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## Children, young people and mental health services

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### Summary

- Encourage good mental health in your child by actively listening to them, giving them lots of free play time and rewarding good behaviour.
  - Create a secure environment for your child to develop at their own pace. By making sure your child feels safe and loved you give them the best opportunity to develop the social skills they need to get through life.
  - Call Parentline on **13 22 89** for telephone counselling services from 8 am to 12 am, seven days a week.
  - Encourage your child to call the Kids Helpline on **1800 55 1800** if they don't feel comfortable talking to you about their feelings.
  - Download information and talk to counsellors online at the Youth beyondblue, headspace, Reachout and Somazone websites.
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Growing up is not easy and at each stage of development, from pre-primary, right through to the teen years, there are challenges that will test a child's emotional and mental health.

Promoting good mental health in children, teenagers and young people will help them build lasting relationships, communicate effectively, and adapt to change as they grow into adults. If your child is dealing with a mental health issue, it is important to know who you can talk to and where you can get help.

### Pre-primary children and mental health

When talking about mental health in pre-primary children, the focus is not so much about looking for signs of mental illness, but rather about creating a secure environment for your child to develop at their own pace. By making sure your child feels safe and loved you give them the best opportunity to develop the social skills they need to get through life.

As they grow and get ready for their school years they will learn how to:

- express and control their emotions
- communicate their needs and interests
- behave the right way in different situations
- form friendships and work together with others
- resolve conflicts.

Encourage good mental health in your child by actively listening to them, giving them lots of free play time, rewarding good behaviour, being affectionate and also sharing your own emotions.

### Where to get help

All children develop at different rates and cope differently with the challenges of growing up. Some are more anxious or shy, while others may be irritable or misbehave more than children normally do. If you are concerned about the mental health of your child because of worrying behaviour, there are places you can turn to for help.

A good place to start is to speak to your doctor or maternal health nurse about your concerns. They will be able to talk through some of the developmental issues that might be contributing to bad behaviour and will also be able to suggest further mental health support services.

For more information, make use of Victoria's various parenting helplines and websites, including:

- **Parentline** – call **13 22 89** for this telephone counselling service for Victorian parents and carers of children up to 18 years of age. The service is available from 8 am to 12 am (midnight), seven days a week.
  - **The Raising Children Network** – an online parenting resource with advice for children of all age groups.
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## Primary school children and mental health

Children between the ages of five and ten go through a lot of changes as they adjust to life at school and spending long periods of time away from their parents.

If you are concerned about how your child is coping with these changes, it is a good idea to talk to them about it and get help if you do not know what to do.

Your child may be struggling with shyness, separation anxiety, peer pressure, bullying, or even a behavioural disorder such as oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), conduct disorder (CD) or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

### Where to get help

Speak to your doctor and the school counsellor about any concerns you have. They can give you advice on other ways of communicating with your child and also refer you to mental health support services such as child psychologists or child psychiatrists if needed.

- **The Kids Help Line** is a great option for kids who do not feel comfortable talking about their feelings to you or other family members. They can call 1800 55 1800 for free counselling and advice.
- **The Raising Children Network** is also a great place to find information on children of primary school age, including fact sheets and downloadable toolkits on child development, behavioural problems and other health issues.

Other places to find helpful advice and information include:

- The Specialist Children's Services, Department of Education and Training
- The Resource Centre for Child Health and Safety (CHAS) – call (03) 9345 6429
- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Association of Victoria – call (03) 9890 2144 or 1800 233 842
- Association for Children with a Disability – call (03) 9818 2000 (or 1800 654 013 for rural callers)
- Australian Psychological Society, APS Psychologist Referral Service – call (03) 8662 3300 or 1800 333 497.

## Pre-teen children and mental health

As you move towards your teenage years and high school, you will have to deal with pressures that you might not have experienced before such as issues with your body image, social media experiences and sexual development. It can be hard to make sense of all the changes that are going on around you.

### Where to get help

Sometimes you will want to talk to your family or friends about what you are going through, and other times you will want to talk to someone who isn't close to you.

Talk to your school counsellor or local doctor if you need help. Your conversations with them are private and they will be able to direct you to further support if you need it.

If you need to talk to someone right away, contact The Kids Help Line on 1800 55 1800, 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For online counselling and email support, visit the [Kids Help Line website](#).

Parents will find useful information on how to help their child in the pre-teens' section of [The Raising Children Network website](#).

## Teenagers, youth and mental health

Some teenagers experience mental health issues and illness. Teenagers can experience bouts of depression and anxiety, have problems with bullying, peer pressure or drugs and alcohol. The most important thing is to have someone to turn to when you need help.

### Where to get help

Start by talking to your family and friends about what you are feeling. If you would rather speak to someone you do not know, try talking to your school counsellor or local doctor. Your conversations with them are private and they will be able to direct you to further support, through mental health support services such as a psychologist or

psychiatrist.

Headspace, which is run by the National Youth Mental Health Foundation, offers support, information and advice to young people between the ages of 12 to 25. Visit the [Headspace website](#) to find a centre near you

If you are living with, or caring for, a family member with a mental illness, contact [Young Carers](#) on 1800 242 636 or visit the website for information and support.

For crisis support, phone and web counselling, and mental health information contact one of the mental health support services listed below:

- **Lifeline** – call 13 11 14 for this free Australia-wide crisis support and suicide prevention service.
- **Suicide Call Back Service** – call 1300 659 467 for this free service for people having suicidal thoughts, family or friends affected by suicide and healthcare professionals treating suicidal patients.
- **Suicide Line** – call 1300 651 251 for free and anonymous support, 24 hours a day, seven days a week across Victoria.
- **Kids Help Line** – call 1800 55 1800 for free counselling and advice for young people between the ages of five and 25.
- **Headspace** – headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25 year olds.
- **Reachout** – visit their website for information, tools and support for young people with mental health issues.
- **Youth Beyond Blue** – call 1300 22 4636 for free telephone counselling or visit their website for information, resources and support for young people with depression or anxiety.
- **Alcohol and drug foundation** – free health advice for young people on alcohol and drug use, including mental health.

#### Where to get help

- Your GP (doctor)
- Your counsellor
- Psychologist
- Psychiatrist
- Telephone helplines
- Internet forums

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Better Health Channel - (need new cp)

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