



# Anxiety and Depression



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## Anxiety and depression are mental health conditions.

They can happen at the same time, but they are different. This fact sheet explains each condition and gives ideas to help and support me.



## Anxiety

### What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a mental health condition where I:

- Feel very worried or scared a lot of the time.
- Think a lot about bad things that might happen.
- Find it hard to relax or stop worrying.



### What are some of the symptoms of anxiety?

Different types of anxiety may have different symptoms:

- **Generalised anxiety** – I worry about many things, even small ones.
- **Social anxiety** – I feel nervous in groups or when I meet new people.
- **Panic** – I get sudden strong feelings of fear, with physical symptoms like a fast heartbeat, feeling sweaty, dizzy or short of breath.
- **Phobias** – I feel scared of a specific thing, such as needles, animals or other things.

### How can anxiety affect my daily life?

- I might feel scared even when there is no danger.
- I may avoid places or people that make me nervous.
- I might have trouble falling asleep.
- I may find it hard to enjoy things or focus on activities.

### How might someone notice if a person is anxious?

My family or support people might notice I am anxious if I am:

- Saying things like “I feel scared” or “I don’t want to go”.
- Avoiding people or places or wanting to stay home.
- Getting headaches, stomach aches or other new body feelings.

### Why is it important?

- Everyone feels anxious sometimes, but when it happens most days, it can make life hard.
- Getting help can make you feel calm again and able to enjoy life.

## Depression



### What is depression?

Depression is a mental health condition where I:

- Feel sad or flat most of the time, for a long time (at least 2 weeks or more).
  - Stop enjoying things that used to make me happy.
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### What might I feel if I am depressed?

I might:

- Feel sad or tearful.
  - Feel tired or lacking energy.
  - Have changing interest in food.
  - Feel hopeless or not good enough.
  - Have trouble sleeping or sleep too much.
  - Have trouble concentrating.
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### How might someone notice if a person is depressed?

My family or support people might notice I am depressed if I:

- Seem teary, quiet or angry more than usual.
  - Are saying things like “I feel sad”.
  - Do not want to do your usual activities which you enjoy.
  - Change the amounts I eat or drink.
  - Sleep more or wake up early.
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### How can depression affect my daily life?

- I might find it hard to get out of bed or start the day.
  - I may not want to go to work, school, or activities.
  - I might not enjoy spending time with friends or family.
  - I may find it harder to look after myself or make choices.
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### Why is it important?

- Everyone feels sad sometimes, but depression lasts longer and feels stronger.
- If these feelings don't go away, I need to get help.
- Getting help early can help stop depression getting worse.
- With the right support I can feel better and enjoy life again.

## Getting help for anxiety and/or depression

Anxiety and depression are different, but the good news is that many of the same things can help with both.

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### When should I get help?

I should get help if my worry, fear, or sadness:

- Does not go away after a few weeks.
- Starts to make daily life hard.

Getting help early can make a big difference.

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### What every day things can I do to feel better?

- Talk to someone I trust.
  - Go for a walk or do gentle exercise.
  - Try to get enough sleep and eat healthy food.
  - Do something I enjoy, like see friends or listen to music.
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### What can families and carers do to give support?

They can:

- Ask how I am feeling and listen carefully.
  - Help me keep a routine for sleep, meals, activities.
  - Help me organise more support like a GP visit.
  - Be patient and remind me it is OK to ask for help.
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### What can health professionals do to help?

They can:

- Check for health problems that may cause changes in my mood, anxiety or behaviour.
- Link me with a psychologist.
- Explain treatment options, including therapy and, if needed, medication to help with my anxiety or depression.
- Link me with community or specialist services.



### Who can support me and my family?

- **GP (family doctor)** – the first person to talk to about mental health.
- **Psychologist or counsellor** – can teach me coping skills and provide therapy.
- **Psychiatrist** – a mental health doctor who can assess and treat me for anxiety or depression.
- **Local mental health team** – which will vary depending on where I live.
- **Disability or community support workers** – can help me with daily routines and activities.

### What to do in an emergency?

If you or someone you know talks about wanting to hurt themselves, or you are very worried, **call 000** or go to the nearest hospital emergency department.



## Where else can I go for help?

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- GP or local mental health centre.
- Intellectual Disability Mental Health Connect:  
 [idmhconnect.health](https://idmhconnect.health)
- Lifeline:  
 **13 11 14 – 24-hour support**
- 13YARN:  
 **13 92 76**  
 [www.13yarn.org.au](https://www.13yarn.org.au)
- Beyond Blue:  
 [www.beyondblue.org.au](https://www.beyondblue.org.au)
- Black Dog Institute:  
 [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)
- SANE Australia:  
 [www.sane.org](https://www.sane.org)
- Medicare Mental Health Centres:  
 [www.medicarementalhealth.gov.au/medicare-mental-health-centres](https://www.medicarementalhealth.gov.au/medicare-mental-health-centres)

### Disclaimer

This information is general. It is not medical or legal advice. Talk to your GP or health professional about what is right for you. Down Syndrome Australia and nib foundation are not responsible for decisions made using this information.

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