Need help finding the right mental health support?

Sometimes your concerns require more or different support than we can offer through our short-term services. We understand that this may feel disappointing or overwhelming, especially if you are not familiar with the Dutch healthcare system.

You do not have to figure this out on your own. Below we explain step by step how to access the right support.

How mental healthcare works in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, a General Practitioner (GP, in Dutch: huisarts) is usually the first point of contact for both physical and mental health concerns.
The GP helps you determine what kind of help you need. If you need more specialised care, the GP can refer you to a mental healthcare provider (GGZ – Geestelijke Gezondheidszorg).

Step 1: register with a GP

If you do not yet have a GP in the Netherlands, this is your first step. If you are staying in the Netherlands for a longer period, registering with a GP is strongly recommended. If you are staying only temporarily, GP practices may offer care as a temporary patient (passing patient), although this varies between practices.

Search for GP practices in your neighborhood and check their website for registration options. Visit Sterkz.org (the website is only available in Dutch) for an overview of the available GP's in Utrecht. Some practices allow online registration, others require you to call or fill in a form.

GP access can sometimes be difficult

In some areas, GP practices may be full or may not accept new patients quickly. If this happens:

- Try multiple GP practices in your area
- Ask if they have a waiting list for new patients
- See huisartsenutrechtstad.nl for extra guidance

If you are told that a practice cannot accept you, you can try another GP. Availability differs per location.

Language

Most GP practices in student cities can offer consultations in English, but this is not always guaranteed.

If needed, you can:
- Clearly state you are comfortable speaking English
- Ask if an English-speaking GP is available
- Try another practice if necessary

What to say when calling

If you find it difficult to make the call, you can say:

> *"Hello, I would like to register as a new patient. I am an international student and I would like to know if you accept new patients and if consultations can be in English."*

You do not need to explain your situation in detail at this stage.

Step 2: make an appointment with your GP

Once registered, you can book an appointment by phone or via the GP's website. You can usually get an appointment within a week. You can say for example:

> *"I would like to talk about mental health concerns I have been experiencing."*

If it feels difficult to explain your situation, it can help to prepare your appointment by writing down :
- What you are experiencing
- How long this has been going on
- How it affects your studies, work, or daily life

You do not need to know exactly what is wrong. Even if you mainly feel stressed, stuck, or not yourself, you can go to your GP.

Step 3: referral and next steps

Depending on your situation, your GP may suggest support within the GP practice, refer you to a psychologist or specialised mental healthcare, or advise another type of support. Sometimes you will receive a referral yourself and contact a provider. In other cases, the GP sends the referral directly.

In many cases, you can choose between different mental healthcare providers. Your GP can help you decide what might fit your situation.

After referral, you will usually have an intake appointment at the psychologist's office or mental health care facility. During this interview, they will assess your situation and discuss what type of support is most appropriate.

What if I cannot find a GP?

This can happen, especially in busy student cities.
If you cannot find a GP:

- Keep trying different practices nearby
- Neighbourhood teams (Buurtteams) can also help you find the right care. Go to buurtteamsutrecht.nl.
- Contact your health insurance provider for support in finding a GP

It is important not to wait too long. Having a GP is important for accessing most non-emergency healthcare in the Netherlands (emergency healthcare is always available if needed).

What about waiting lists?

Waiting times in mental healthcare vary depending on the type of support and provider.

If you are placed on a waiting list, your GP or the mental health nurse practitioner (POH-GGZ) at the GP's practice may still be able to support you in the meantime.

If your symptoms worsen while waiting, contact your GP again. You do not need to wait until treatment starts to ask for help.

What can I do in the meantime?

If you would like to start working on your mental wellbeing, Moodlift offers free online programmes for UU students with practical tools and insights.

If you want someone to talk to, you can contact Injebol.nl for free chat or phone support with trained volunteers. @ease and Mental Motion also offer free, accessible support to young people.

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, contact 113 Suicide Prevention. They are available 24/7.

Emergency?

- *If you are in immediate danger or worried about your safety, call 112.*
- *If you need urgent medical help outside your GP's opening hours, contact the out-of-hours GP service (huisartsenpost). During GP opening hours, contact your GP.*

Insurance and costs

The costs of healthcare depend on the type of health insurance you have. International students may be covered by Dutch basic health insurance, the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), or private/international student insurance. Coverage differs between these options.

If you have Dutch basic health insurance, consultations with your GP and the practice mental health nurse (POH-GGZ) are covered and do not count towards your annual deductible (eigen risico). The costs of specialised mental healthcare (GGZ) depend on your insurance policy and the provider you choose. Depending on your situation, you may have to pay (part of) the annual deductible or part of the treatment costs yourself.

If you have an EHIC or private/international insurance, reimbursement depends on the terms of your policy and the healthcare provider you use.

We therefore recommend checking with your insurance provider before starting treatment. They can tell you:

- What is covered
- Wheter a GP referral is required
- Which providers you can use

Questions?

You do not have to figure everything out on your own. If you are unsure about the next step, you can contact your GP, your insurance provider, or the Student Psychologists for guidance.