

## **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 Empowr for Autism Assessments**

Families can access autism assessments with Empowr with or without a referral. There are three options depending on whether you want to use Medicare rebates to help with costs.

##### **Option 1: Private Referral (No Medicare Rebates)**

- You can book directly with Empowr—no referral needed.
- Suitable for families who are self-funding or using private health cover.
- Full fees apply, with no Medicare rebate.

##### **Option 2: CND Referral (Medicare Rebates for Assessment and Treatment)**

- A CND ( **Complex Neurodevelopmental Disorders and eligible disabilities**) referral allows access to Medicare rebates for autism assessments and therapy.
- This referral must come from a paediatrician, child psychiatrist, or neurologist.
- Your GP can help by referring you to one of these specialists.

- Rebates are available for up to 8 assessment sessions and 20 therapy sessions (if a diagnosis is confirmed).

### **Option 3: Better Access Mental Health Care Plan**

- You can use a GP Mental Health Care Plan for Medicare rebates on the first and final appointments (e.g., intake session and feedback session).
- This plan is available through your GP under the Better Access initiative.
- It supports access to psychological services for mental health concerns, including autism-related needs.

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.

### Booking the Assessment:

1. When you call to book the assessment appointments, **you will be required to pay a deposit of the first appointment fee in full, to secure your assessment appointment dates.**
2. An email will then be sent to you with instructions regarding the assessment process, along with an intake questionnaire and consent form. You will need to complete these documents and provide contact details of people in your / your child's life (e.g. teachers, carers, supervisors, service providers) that can assist with providing information as part of the assessment process.
3. Once we have received this information, we will ask you/parent/carers to complete questionnaires and 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
4. Please note: **All assessment forms and questionnaires MUST be completed and returned before the first appointment can be confirmed.** Once this information has been received, we will send you a confirmation email with details of your appointments.

### Preparation prior to the Initial Appointment:

- 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

### 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.

### Appointment 1 – Clinical Developmental ADI-R Interview (120 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 when necessary.

### 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 you/ your child responds, including use of language, gestures, eye contact, emotional expression, and social engagement. The activities are intentionally naturalistic, helping us understand how you/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

### 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 registered 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. Your first appointment must be paid for at booking to secure your assessment booking schedule. Any additional sessions or case conferences required, are billed at \$222.30/hr.

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.

A total of 2 Medicare rebates of \$98.95 can apply if there is a current Mental Health Care Plan (MHCP) in place.

## General Registered Psychologist

Session	Cost / Fee Payable	CND Ref Rebate	Out of Pocket
Appt 1 - Clinical Interview	\$680.00	\$98.95	\$581.05
Appt 2 - Observation	\$680.00	\$98.95 (CND only)	\$581.05
Appt 3 - Report Appointment	\$680.00	\$98.95	\$581.05
Report Writing - <i>Fee on completion</i>	\$680.00	NA	\$680.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2720.00</b>	<b>\$197.92-\$296.85</b>	<b>\$2423.15</b>

## Fee Transparency Statement

At Empowr Health Collective, we believe in clear and transparent pricing so that you know exactly what you are paying for.

### How Assessment Fees Are Calculated

Our assessment fees are based on:

- **Total duration of time required:** this includes direct assessment sessions, scoring, interpretation, report writing, and feedback.
- **Hourly rate of the clinician:** fees differ depending on whether your assessment is completed by a fully registered psychologist or a provisional psychologist.
- **Survey and materials cost:** this covers the use of evidence-based, standardised questionnaires used as part of the assessment process.

### *Typical Assessment Durations*

The time required for an assessment depends on the type of assessment being completed:

12 hours	<b>Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) Assessment</b>
10 hours	<b>Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Assessment</b>
10 hours	<b>Cognitive Assessment</b>
9 hours	<b>Functional Capacity Assessment</b>

### *Hourly Rates*

\$222.30 per hour      **General Psychologist**

### *Payment Process*

- The **total assessment cost is divided evenly into four instalments**, payable across the assessment process.
- **Medicare rebates will be applied where applicable**, provided the correct referral type has been supplied (Mental Health Care Plan [MHCP] or Complex Neurodevelopmental Disorder [CND] referral).

### *What's Included in Your Fee*

Your investment covers more than just the time spent face-to-face. It includes:

- Clinical interviews and assessment sessions
- Administration and scoring of assessment tools
- Evidence-based questionnaires (survey cost)
- Detailed analysis and interpretation
- Report writing

Feedback session to explain results and recommendations

Please Email [contact@empowr.com.au](mailto:contact@empowr.com.au) to arrange a Cognitive assessment for yourself or your child. We look forward to providing you or your child, support and an improved and individualised learning development program.

*Empowering your Wellbeing . . . Inspiring your growth*