

Getting Professional Mental Health Help - What are the steps?

This information is on how to get professional mental health help. For information on mental health and to access translated resources, please visit <https://embracementalhealth.org.au/>.

There are lots of ways to get mental health help. This information provided in this fact sheet is general and does not cover all options for getting help or cover all possible symptoms a person may feel when mental health help should be sought.

If you need help now

If you think someone could hurt themselves or others, get urgent help.

Call emergency services

Dial triple zero (000)

Call Lifeline

Dial 13 11 14

Go to a hospital emergency department

At the emergency department, you will be seen first by an emergency doctor. Then, if needed, you will talk to a psychiatrist or other mental health professional.

Find a mental health crisis team

Mental health crisis teams provide urgent treatment and support for people in mental health crisis. Treatment is often in your home.

Call your closest major hospital to access the mental health crisis team in your area.

If it is not an emergency

See your doctor

If it is not an emergency, but you have symptoms that are severe, or have been going on for more than a few weeks, you should seek help.

Symptoms include

- feeling anxious
- feeling sad or depressed
- feeling very irritable
- not wanting to see other people
- sleeping a lot more or less
- eating a lot more or less
- using alcohol or drugs to cope
- having angry or emotional outbursts



Symptoms are not limited to these. Everybody's circumstances, history and culture will be different. The causes, duration, symptoms and treatment for mental health will be different for each person.

Your doctor is a good place to start when seeking mental health help. If you don't have a regular doctor, you can ask family or friends for recommendations.

Before you book:

It is ok to ask questions before booking your appointment. You may like to ask:

- About the doctor's mental health experience and training
- If the doctor can meet any special needs or preferences you may have, such as language, culture or gender of the doctor
- You can ask at the start how much the visit will cost you. If you aren't eligible for Medicare, you will pay the full cost. If you are eligible, then Medicare covers some or all of the cost
- If you don't feel comfortable talking with your doctor about your mental health, you can look for another one that you are comfortable with. It may take some time to find the right doctor for you

Tell your doctor:

- How you are feeling
- Your concerns
- How what you are feeling is affecting your life

You can take a family member or close friend along for support; they can also help explain your situation to the doctor, and they can help remember the discussions you had.

Ask your doctor:

- What are all of my options?
- What do you think are the best options for me?
- How much better might I feel?
- When might I feel better?

It is normal and expected that you will ask questions to your doctor.

What next?

After seeing your doctor about your mental health, your doctor might suggest one or more of the following:

- Ask you to come back for a follow up appointment
- Your doctor might give you a diagnosis, for example of depression or anxiety. This doesn't always happen after your first appointment and may only be possible after monitoring you over time or referring you to a specialist.
- Your doctor may suggest making changes to your exercise, eating and sleep habits which may help you to manage your symptoms
- Your doctor might refer you to another service such as a psychologist, social worker or occupational therapist.
- They may recommend some [online programs and resources](#) that help you to take care of yourself
- They may also ask you to come back for a longer appointment and create a mental health plan

If you have a mental health care plan, you will be entitled to [Medicare](#) rebates for up to 10 individual and 10 group appointments with some [allied mental health services](#) in a year. That means for certain [psychologists](#), [occupational therapists](#) and [social workers](#), you are also entitled to Medicare rebates for 10 individual and support group sessions in a year.



Once you have seen your doctor about your mental health, it is important to take action on any recommendations they have given you. It may help to tell family or friends about your plan, so they can help you take action.

Your privacy is important.

There are laws to protect your privacy whenever you use a health or mental health service in Australia.

This means that what you say to your doctor, counsellor, interpreter or other health professional is confidential and will not be shared with anyone else without your consent.

The only exception to confidentiality is the rare situation where someone is at serious risk of being harmed or harming others, to keep everyone safe.

About this factsheet:

Sources:

<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/talking-to-your-doctor-gp-about-mental-health>

<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/fact-sheets/>

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/seeking-help-for-a-mental-health-problem/what-might-happen-at-a-gp-appointment/#WhatMightTheOutcomeOfMyAppointmentBe>

This fact sheet has been informed by members of the Embrace CALD Mental Health Consumer and Carer group.

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