 mins)

Who attends: Parent(s) or adult client. Your child does not attend this session

What to expect: Your psychologist will go through a written report summarising the findings

If ASD is diagnosed, we will discuss:

- Next steps for support and treatment
- Medication referrals (if applicable)
- Ongoing strategies for success
- Co-occurring conditions

If Autism is **not** diagnosed, guidance on alternative explanations and support options will be provided.

A **draft report** may be reviewed during this session.

The **final report** will be provided within **10 business days** of your last appointment.

Additional Information Based on Clinical Guidelines

Our autism assessments follow gold-standard practices outlined by the **DSM-5**, the **Autism CRC**, and the **NDIS Autism Assessment Guidelines**. They are administered by psychologists trained in the use of structured observational tools and adaptive behaviour assessments.

NDIS and Comprehensive Needs Assessments

Under NDIS national guidelines, autism diagnostic assessments must be conducted by appropriately trained professionals and include:

- A comprehensive developmental history
- Use of a validated observational tool (e.g. ADOS-2 or MIGDAS-2)
- Adaptive functioning measures (e.g. Vineland-3, ABAS-3)
- Input from caregivers, teachers, or support workers
- Clinical judgement and formulation

NDIS often refers to this process as a **Comprehensive Needs Assessment**, which not only supports formal diagnosis but also guides the development of a person's support plan based on functional capacity, strengths, and goals.

Questions?

We welcome questions at any point in the process. We are here to support you with clarity, compassion, and evidence-based knowledge—and to make this process as comfortable and empowering as possible.

Assessment Costs

Autism assessments at Empowr start at \$2600. Payments are typically made in four instalments over the three appointments conducted at our practice. A deposit of \$200.00 is required to secure your assessment booking schedule. Additional sessions or case conferences these are billed at \$270.00 per hour or pro rata unit \$90.00 per 20 mins. A total of 4 Medicare rebates of \$98.95 can apply if there is a referral from your medical health professional under the [Complex Neurodevelopmental Disorders and eligible disabilities](#) referral pathway.

Session	Cost / Fee Payable	CND Referral Rebate	Out of Pocket
Appt 1	\$850.00	\$98.95	\$751.05
Appt 2	\$500.00	\$98.95	\$401.05
Report Writing Charge	\$400.00	NA	\$400.00
Appt 3	\$850.00	\$98.95	\$751.05
Total	\$2600.00	\$296.85	\$2303.15

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