

ADHD Diagnosis and Treatment in Primary Care

Information for West Coast Health Clinical Team Members

Regulatory and funding changes will be made from Feb 1st 2026



What's Changing?

Medsafe is allowing more doctors and nurse practitioners to be able to begin treatments with stimulant medicines for ADHD (from 1st February 2026)

- For people with **ADHD 17 years and under**: medical practitioners specialised in paediatrics or psychiatry and nurse practitioners working within paediatric services or CAMHS may start people on stimulant medicines
- For people with **ADHD 18 years and over¹**: Medical practitioners specialised in paediatrics, psychiatry or general practice and nurse practitioners working within their area of practice may start people on stimulant treatments for ADHD.

Statement from the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners:

RNZCGP states the following:

- **The assessment for, and commencement where necessary, of ADHD medication, cannot happen within the standard 15-minute GP consultation.**
- **The college believes that appropriate assessment and formulation would take at least 1-2 hours of work**
- ADHD work should not be considered part of the capitated services delivered under first contact care
- Specialist GPs will be encouraged to establish ADHD Special Interests under similar models to skin cancer work or menopause medicines, i.e., longer appointments attracting fair remuneration paid for by the patient, or government funding.

Support for prescribers

Health New Zealand, RNZCGP and Nurse Practitioners NZ have been involved in this proposal and are in the process of scoping and developing resources, which may include training, education and guidance to support ADHD assessment, diagnosis and appropriate treatment, and practice resources to support prescribers.

RNZCGP has stated that they will establish and support Special Interest Peer Groups for specialist GPs who choose to develop ADHD as a clinical interest.

^{1 1} The New Zealand ADHD Clinical Principles Framework states: For the assessment and diagnosis of adults, appropriate health care professionals [include]: vocationally registered general... and nurse practitioners... who have developed further clinical expertise in ADHD.

NZ Clinical Principles Framework for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

It is explicitly stated that this is not a clinical guideline, but a clinical framework designed for the New Zealand context. Key points:

- ADHD assessments should be comprehensive – the primary diagnostic tool is an in-depth clinical interview with collateral information from multiple sources
- An ADHD assessment should clearly consider differential diagnoses and alternative explanations of presenting symptoms
- The document outlines expected standards and further considerations for the age-specific assessment, diagnosis, treatment and management of ADHD within New Zealand.

References and Resources

1. The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners proposal: [RNZCGP ADHD Proposal](#)
2. Consultation outcome – Medsafe: [Medsafe Consultation Outcome - ADHD regulatory restrictions](#)
3. Goodfellow Unit, ADHD in Focus: Primary Care Management of ADHD (webinar): [Primary care management of ADHD | Goodfellow Unit](#)
4. Ministry of Health, New Zealand Clinical Principles Framework for ADHD: [New Zealand Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Clinical Principles Framework](#)
5. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists Guidance for the use of stimulant medications in adults: [Professional Practice Guideline: Use of Stimulant Medications in Adults](#)
6. Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists proposal: [Proposal to amend prescriber regulations for stimulant medications](#)
7. Healthify – ADHD in adults, for healthcare providers (contains further resources): [ADHD in adults for healthcare providers | Healthify](#)
8. HealthPathways – contains three sections: ADHD in Adults, ADHD in Children and Youth, and ADHD Medications for Children and Youth. [ADHD - Community HealthPathways Waitaha | Canterbury](#)