

Anxiety

What is anxiety?

Most people will experience feeling worried or anxious at some time in their life. Anxiety is a normal response to danger, threat, difficult times, and new challenges.

When you are anxious you may **feel**:

- nervous, worried, or scared
- upset or can't stop thinking about your fear or worry
- uncomfortable, restless, panicked

You may have **physical symptoms** like:

- a racing heart
- feeling sick in the stomach
- headaches
- tiredness
- sweating
- shakiness

Some **life experiences** can make you feel anxious, like:

- big life changes, for example moving to a new country or city
- losing a job or not being able to work
- the death of someone close to you
- money problems
- not being able to see your family

It is normal and common to feel anxious in these situations and for these feelings to come and go.

Having anxious feelings does not always mean something is wrong. Anxiety can sometimes help us perform better by helping us feel alert and motivated.

For most people, these anxious feelings usually go away once the stressful situation has ended.

For others, anxiety can stick around, or it can come when you may not expect it. You can get support to help with anxious feelings.

Some people experiencing a lot of difficult situations for a long time may be used to feeling anxious and not realise they could be feeling better. Everyone deserves to feel well, and help is available.

When should you get help for your anxiety?

When anxious thoughts, feelings, or physical symptoms are too strong and overwhelming, and occur in situations that are not truly threatening or dangerous, it might indicate an anxiety disorder.

An anxiety disorder is more serious than normal anxiety and help is needed.

Anxiety disorders are one of the most common types of mental illness diagnosed in Australia and they are treatable.

Anxious feelings can be a problem if they do not go away, and they make it hard for you to do daily activities like:

- eating
- sleeping
- working
- looking after yourself or your children
- leaving your house to do the grocery shopping or meet friends

Anxiety disorders can take a while to develop, and they can get worse over time.

If you have anxious feelings that make it difficult to do your daily activities and are so strong or big that you cannot manage them, you should seek support.

A doctor, psychologist, or psychiatrist can assess whether you have an anxiety disorder and can then help you feel better.

Anxiety signs and symptoms

There are signs and symptoms that can indicate to a doctor or health professional that you might have an anxiety disorder. Symptoms can be different for everyone.

Some examples are:

Thoughts

- mind going blank
- vivid dreams
- confusion
- difficulty making decisions
- can't stop worrying

Emotions

- very scared all the time
- difficulty concentrating
- difficulty calming down
- embarrassment, shame
- overwhelmed



Physical symptoms

- headaches, dizziness, tingling, numbness
- shaking hands or body, clenching your jaw, uncontrolled tapping foot/leg
- very fast heartbeat, tight chest, pain in chest
- breathing quickly or shortness of breath
- panic attacks
- stomach pains, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhoea
- muscle aches (neck shoulders back), or tight body
- sweating

Behaviours

- avoiding going to places or doing things that make you feel anxious – like school or work, seeing friends, or going to social events
- difficulty going to sleep or difficulty staying asleep
- obsessive or compulsive behaviour
- crying a lot
- shouting a lot
- changes in eating (not able to eat much, or eating more than usual)

Anxiety disorders can be caused by a lot of different things. Each different anxiety disorder can have different causes.

In some cases, it can be difficult to find what is causing it, but you can still get help to feel better.

Getting help for your anxiety

Anxiety disorders can be treated by a health professional. Treatments can include local support groups, therapy - like counselling, or medicines provided by your doctor.

You can talk to your doctor first if you are worried about your mental health, the mental health of your child, or someone you look after.

Treatments for anxiety disorders are very effective and most people get better with help.

You don't need to suffer with anxiety. It is good to ask your doctor for help to manage your anxiety early on.



Who can help with mental health and anxiety?

It's a good idea to talk about how you're feeling. This can be with someone you trust like a friend, family member, community member, school counsellor, Maternal and Child Health Nurse, or doctor.

Psychiatrists and psychologists are specialists who can help people with mental illnesses, such as anxiety disorders.

How can you help someone with anxiety?

It is important for family and friends to support someone who has anxious feelings or an anxiety disorder. Showing support and understanding towards someone with a mental illness, like an anxiety disorder, will help them.

A person with an anxiety disorder or any mental illness might feel lonely and too scared to talk to someone or ask for help. They might be worried their friends, community or family will reject them.

Being kind and understanding when someone has a mental health challenge, or a mental illness will show them it is OK to ask for help.

You can support them by:

- listening to them talk about their feelings
- talking about mental health and mental illness openly
- not blaming the person for their mental illness
- treating people with a mental illness with respect
- offering support
- not sharing what they tell you with other people without their permission

Where to get help

If English is not your first language, call the Translating and Interpreting Service

- Call 13 14 50
- Tell them what language you speak.
- They will call the services for you.



If you are in crisis and need help now:

- Call 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department, or
- Call Lifeline on 13 11 14

Where to get help

For anxiety related concerns:

Beyond Blue – call 1300 22 46 36 to talk to a counsellor

Or visit www.beyondblue.org.au

For kids or young people (aged 5 – 25 years) with behavioural or mental health issues:

Kids Helpline – call 1800 551 800

Or visit www.kidshelpline.com.au

For young people (aged 12 – 25 years) with mental health concerns:

Headspace – call 1800 650 890

Or visit www.headspace.org.au

For more information and translated resources:

Visit the Embrace Multicultural Mental Health website

www.embracementalhealth.org.au/community/multilingual-information

About this factsheet:

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Sources

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<https://www.dhi.health.nsw.gov.au/transcultural-mental-health-centre>

