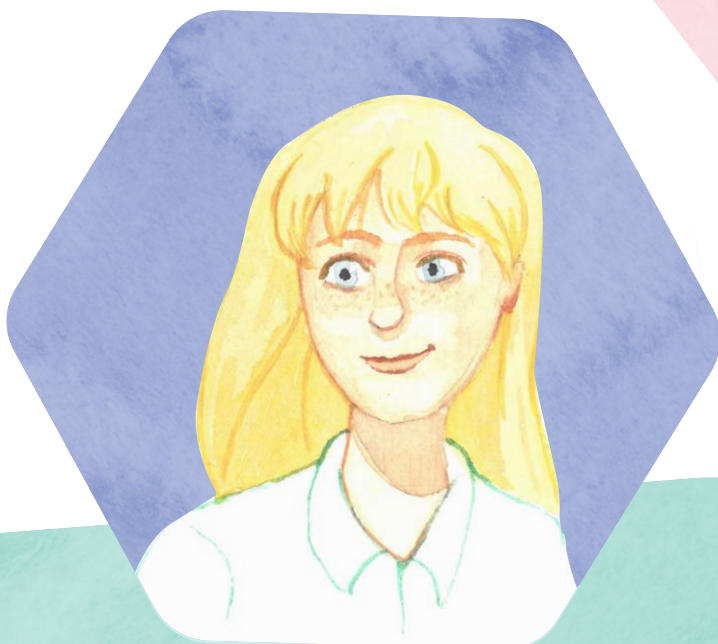


# Going to the General Practitioner (GP) about your mental health: A Guide for Autistic Women



# About this guide

# Welcome to *Going to the General Practitioner (GP) about your mental health – a guide for autistic women.*

**This guide was developed using research by Brown, C.M., Ransley, F.R., Sinclair, J.L. & Stokes, M.A. (2019). *My autism my mental health*. Unpublished. Data were collected via a survey of 236 Australian women aged between 18 and 71 years old (110 autistic women and 126 non-autistic women). The data were statistically analysed to test for differences in mental health needs between autistic women and non-autistic women.**

## **The research shows that:**

- autistic women have greater mental health needs than non-autistic women. In the study fewer autistic women showed normal levels of mental health symptoms than non-autistic women. On mental health questionnaires more autistic women scored within the 'high eating disorder risk' category, 6% of autistic women scored within the 'normal' range for anxiety and 11% scored within the 'normal' range for depression.
- mental health screening tools are not user-friendly for autistic women because the language used is hard to understand and may be misunderstood if taken literally.
- there's a need for specialised mental health screening tools to be developed for autistic women.

Amaze also consulted with autistic women about their experiences of identifying mental health concerns and seeing a GP about their mental health concerns. We did a thematic analysis of their responses.

## **We found that:**

- autistic women face specific challenges in identifying that they have a mental health concern.
- autistic women also face specific challenges in seeking support from their GP.
- autistic women use a range of strategies to identify mental health concerns and to seek support from their GP.

Thank you to all of the women who took part in the research survey and the workshop for their valuable input.

Amaze would like to thank the Advisory Committee: Pia Bradshaw, Carol O'Dwyer, Prue Stevenson, Associate Professor Mark Stokes and Vanessa Thomas and our expert reviewers: Stephanie Crawford, Kathy Isaacs, Sally Sant, Associate Professor Mark Stokes and Vanessa Thomas.

Amaze thanks the William Henry & Vera Ellen Houston Memorial Trust Fund managed by Equity Trustees for their support in funding this project.

This guide was developed by the team at Amaze: Elena Ashley, Claire Brown, Claire Holden, Fiona Ransley, Joanne Sinclair, Rory Sinclair and Lived Experience Consultant Prue Stevenson (watercolour illustrations).

# How to use the guide

This guide has seven sections. You can use any of the sections which meet your needs. You don't have to read the whole guide for it to make sense. You can download individual pdf files from the sections you'd like to use or download a pdf copy of the whole guide.

## The sections are:

- About this guide

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- Do I need to see a GP about my mental health?

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- Before the appointment

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- Appointment day

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- After the appointment

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- Links to more resources, and

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- References.

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This guide is designed to help autistic women to talk to a GP and refers to Medicare and the Australian health system. If you're outside Australia and are seeking support for your mental health contact your local autism organisation.

This guide is designed to help autistic women talk to a GP about mental health support. This guide doesn't cover the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

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Contact the Amaze Autism Connect advisors for more information about autism, or to talk about your individual situation:

**Phone:** 1300 308 699

**Email:** [info@autismconnect.org.au](mailto:info@autismconnect.org.au)

**Website and webchat:** [www.amaze.org.au](http://www.amaze.org.au)

This service is available from 8am to 7pm, Monday to Friday  
(excluding public holidays)

Anyone who has concerns about their mental health and needs support with communication, memory and/or organisational skills may also find the guide useful.

# If you need urgent help or life is in danger dial 000.

This isn't a crisis guide. If you're in crisis please contact,

## Crisis Support

- [Lifeline](#) — **13 11 14**  
National free crisis counselling service. Available 24 hours a day.

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- [Beyond Blue](#) — **1300 224 636**  
National free mental health counselling service. Available 24 hours a day.

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- [1800 RESPECT](#) — **1800 737 732**  
National sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service. Available 24 hours a day.

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- [Parentline \(ACT only\)](#) — **(02) 6287 3833**  
Free counselling and advice for parents and carers in the ACT. Available Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm and Saturday 10am to 12noon.

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- [Parentline \(QLD and NT only\)](#) — **1300 30 1300**  
Free telephone counselling and advice for parents and carers in Queensland and the Northern Territory. Phone line available 8am to 10pm seven days a week. Webchat available 8am to 9pm seven days a week.

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- [Parent Line \(NSW only\)](#) — **13 00 52**  
Free telephone counselling and support service for parents and carers with children from birth to 18 years old in NSW. The service is available between 9am to 9pm Monday to Friday and 4pm to 9pm on weekends.

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- [Parent Helpline \(SA only\)](#) — **1300 364 100**  
Free telephone information and support for parents and carers of children from birth to 12 years in South Australia. Available 24 hours a day.

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- [Parent Line \(TAS only\)](#) — **1800 808 178**  
Free telephone information and support for parents and carers in Tasmania. Available 24 hours a day.

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- [Parentline \(VIC only\)](#) — **13 22 89**  
A phone service for parents and carers of children from birth to 18 years old in Victoria. Available 8am to midnight seven days a week.

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- [Parenting Helpline \(WA\)](#) — **(08) 9368 9368 or 1800 111 546 for country callers.**  
A phone service by Ngala for parents and carers of children from birth to 18 years old in Western Australia. Available 8am to 8pm, seven days a week. Outside these hours, parents and carers can leave a message on the call-back service.

See other sections of this guide or download the complete guide [here](#).

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