

# Types of help available



## FACT SHEET 4

Depression is an illness that can go on for months or even years if left untreated. There are many health professionals and services available to help with information, treatment and support.

### DOCTOR

Visiting your General Practitioner (GP) is a good first step in getting help for a mental or physical health problem. Some GPs may manage your mental health themselves, while others may refer you to a specialist such as a psychologist or psychiatrist.

### PSYCHOLOGISTS

Psychologists are health professionals who provide psychological therapies and treatments. Common effective types of psychotherapy are Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and Interpersonal Therapy (IPT). These are generally known as talking therapies.

Psychologists and clinical psychologists are not doctors and cannot prescribe medication in Australia.

### PSYCHIATRISTS

Psychiatrists are doctors who have undergone further training to specialise in mental health. They can make medical and psychiatric assessments, conduct medical tests, provide therapy and prescribe medication. Psychiatrists often use psychological treatments such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy and/or medication. If your depression is severe and you require admission to hospital, a psychiatrist will be in charge of your treatment.

### SOCIAL WORKERS, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS IN MENTAL HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH NURSES

Social workers in mental health are specially trained to work with people who are experiencing difficulties in life. Social workers can support people with depression, anxiety and related disorders by helping them find ways to manage more effectively some of the situations that trigger these disorders such as family issues, financial problems, work stress and living arrangements. Mental health social workers can also provide focused psychological self-help strategies.

Occupational therapists in mental health help people who have difficulties functioning because of a mental illness (such as anxiety or depression) to participate in normal, everyday activities. Mental health occupational therapists can also provide focused psychological self-help strategies.

Mental health nurses are specially trained to care for people with mental health problems such as depression, anxiety and related disorders. They work with psychiatrists and GPs to review a person's mental health, monitor medication and provide information about mental health problems and treatment. Some have training

in psychological therapies. If you would like a referral to a mental health nurse who works in a general practice, ask your GP.

### You and your health professional

- If you're looking for a doctor, ask for a recommendation from friends or colleagues.
- On the *beyondblue* website, you can access a list of GPs and mental health practitioners who have been specially trained to treat mental illness. Just click on [Find a Doctor or other Mental Health Practitioner](#).
- Before you visit the health professional, write a list of your symptoms to take with you for discussion. It might also be useful to fill out a depression checklist (available to download from [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)).
- It's important to give your health professional the full picture. Think about taking a close friend or family member with you for support.
- Don't be afraid to consult another health professional if you don't have confidence in, or don't feel comfortable with, the one you've chosen.

### PUBLIC AND PRIVATE HOSPITALS

Some public hospitals have their own mental health units. This means people with mental health problems can be treated by a team of professionals employed by the hospital, either in hospital as an inpatient or out of hospital as an outpatient. If a person is experiencing severe depression and is at risk of harming themselves or others, it may be necessary for them to spend time in hospital.

### PRIVATE PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITALS

A person can be admitted to a private psychiatric hospital if he/she is experiencing a severe depressive episode or anxiety disorder. To be admitted, a person requires a referral from a doctor to a psychiatrist working at the psychiatric hospital who agrees to undertake the person's care. A GP is usually the best person to judge if this is the most suitable course of action.

Private psychiatric hospitals can be costly and are recommended only if the person has an appropriate level of private health cover.

### HOSPITAL DAY PROGRAMS

Some hospitals have day programs, which are conducted by trained mental health workers and may be run as group sessions. Hospital day programs are designed to complement individual treatment from a psychiatrist and aim to:

- provide ongoing support to maintain good mental health
- help people develop strategies to manage stress
- help people manage symptoms and prevent relapse
- assist with personal growth and development.

Speak to your doctor for more information.

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### SPECIALIST COMMUNITY SERVICES

There are many services available in the community. You can access them by phoning your local council or you can find them in the White Pages [www.whitepages.com.au](http://www.whitepages.com.au) or by phoning Telstra directory assistance on 1223 or *beyondblue's* info line **1300 22 4636**.

### CRISIS ASSESSMENT OR ACUTE TREATMENT (CAT) TEAMS

Crisis Assessment or Acute Treatment (CAT) teams provide emergency psychiatric care in the community to people experiencing a mental health crisis. The person can be assessed and treated in the community and therefore avoid an admission to hospital. However, when the person is potentially a danger either to themselves or others, they will be admitted to hospital. You can access your nearest Crisis Assessment or Acute Treatment team by phoning your local hospital or community health centre.

### MORE INFORMATION

#### ***beyondblue: the national depression initiative***

**1300 22 4636 or [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)**

Information on depression, anxiety and related disorders, available treatments and where to get help

#### **[www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)**

*beyondblue's* website for young people – information on depression, anxiety and how to help a friend

#### **Lifeline**

**13 11 14**

Counselling, information and referral

#### **SANE Australia Helpline**

**1800 18 7263 or [www.sane.org.au](http://www.sane.org.au)**

Information about mental illness symptoms, treatments, where to go for support and help for carers

#### **Multicultural Mental Health Australia**

**(02) 9840 3333 or [www.mmha.org.au](http://www.mmha.org.au)**

Mental health information for people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

#### **Kids Helpline**

**1800 55 1800**

Counselling for children and young people aged between five and 25

#### **MensLine Australia**

**1300 78 99 78**

Support for men and their families

#### **Suicide Call Back Service**

**1300 659 467 or [www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)**

Telephone support and online resources for those at risk of suicide, their carers and those bereaved by suicide

#### **SuicideLine Victoria**

**1300 651 251**

Counselling, crisis intervention, information and referral

#### **Post and Antenatal Depression Association (PaNDa)**

**1300 726 306 or [www.panda.org.au](http://www.panda.org.au)**

Support and referral to anyone affected by post and antenatal depression, including partners and extended family

#### **Carers Australia**

**1800 242 636 or [www.carersaustralia.com.au](http://www.carersaustralia.com.au)**

Family carer support and counselling in each state and territory

#### **Relationships Australia**

**1300 364 277 or [www.relationships.com.au](http://www.relationships.com.au)**

Support and counselling for relationship issues

#### **headspace – Australia's National Youth Mental Health Foundation**

**[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)**

Information, support and help for young people

#### **Black Dog Institute**

**[www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)**

Information about depression and bipolar disorder

#### **Virtual Clinic**

**[www.virtualclinic.org.au](http://www.virtualclinic.org.au)**

Information and internet-based education and treatment programs for people with depression or anxiety

#### **Counselling Online**

**[www.counsellingonline.org.au](http://www.counsellingonline.org.au)**

Free, online professional drug and alcohol counselling

#### **ReachOut.com**

**[www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)**

Information to help young people through tough times

#### **Reconnexion**

**[www.reconnexion.org.au](http://www.reconnexion.org.au)**

Information and treatment services for those experiencing anxiety, depression and tranquilliser dependency

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