



Anxiety and Depression

Notice a change in your mood? Struggling at work or home? How is your mental health?

Mental health and wellbeing help you to realise your potential, cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively and be able to make a contribution to the wider community.

Mental health is about wellness, whilst anxiety and depression are conditions that affect your mental health. Although they are separate conditions, sometimes they occur together, and in some cases one can lead to the onset of the other.

It is important to recognise the signs and symptoms of anxiety and depression. Seeking help early can make the road to recovery easier.

Recognising Anxiety and Depression

Anxiety and depression are common. Anxiety is more than feeling stressed or worried, just as depression is more than feeling sad. Anxiety and depression can take many forms, but there are some common signs that can help you to recognise the conditions in yourself or others.

Anxiety is when anxious feelings are ongoing without any recognisable cause and cannot be controlled. Common symptoms of anxiety are:

- Snowballing worries, obsessive thinking, and intrusive thoughts
- Withdrawing/avoiding objects or situations that cause anxiety
- Experiencing hot/cold flushes, a racing heart, tightening of the chest, nausea
- Sweating and shaking, muscle tension, difficulty concentrating
- Feeling overwhelmed, fearful, worried about physical symptoms, dread, or panic

Depression affects how people feel about themselves and how they manage day to day. Common symptoms of depression are:

- Feeling overwhelmed, guilty, irritable, indecisive, frustrated, or miserable
- Staying home, not getting things done, withdrawing from family and friends, not doing usual enjoyable activities, relying on alcohol or sedatives
- Constant tiredness, sickness, or being run down
- Headaches and muscle pains, churning gut
- Sleep problems, loss or change of appetite, significant weight loss or gain



What causes Anxiety and Depression?

While you can't always identify the cause of mental health conditions, it is often a combination of factors that contribute to a person developing anxiety and depression:

- **Recent stressful events:** including job stress, change in living arrangements, pregnancy/giving birth, family and relationship problems, experiencing a trauma, and loss of a loved one can affect your mental health.
- **Continuing difficulties:** ongoing stressors like unemployment, abusive relationships, trauma, isolation, and loneliness may contribute to anxiety or depression.
- **Personality factors:** people who are perfectionists, lack self-esteem, want to control everything, are sensitive to personal criticism or are self-critical have a higher risk.
- **Substance abuse:** Heavy or long term use of alcohol, cannabis, amphetamines, or sedatives can lead to (or result from) anxiety and depression.
- **Family history of mental health conditions:** there is an increased genetic risk for those who have relatives with depression or anxiety.
- **Physical health problems:** chronic pain, hormonal problems, diabetes, asthma, and heart disease can trigger or complicate mental health conditions.

Help is available

Many of the treatments for anxiety and depression are effective and available. Mild symptoms might be relieved with lifestyle changes such as regular physical exercise and a change in sleeping patterns. Moderate to severe symptoms may need to be treated with professional psychological therapy and/or medication. There are also options like support groups, online forums, relaxation training, and gaining the support of family and friends to help treat anxiety and depression.

If you are concerned about your own mental health, reaching out to someone you trust is a great first step. Talk with a trusted friend, family member, colleague, or OzHelp about your experiences. From there you can plan to go a General Practitioner (GP), counsellor, psychologist, or other health professional.

If you have noticed a change in someone else, and you think it might be related to their mental health, start a conversation. Ask them how they are going, listen and be prepared to lend your support in helping them speak to a health professional.

More Information

If you have concerns about your mental health, please talk to your GP. The following websites offer further information about anxiety and depression.

Beyond Blue Anxiety

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/anxiety>

Beyond Blue Depression

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/depression>