



HELPING CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

New Medicare items for diagnosis and early intervention treatment for children with autism spectrum disorders

Why is this important?

- Diagnosis represents a critical point for children with autism spectrum disorders and their families.
- This initiative will provide new Medicare items for diagnosis and early intervention treatment for children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). These include autism and other less prevalent pervasive developmental disorders such as Rett's disorder, Asperger's syndrome and childhood disintegrative disorder. It will allow for prompt and accurate diagnosis of ASD in children and increase their access to early intervention therapy.
- Medicare items will be introduced for:
 - paediatricians and child psychiatrists to diagnose and develop a treatment plan for children aged up to 12 years on referral from a GP;
 - developmental psychologists and speech pathologists to assist with the assessment where required; and
 - specific allied health providers to provide early intervention treatment following diagnosis (providing up to 20 services per child).
- Health professionals will also be given appropriate training to support the implementation of the new items.

Who will benefit?

- Children aged up to 12 years with ASD and their families will benefit from this initiative through increased access to diagnosis and treatment services.

What funding is the government committing to the initiative?

- \$20.7 million has been allocated to this measure over five years.

How will the initiative be implemented?

- The initiative will be implemented through changes to the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) and in consultation with relevant community and professional groups.

When will the initiative commence?

- The MBS items will be available from July 2008.

How can I find out more?

- Further information is available from the *Helping children with autism* Inquiry Line on 1800 289 177 and TTY 1800 260 402 and from <http://www.health.gov.au/autism>.