

Assessments - FAQs

How do I know if I should see a Psychologist or a Paediatrician for my child?

Paediatricians or Psychologists see children with suspected attention difficulties, learning difficulties, behavioural issues, developmental delays and other developmental issues. Paediatricians are medical practitioners and can prescribe medication whereas Psychologists cannot prescribe medication. Depending on the presenting issue, children often see both a Psychologist AND a Paediatrician who often work in a collaborative way to ensure the best treatment for your child. Paediatricians come from a medical perspective while a Psychologist comes more from a behavioural perspective.

What types of things can psychologists diagnose from an assessment?

Psychologists can diagnose issues such as learning difficulties, giftedness, cognitive delays, dyslexia, etc

Are there questions I should ask when booking an initial appointment with a psychologist?

- When finding a psychologist it is firstly important to find out whether they are a specialist Educational Psychologist. This is evident by the letters CEDP after their name, indicating that they are a member of the College of Educational and Developmental Psychologists.
- Don't just compare the price, find out what the cost includes and what is extra, ie does it include a full comprehensive report with strategies and recommendations.
- It is important to find out if the psychologist has the relevant experience ie will they get the most out of your child regardless of whether they are anxious, distractible, oppositional, moody, immature, or have learning difficulties.
- It is important to find out if the psychologist is registered with Medicare and/or health funds in order to maximise claiming.
- Find out if the psychologist with the experience will be the one assessing your child and not an intern psychologist.

What information do the parents need to provide to the psychologist before the assessment?

Every psychologist works differently however generally psychologists will ask for background information about the family, information about your child's birth, family history and structure, developmental milestones, medical history, previous assessments administered and previous therapies such as speech or occupational therapy.

What happens if the parents and teachers views on the child are very different?

This is not uncommon due to the different expectation in both the school and home environments. This in itself can raise interesting questions about what is going on with the child and warrants further investigation or observations by the psychologist.

Should I tell the psychologist if I think my child has autism/adhd/dyslexia/etc?

It is important to talk to the psychologist and be as honest as you can. All good psychologists are not influenced by what you say and value all the information they can get from parents.

What tests/tools will a psychologist use to assess my child?

Psychologists use a range of assessments depending on the referral reason. Some test include IQ tests; tests of academic achievement such as reading, spelling, maths, auditory/visual attention; personality assessments, vocational tests; aptitude assessments; rating questionnaires investigating attention, social skills, behaviour, anxiety, depression, OCD, etc

At what age can I have my child assessed?

- IQ tests can be administered from the age of 2 to adulthood. There are specific tests for specific ages such as WISC-IV (Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children) – ages 6 to 16

- Stanford-Binet V - ages 2 to 85+
- WPPSI-III (Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence) – ages 2 yrs 6 months 7 yrs 3 months
- WAIS (Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale) – 16 +

Generally the same IQ test should not be administered within 18 months to 2 years from the initial assessment. Achievement tests can be administered more regularly as there are often alternative forms for the same tests.

What should I tell my child about having an assessment?

I often recommend that parents say as little as possible about the assessment and let the Psychologist explain to the child what they will be doing. For psychometric assessments I usually tell the children that we are measuring their strengths and weaknesses and looking at their learning style.

What will my child have to do?

Tests such as IQ tests involve many components investigating verbal reasoning, nonverbal skills, memory and processing. Depending on the age of the child, tasks involve using blocks to make patterns, answering how 2 words are similar, short-term memory tasks, vocabulary tasks.

What information will the psychologist provide after the assessment?

Psychologists should provide a full report including practical strategies and specific recommendations regarding what to do next. A follow-up consultation at least over the phone or in person and the opportunity to speak to your child's teacher/school. Psychologists may refer onwards to a Speech Therapist, Occupational Therapist, behavioural optometrist, Paediatrician etc.

Do I have to tell the school the results?

It is always up to the parent as to whether they wish to share the results with anyone. I generally encourage speaking to the school and often organise meeting at the school so everyone is on the same page regarding your child's results.