



# TREATMENTS FOR DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

Having feelings of depression and anxiety from time to time is part of being human. However, when these feelings seriously affect your day-to-day life, they may mean you have depression or an anxiety disorder, so it's good to know that there are treatments that work. It's important to get help as soon as possible, so that treatment can be started. When you've started treatment, it's useful to keep talking to family or friends – having someone you know and trust being aware of your situation can be a big help.

## GETTING HELP

The first step in dealing with depression or anxiety is talking to someone about it. Some people think that it's weak to admit that they're going through a tough time. But if you have depression or an anxiety disorder, you can't just 'snap out of it' or 'pull yourself together'. Keeping it to yourself only makes things worse. Start by talking to someone you trust – maybe a parent, teacher, school counsellor, family member or friend. They can help you decide what to do next.

If you're unsure if you need treatment, seeing a General Practitioner (GP) is a good way to start. If you are having frequent thoughts of wanting to die, you should speak to someone about this immediately. GPs are used to recognising and treating common health problems, including depression, anxiety disorders, alcohol and drug concerns, family hassles and medical issues. They can help you to work out the best ways to cope with how you're feeling and make a plan to get through it. If needed, they can also refer you to an expert in treating mental health problems, such as a psychologist or psychiatrist.

## KNOWING WHEN TREATMENT IS NEEDED

Everyone feels down or worried sometimes. It can be hard to recognise if you have depression or anxiety, let alone whether you might need help to get better. It's a good idea to talk to someone if for **MORE THAN TWO WEEKS** you have:

- felt sad, down or miserable, or irritable most of the time
- lost interest or enjoyment in your usual activities
- felt anxious, tense or nervous most of the time
- felt fearful or worried all the time
- been experiencing frequent panic attacks (or felt constantly worried that you will have one).

Other symptoms of depression and anxiety include:

- not doing so well at work/study
- changes in your relationships with family and friends
- having trouble falling or staying asleep
- feeling restless, keyed up or on edge
- being forgetful, losing concentration and being easily distracted
- becoming withdrawn and losing friends
- losing or gaining weight quickly
- feeling unwell, with unexplained aches and pains
- avoiding activities or places for fear of causing an a panic attack.

If you have specific concerns that you want to talk through, there are counsellors who specialise in particular issues such as family issues, school and careers, pregnancy, abuse, alcohol and other drugs.

If you need to talk to someone right away but don't feel ready to see a counsellor or doctor, you could try telephone counselling services, which are available free or for the cost of a local call, or online counselling (some numbers and websites are listed at the end of this fact sheet).

Visit: [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)

Info line: **1300 22 4636**

beyondblue: the national depression initiative





## WHAT KINDS OF TREATMENTS ARE AVAILABLE?

**Psychological and family therapies (also called talking therapies) are the main treatments for depression and anxiety in young people.**

Two psychological therapies have been found to be especially helpful – Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and Interpersonal Therapy (IPT). These therapies can help you to change your negative thoughts and feelings, get involved in activities again and stop your depression or anxiety from coming back later in life.

Other ways to tackle depression and anxiety, such as stress management and tips to improve your sleep patterns, can also be helpful.

The use of antidepressants as the first treatment for people under 18 years is not recommended (unless you have Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). However, if your depression is very severe or other treatments haven't worked, your doctor may discuss the use of antidepressants for you. When antidepressants are used, it's important that you see your doctor regularly to monitor your progress, and that you continue with other forms of treatment such as talking therapies and self-help (see Youthbeyondblue Fact sheet 5 – *Antidepressants for the treatment of depression in children and adolescents*).

There are also alternative treatments, such as herbal remedies. A few of these have been somewhat effective in adults – especially when their depression isn't severe and they're not in danger of harming themselves. It's important to realise that there's been no good research done on the effectiveness of these treatments for young people and that a lot of them have side-effects and may interfere with other medications you're taking.

## SELF-HELP

Along with seeking treatment to manage depression and anxiety, looking after yourself on a day-to-day basis will help your recovery. Even though you might not feel like eating, food can play a vital role in maintaining mental health as well as physical health. Eating regular meals and a varied, nourishing diet can improve your sense of well-being. Avoid alcohol and drugs. Although it may seem that they help you to feel better, the feeling is temporary and the after-effects usually make the problem worse.

Keeping active can help you stay physically fit and mentally healthy. It can help lift your mood, help you get a good night's sleep, increase your energy levels, help block negative thoughts and distract you from your worries, and increase your well-being.

Taking time out to relax is also a good idea and may reduce the level of stress you are feeling. Try to take a bit of each day to do something you enjoy. When you are feeling down it may be hard to be social or motivate yourself to do things. It may help to make a list of all the things you enjoy doing and then plan to do something from this list each day. Learning to identify and solve your problems can also be very helpful.



## KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

- Sometimes people set goals that are hard to achieve. Try to set goals that are achievable for you, even if it's on a day-by-day, or hour by-hour, basis. And remember to reward yourself too.
- Think of some physical activities you enjoy (e.g. walking, cycling, swimming), start slowly and build up your level of exercise. Try a few different ways of staying active so you don't get bored.
- Psychological and family therapies can only help you if you play your part by going to your appointments, being open with your counsellor and following the plan you both decide is best for you. It may take time and effort, but it will help you to recover.
- Keep talking to your family, doctor and counsellor about how you're feeling and whether your treatment is working for you – if it isn't, don't give up. You can try something else.



## LOOK

for the signs of depression



## TALK

about what's going on



## LISTEN

to your friends' experiences



## SEEK HELP

together!

## MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

You can speak to trained counsellors by phoning these 24-hour telephone counselling services:

**Lifeline 13 11 14** (cost of a local call)

**Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800** (freecall)

Information and support is also available from the following websites:

**beyondblue** [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)  
or [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)  
info line 1300 22 4636

Information on depression, anxiety and how to help a friend

**headspace** [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)  
Information, support and help near you

**ReachOut.com** [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)

Information and support for young people going through tough times

**National LGBT Health Alliance**

[www.lgbthealth.org.au](http://www.lgbthealth.org.au) Information and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other sexuality, sex and gender diverse people (LGBT)

The websites below can help you to find health services in your area. They list services that are either free of charge or low cost:

**Kids Help Line** [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

**Lifeline Service Finder**  
[www.lifeline.org.au/service\\_finder](http://www.lifeline.org.au/service_finder)

If you or a friend want to communicate with someone via email or online, Kids Help Line offers confidential, non-judgemental, emotional support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

**SOURCES** This fact sheet is based on information from:

- **beyondblue** [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com) and [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)
- **ReachOut.com** [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)

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