

Diagnosis Guide for Adults

01. Take an online autism test

If you suspect that you may be autistic, you may like to take a screening test. The results are not a diagnosis, but they may help with your decision to seek a formal assessment. Only a qualified clinician can diagnose you.

Online tests leave out many things, including things that only a skilled diagnostician will be able to assess. All online tests can do is ask for your opinions about your own behaviour.

Below is an example of an autism screening test:

[Ritvo Autism Asperger Diagnostic Scale-Revised \(RAADS-R\)](#)

02. Publicly funded assessment - meet with your GP

If you would like to access a publicly funded assessment (i.e. free to access), you should book an appointment with your GP to request a referral. If you are already seeing a specialist for other reasons, you may wish to raise the matter with them first.

It would be helpful if the GP you see has an understanding of autism. Consider taking along a copy of the online screening test result, as it may be a helpful guide when discussing characteristics that you think apply to you. Alternatively, you may like to refer to [the characteristics of autism](#) page on the Autism New Zealand website.

While the [New Zealand Autism Guideline](#) recommends that specialist diagnostic assessment should be publicly available for all people who may be autistic, this is not currently the case for adults. It can be challenging for adults to access a publicly funded assessment for autism. In some cases a referral is only accepted if the adult has a co-occurring intellectual disability or mental health condition. Occasionally a referral is accepted without any co-occurring conditions.

Regardless, GPs can send a referral to the appropriate local Adult Mental Health Service. Although autism is not a mental health condition, it can be diagnosed by Psychologists or Psychiatrists who work for the Adult Mental Health Service.

If the referral is not accepted, your GP may be able to refer you to an autism-experienced Psychologist or Psychiatrist in the private system. You can also look on the [Community Links](#) page of the Autism New Zealand website to see a list of private diagnosticians in your area.

03. Private assessment - select a qualified clinician

Some people prefer to seek an assessment for diagnosis privately (with a personal cost for the assessment). Qualified clinicians who can provide diagnosis include autism-experienced Psychologists and Psychiatrists. You can find links to local private diagnostic services on the [Community Links](#) page of the Autism New

Zealand website or you may like to ask your [local Autism New Zealand Outreach Coordinator](#) for a list of known clinicians in your area.

Most private diagnostic services accept self-referrals and referrals from agencies. After you have made contact with the clinician you select, they will arrange a time with you for the assessment. Wait times for the assessments vary, and there will be a cost for private assessment.

04. Assessment for autism (provided by a qualified clinician)

The clinician will likely be a Psychologist or Psychiatrist. It is recommended that a team of clinicians with experience in autism diagnosis complete the assessment, but this is not always possible.

The clinician may need to meet with you more than once to ask you questions and gather the information they need to form a diagnosis. They may want to speak with someone who has known you when you were a child. They will then produce a report that outlines their findings and the diagnosis. The diagnosis provided may confirm autism or provide another explanation or guidance.

It can be helpful to collect as much information as you can about yourself starting from birth (e.g. friendships and social situations, communication skills, behaviours and interests, sensory processing). Include information about family members who have been diagnosed with autism.

Reports prepared via a private diagnosis may not automatically be shared with your GP. You may like to ask who will have access to the report, and request they receive a copy.

05. Additional services referral

Depending on the conclusions in the report, you may be referred for additional services. Services that may be offered could include appointments with a Psychologist, or a Psychiatrist. In some cases you might also be eligible for publicly funded services outlined on the [Understanding Autism](#) page of the Autism New Zealand website.

You can also self-refer to a local [Outreach Coordinator](#) at Autism New Zealand. This is a free service provided nationwide and available at any stage of the diagnosis journey. Outreach Coordinators can help you navigate information on autism and suggest supports and services available for you and your support network.