

Who could benefit from EMDR Therapy?

While EMDR Therapy was originally developed for PTSD, research is continuing to support its application to a range of other psychological issues, including:

- Anxiety
- Phobias
- Personality disorders
- Chronic pain
- Panic attacks
- Depression
- Complicated grief
- Eating disorders.

Any questions regarding this program can be directed to:

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EMDR Program

Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing

Information for patients, carers, family and support persons




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What is EMDR Therapy?

EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) Therapy is a psychological treatment highly effective in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), as well as other psychological conditions.

EMDR Therapy is based on the idea that negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours stem from unprocessed memories from stressful or traumatic experiences. EMDR Therapy is a structured treatment that involves focusing simultaneously on:

- a) an upsetting issue or traumatic memory and its associated thoughts, feelings and sensations, and**
- b) bilateral stimulation that is most commonly in the form of repeated eye movements.**

This is believed to mimic the natural memory processing characteristics of REM sleep and disrupt working memory, thus facilitating the brain to successfully process a memory or issue. Once traumatic memories have been desensitized and reprocessed, they no longer have the same negative impact. Memories typically become less vivid and upsetting, intrusive symptoms such as nightmares and flashbacks reduce or cease, and more adaptive beliefs emerge.

The EMDR program

Clients are admitted to the EMDR Program for a 4-week admission. There are individual and group treatment components in the program. Patients see their EMDR Therapist for three 60-minute sessions each week, so a total of 12 EMDR sessions per admission. Patients also attend daily group therapy sessions, Monday to Friday.

EMDR is an 8-phase model of treatment that involves assessment and preparation prior to the commencement of trauma processing. This means that each person's first EMDR admission will be different, as the EMDR Therapist will tailor the early stages of therapy to suit the individual client. The pace of treatment depends on the complexity of the client's trauma history, their existing resources and emotional regulation skills, and their broader life circumstances.

Some clients may only require a single EMDR admission. However, it is not unusual for clients to require 2-3 admissions to the EMDR program, with breaks of a number of months in between. For some clients, memory processing using eye movements will commence in the second or third EMDR session, while for others it may not commence until their second or third admission.

Once EMDR sessions have commenced, emotions may be raw, thoughts of the issues are more present and dreams can be more vivid. This is a normal response as the brain continues to process memories in between sessions. Patients receive support in the group sessions and have the opportunity to speak to clinical staff if they require support in between EMDR treatment sessions.



The EMDR Treatment Process

- Identification and mapping of significant life events and traumatic experiences
- Development of resources, coping strategies, and grounding techniques
- Exploration of different aspects of your personality (parts of self)
- Processing of traumatic memories using bilateral stimulation (typically eye movements).

The evidence that supports EMDR

EMDR is a widely researched and supported therapy for the treatment of trauma.

It is endorsed by:

- The World Health Organization (2013)
- The Australian Psychological Society (2010)
- The International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies (2009)
- American Psychiatric Association (2004).