



beyondblue

Depression. Anxiety.

Improve your understanding
of anxiety and depression,
then take action



Throughout our lives there can be a number of personal issues and situations that negatively impact our social and emotional wellbeing. It is important for men to pay attention to these signs of poor mental health, seek advice and manage them, so we can perform at our best, support our friends and family and prevent things getting worse.

Anxiety and depression are common and often serious conditions. On average, one in eight men will have depression and one in five men will experience anxiety at some stage of their lives.¹

Untreated depression can impact on your day to day life and is also a risk factor for suicide. In Australia, there are more than 3,000 suicides each year and 75 per cent of people who take their lives are men, so it's important to get support as soon as you can.²

The key thing to remember is that there are effective management and treatments which mean you can recover from anxiety and depression with the right advice, support and treatment – it's just a question of taking action. If you had a broken arm or a deep cut on your foot, you wouldn't expect that to heal without talking to a doctor first. It's the same with anxiety and depression.



Signs and symptoms

It's useful to know the warning signs of anxiety and depression – not only for you, but also for your mates and family.

Anxiety conditions

Everyone gets anxious, particularly when they are dealing with something challenging. Anxiety conditions are more than just every day worry. They are a group of conditions where the symptoms of anxiety are more intense, more persistent and more disruptive than the type of anxiety you might get when you are going for a job interview or the like. Symptoms of anxiety conditions can include feelings of worry, fear and panic so severe they interfere with your ability to work, maintain relationships and get a decent night's sleep. Anxiety conditions can also lead to avoidance, which interferes with a person's day to day life.

What to watch for:

Physical

- pounding heart
- excessive sweating
- choking sensations
- dizziness and vertigo
- shortness of breath
- hot flushes or chills
- insomnia
- muscle tension or being wound up
- panic attacks

Thoughts and feelings

- constant worry
- feelings of dread

- difficulty concentrating
- catastrophic thinking
- irritability or edginess
- hyper vigilance toward danger
- absentmindedness
- fear of losing control

Behaviour

- being restless and fidgety
- withdrawing or avoiding people and situations
- drinking to cope

Depression

We can all experience sadness in our lives, particularly when we suffer a loss, or experience a major setback or disappointment. But feeling sad about something that's gone wrong is not the same as experiencing depression. Depression is more intense, more persistent

and more disruptive. The major symptoms of depression are constant low mood and a loss of interest in the things around you or things you used to enjoy. It's worth knowing that while depression is often associated with feeling low, it can manifest itself into moodiness, irritability, fits of rage, unnecessary risk taking, and alcohol or drug abuse in some men.

What to watch for:

Physical

- loss of energy
- loss of sex drive
- change in sleep patterns and restlessness
- changes in appetite
- lethargy and/or exhaustion
- alcohol or drug abuse

Thoughts and feelings

- low mood

- losing interest in hobbies
- feeling guilty
- feeling low in self confidence
- feeling uninterested
- feeling alone
- feeling nervous
- feeling angry or violent
- taking unnecessary risks
- thinking about death or suicide

To find out more about anxiety and depression in men visit www.beyondblue.org.au/men

Taking action

Supporting yourself

Lifestyle changes can often help to deal with depression. While depression can sap your enthusiasm and energy it's important to try to stay active and make plans for the day – they don't have to be grand plans, just small things like going for a run, talking to a mate or doing some gardening. Try to include activities or hobbies that you specifically enjoy. At first, you may not enjoy them as much as you did before, but if you keep active and persist, the enjoyment should eventually return.

It's important to look after your body by staying physically active, eating healthily and getting plenty of sleep. Try not to drink or take drugs to block out how you're feeling and what is happening – this is not a positive long-term solution and only makes the anxiety or depression worse.

So, there is a range of options available, but it's different for everybody. The important thing is finding the right options that work for you.

Talk to others

beyondblue forums

“The compassion and understanding was amazing. Helps talking to people who get it.” – forum user

Each month, over 60,000 people visit our online forums to safely and anonymously discuss anxiety, depression, suicide and a range of life issues. Talking about what's going on with others who understand – or may be going through something similar – can really make a difference. Anyone in Australia can participate in discussions, connect with others and share their experiences with our community. **www.beyondblue.org.au/forums**

Seek support from your GP

Your doctor is a good source of information and can assess if what you are feeling is anxiety or depression. If you are diagnosed with either of these conditions, together you can work out an action plan.

Your action plan can cover a wide range of options. The plan can include lifestyle changes like exercise, stress management and how to improve your sleep. You may be referred to a psychologist or other mental health professional who can help you to address things like negative thinking and how to deal with hassles in your relationships.

For some people, medication might also be necessary, particularly if the depression is severe. It's important to talk through all your options with your GP so you can make the choice about what is right for you.

Supporting others

How can I help someone with anxiety or depression?

It is helpful to:

- let them know if you've noticed a change in their behaviour
- spend time talking about their experiences and let them know that you're there to listen without being judgmental
- help them to get information from a website, library or community health centre
- suggest they go to a doctor or health professional, and help them to make an appointment
- offer to go with them to their appointment and/or follow them up afterwards
- encourage them to get enough sleep, exercise and to eat well
- encourage family and friends to invite them out and keep in touch, but don't pressure them to participate in activities
- encourage the person to face their fears with support from their doctor/psychologist
- discourage them from using alcohol or other drugs to try to feel better
- contact a doctor or hospital if they become a threat to themselves or others.

It is unhelpful to:

- put pressure on them by telling them to "snap out of it" or "get their act together"
- stay away or avoid them
- tell them they just need to stay busy or get out more
- pressure them to party more or wipe out how they're feeling with drugs and alcohol
- assume the problem will just go away.

If you or someone you know needs help, talk to a GP or other health professional about getting appropriate treatment.

Know the options and develop an action plan

Getting on top of anxiety and depression is like getting on top of any other health condition – it's a team effort involving you, your family and support network, and your health professionals.

Some people think that it's weak to admit that they're going through a tough time, but if you have anxiety or depression, you can't just 'snap out of it' or 'pull yourself together'. There's more to it than that.

If you think you may have depression or anxiety, and want to take action, start by talking to someone you trust – keeping it to yourself doesn't help. Discuss your situation with a mate, partner, family member or a colleague.

Take action and find out more.

Visit www.beyondblue.org.au/taking-action

References

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing*, 2007, Catalogue Number 4326.0, 2008

² Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Causes of Death Australia 2015 preliminary data*, Catalogue Number 3303.0, 2016



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Where to find more information

beyondblue

www.beyondblue.org.au

Learn more about anxiety, depression and suicide prevention, or talk through your concerns with our Support Service. Our trained mental health professionals will listen, provide information and advice, and point you in the right direction so you can seek further support.

 1300 22 4636

 Email or  chat to us online at www.beyondblue.org.au/getsupport

mindhealthconnect

www.mindhealthconnect.org.au

Access to trusted, relevant mental health care services, online programs and resources.



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