
Anxiety and depression in men

Summary

- Anxiety and depression in men are common and effective treatments are available.
 - Anxiety and depression are medical conditions, not weaknesses.
 - Taking action may not be as hard as you think.
 - It's important to seek support for anxiety and depression early – the sooner the better.
 - With the right treatment, most people recover from anxiety and depression.
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In general, men tend to put off getting any kind of support, because they think they're supposed to be tough, self-reliant, and able to manage pain and take charge of situations. This can make it hard for men to acknowledge they have any health issues, let alone any that affect their social and emotional wellbeing.

Depression is a serious and common condition that won't get better by itself. If you have a broken arm or a deep cut on your foot, you don't expect that to heal without medical help. It's the same with depression.

On average, one in eight men will have depression and one in five men will experience anxiety at some stage of their lives.

Men are less likely to experience anxiety and depression than women. They are also less likely to talk about it. This increases the risk of their anxiety or depression going unrecognised and untreated.

Untreated depression is a high risk factor for suicide. In Australia there are about 3,000 suicides each year. Seventy-five per cent of people who take their lives are men – with an average of almost six men taking their lives every day. Suicide is the leading cause of death for men under the age of 45, significantly exceeding the national road toll. It's important to remember that anxiety and depression are medical conditions, not weaknesses, and effective treatments are available.

Learn the **signs and symptoms of anxiety** and **depression** – not only for you, but for your friends and family. Visit [beyondblue](#) to find out more about **anxiety** and **depression in men**.

Symptoms of anxiety in men

Anxiety is more than having sweaty palms and butterflies in your stomach. Symptoms of anxiety can include feelings of worry, fear and impending doom that are so severe they interfere with your ability to work, maintain relationships and get a decent night's sleep. Physical signs of anxiety may include:

- pounding or racing heart
- excessive sweating
- muscle tension
- restlessness or agitation
- dizziness and vertigo
- shortness of breath or choking sensations
- insomnia
- panic attacks.

Emotional signs of anxiety may include:

- constant worry about what could go wrong
- feelings of dread

- concentration problems
- avoidance
- catastrophic thinking
- irritability or edginess
- being overly vigilant towards danger
- absentmindedness
- fear of losing control.

Symptoms of depression in men

While depression is often associated with sadness and hopelessness, it also manifests itself in irritability and anger, unnecessary risk taking, and alcohol or drug abuse in men.

Physical signs of depression may include:

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

Emotional signs of depression may include:

- feeling sad or nervous
- losing interest or pleasure in activities
- feeling irritable, angry or violent
- becoming withdrawn and isolated
- feeling worthless, guilty, or hopeless
- taking unnecessary risks
- thinking about death or suicide.

Treatment for anxiety and depression in men

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, or both, together you can work out an action plan.

Anxiety and depression are like any other medical condition – you need ways to manage them and recover.

Lifestyle changes, such as spending time with supportive friends and family, **regular exercise**, getting enough **sleep**, eating a **healthy diet** and cutting down on alcohol and other drugs are all worthwhile changes that can help to reduce anxiety and depression symptoms.

Psychological treatments, including **cognitive behaviour therapy**, are effective in treating anxiety and depression and are often recommended first, particularly for mild to moderate anxiety and depression. Your doctor may refer you to see a psychologist or other counsellor for this type of treatment.

For some people, antidepressant medication might also be necessary. Antidepressants are effective for both anxiety and depression. They usually take at least two weeks before they start to help, and it may also take some time for your doctor to find the medication and dose that is most effective for you.

Develop an action plan for anxiety and depression

Your action plan for anxiety and depression will cover a wide range of options. The plan can include exercise, stress management and how to improve your sleep. You may be referred to a psychologist who can help you address things like negative thinking and how to deal with difficulties in your relationships.

Some people think it's weak to admit 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 anxiety or depression and want to take action, start by talking to someone you trust –

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keeping it to yourself only makes things worse. Discuss your situation with a friend, partner, family member a colleague or your GP.

To find out more about how to make an action plan, visit [beyondblue](#).

Tips for men coping with anxiety and depression

There are lots of things you can do to look after your health and wellbeing, so find an approach that best suits you. For example, 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 or talking to a mate.

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.

The important thing is to find the right options and the right health professionals that suit you.

Supporting someone with anxiety or depression

There are ways that you can help someone with anxiety or depression. It may be helpful to:

- let them know if you've noticed a change in their behaviour
- spend time talking about their experiences and let them know 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 follow up with them afterwards
- encourage them to get enough sleep, to 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 or 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 support, talk to a doctor or other health professional about getting appropriate treatment.

Stress is not anxiety or depression

Stress is not the same as anxiety or depression – but for some people, being stressed for a long time can lead to anxiety or depression, and it can affect a person's physical health, particularly cardiovascular health.

When we talk about being stressed, it usually means we're upset or tense about something that's happening in our lives. Stress is a normal part of daily life. It's a natural physical and mental response that is designed to help people cope effectively with emergencies.

Some stress can be a good thing. It can help us get motivated to get things done, but health problems from stress happen when it is regular and doesn't let up.

Better Health Channel has information about [ways to manage stress](#).

Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- **Psychologist**
- **Psychiatrist**
- **MensLine Australia** Tel. **1300 78 99 78** (24 hours, 7 days)
- **Suicide Call Back Service** Tel. **1300 659 467** (24 hours, 7 days)
- **beyondblue** Support Service (24 hours 7 days a week). Tel. **1300 22 4636**
- **Lifeline** Tel **13 11 14**
- **Kids Helpline** Tel **1800 55 1800**
- **SuicideLine** Victoria, for counselling, crisis intervention, information and referral (24 hours, 7 days). Tel **1300 651 251**
- **SANE Australia** Helpline Tel. **1800 187 263**
- **THIS WAY UP** - Coping with Stress and Intro to Mindfulness online courses developed by the Clinical Research Unit of Anxiety and Depression (CRUfAD) at St Vincent's Hospital, Sydney and University of New South Wales (UNSW) Faculty of Medicine.

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