



# Anxiety

## What is anxiety?

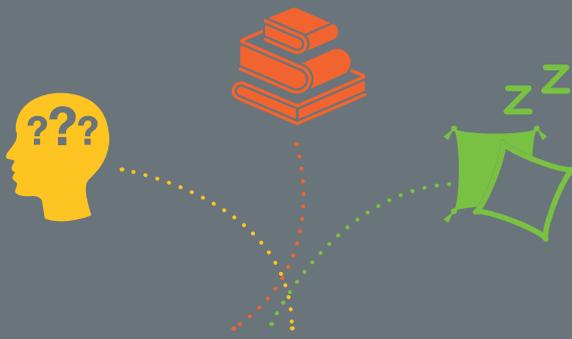
Anxiety is like 'worry'. It's an unpleasant emotion that most people feel when something might be risky, frightening or worrying. Everyone experiences mild anxiety when faced with stressful situations, like just before a sporting match or an exam. This kind of anxiety is normal and is our body's way of preparing us to act in difficult situations. Anxiety can actually help us perform better by revving us up and helping us feel alert.



Anxiety can become a problem when it is very intense, happens a lot of the time, feels overwhelming or it interferes with your daily living.

## What are the symptoms of anxiety?

Physical feelings of anxiety include an increased heart rate, faster breathing, muscle tension, sweating, shaking and 'butterflies in the stomach'. People with anxiety disorders experience these physical symptoms a lot more often. They might also experience:



- Persistent worrying and excessive fears
- Being unable to relax
- Avoiding challenging situations
- Being socially isolated or withdrawn
- Trouble concentrating and paying attention
- Poor sleep
- Problems with work, social or family life.

## What are panic attacks?

Panic attacks can occur as part of any anxiety disorder, but not everyone with anxiety problems will experience them.

Panic attacks are when you are suddenly overcome by strong fear and experience physical symptoms of anxiety, like a pounding heart, difficulty breathing, shaking, feeling dizzy or feeling sick. Panic attacks are short (about 10 minutes) and usually feel frightening and intense. Someone having a panic attack might feel like they're having a heart attack or an asthma attack, or they might fear they're losing control.



# Anxiety



## Types of anxiety disorder

Anxiety problems are classified into different types, referred to as disorders. Here are descriptions of some common anxiety disorders:

- **Generalised anxiety disorder:** Spending most of your time worrying about a variety of everyday things that wouldn't usually bother others. Worries seem out of control and you feel tense and nervous most of the time.
- **Social anxiety disorder:** Experiencing intense anxiety in social situations because you're terrified you'll embarrass yourself or others will judge you. This often leads you to avoid social situations, such as talking in class, going to parties, being the centre of attention, meeting new people.
- **Panic disorder:** Having repeated panic attacks and worrying about having another panic attack.
- **Specific phobias:** Intense fear of a particular situation or object (like small spaces or spiders) that leads you to avoid the situation or object.

## Helping someone with anxiety

A person with anxiety problems needs understanding and support. Anxiety problems can interfere with a person's ability to live a full life so the earlier they seek help the better. Do your best to encourage the person to seek professional help.

Be patient and listen to the person's fears and concerns, and take them seriously. It's not just a matter of telling them to 'calm down'— it's not that easy.



## Other problems



Many young people with anxiety problems may also have symptoms of depression. Some people with anxiety may also drink alcohol or take drugs to ease the discomfort or make them feel more confident. Relying on alcohol or drugs however can make things much worse in the long run and cause long-term physical and mental health problems.

## Getting help for anxiety problems

- If you're experiencing anxiety it's a good idea to talk to someone that you trust about how you are feeling. You might choose to talk with your family or friends. They can help you to work out what is going on and what support or help you might need.
- It is also useful to take care of yourself as best you can; eat well, exercise and find ways to relax by listening to music, meditating, doing yoga and doing activities that you enjoy.
- If your anxiety continues without any improvement you can get help from your general practitioner (GP), a psychologist or a counsellor.
- There are health professionals at **headspace** centres and **eheadspace** (online and phone support) who can help. Treatment might involve counselling sessions to help you learn anxiety management skills, practice relaxation techniques and gain confidence to cope in stressful situations.
- For some people medication is helpful as well. The good news is that most young people with anxiety disorders respond well to treatment. With support you can continue to achieve your work, study, professional or personal goals.



For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](https://www.headspace.org.au)

# Bullying



## What is bullying?

Bullying is a repeated verbal, physical, or social behaviour directed towards another person by one or more individuals over time. Typically this involves one person or a group of people exerting their power over others who are less powerful. For example, the bully may be stronger, have others to “back them up” or they may be socially manipulative.



Bullying takes many forms and can occur face-to-face or online such as verbal and/or physical abuse, deliberate cyber-stalking or sending hate email. It can also be less obvious, such as deliberately excluding others or spreading rumours. Cyber bullying is a form of bullying that uses technology such as text messages, email, and social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram or YouTube to carry out the behaviour.



**46.8%**  
school students  
have been bullied

Bullying is not simply “part of growing up”. It can have serious effects on a young person’s physical and mental health, their school performance, as well as having negative effects on their families and the broader community. Not only can bullying cause serious harm but it is also common, with up to 46.8% of Australian secondary school students reporting they have been bullied in some form over the past 12 months<sup>1</sup>.

## Ways you can help

Family and friends can play a critical role in supporting young people involved in or experiencing bullying. Positive relationships can help protect young people from the negative consequences associated with being bullied<sup>2</sup>.

Young people who are well supported by their parents report fewer depressive symptoms than those who receive little parental support, regardless of whether they are the ones bullying or are the target<sup>3</sup>.

## Ways you can support a young person

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|--|---|--|---|--|
| <p>▶ <b>Let them know they are not alone.</b><br/>It may help them to know that a lot of other young people experience similar difficulties.</p>                                 | <p>▶ <b>Make sure they are safe.</b><br/>Sometimes this may require taking action they are not happy with. Have a conversation with them if this might be the case.</p> | <p>▶ <b>Try to develop a trusting relationship and ask questions.</b><br/>Make sure the young person does not have to handle this situation by themselves.</p>   | <p>▶ <b>Establish and maintain good communication.</b><br/>Ask open-ended questions and listen without judgment and without panicking.</p>                                  | <p>▶ <b>Be involved.</b><br/>Show that you are interested in the young person’s life, relationships and hobbies.</p>   |
| <p>▶ <b>Be prepared to seek help.</b><br/>Help them decide how to approach the situation. Discuss who they could talk to at school, or in the workplace about the situation.</p> | <p>▶ <b>Provide reassurance.</b><br/>Emphasise that the bullying is not their fault and that they are not responsible for what is happening to them.</p>                | <p>▶ <b>Support them to problem-solve.</b><br/>Work together to come up with as many sensible and helpful strategies as possible to try and control the bullying. This can increase their self-esteem and discourage strategies that are unlikely to be helpful (e.g. starting a fight).</p> | <p>▶ <b>Support them to make new friends and maintain existing friendships.</b><br/>Encourage them to spend time with others away from where the bullying is happening.</p> | <p>▶ <b>Build their confidence.</b><br/>Identify their strengths as well as things they enjoy and find ways to develop these, especially social activities. This can help them to feel good about other things in their lives.</p> |

# Bullying



## Finding out if someone is being bullied

Knowing if someone is being bullied can be difficult; often parents and carers do not know, or underestimate its frequency or its severity<sup>4,5,6</sup>. However, family and friends are often in a good position to notice changes in behaviour, mood and general wellbeing as well as early signs of mental and physical health issues. Not all young people will ask for help and it may take time for a young person to speak about their experiences.

If you suspect a young person close to you is being bullied, ask them about their situation. Remember to be respectful and understanding and that they may not necessarily feel like answering. You can ask:

Have you ever noticed kids at school calling each other names or hitting or pushing each other?

What is lunchtime like at school? What do you do?

Do you ever feel lonely at school or left out of activities? What happens and how do you feel?

Do kids ever tease you? Talk about you behind your back? Hit you? Push you around? Say nasty things about you online? If so, that sounds really difficult, how are you coping with that? Do you think anyone else is aware that it's going on?

It sounds like a really difficult situation. Do you think we could talk a bit more together to figure out how I might be able to best support you?

Be mindful that persistent questioning can be stressful for some young people and may make them less willing to talk. Encourage them to speak to someone they feel comfortable with and don't take it personally if they want to speak to someone other than yourself<sup>7</sup>.



## Other things to consider

- ▶ Keep supporting your young person and let them know what actions you are taking.
- ▶ Documentation will be useful if the issue needs to be taken further (i.e. with the school, police or support services) so keep a record of events including when it occurred, who was involved, what happened, where did it happen, did anyone else see it happen, what type of bullying occurred (physical, verbal, cyber bullying?). Did anyone intervene? Has it happened before?
- ▶ Get to know the websites and social networking tools that young people use and talk to them about how to use these safely.
- ▶ If the bullying is occurring in or around the school, approach the school to discuss your concerns or seek advice on what to do. It may be helpful to discuss the process with your young person before you begin.
- ▶ If you're concerned that your young person may need more help than you can provide, contact **headspace**.

## Other useful websites

- Lifeline – [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)
- Kids Help Line – [www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)
- Parent helplines (in every State and Territory of Australia) – Google “Parentline” along with your State or Territory
- Bullying No Way – [www.bullyingnoway.gov.au](http://www.bullyingnoway.gov.au)
- The Alannah and Madeline Foundation – [www.amf.org.au/bullying](http://www.amf.org.au/bullying)
- The Australian Psychological Society – [www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip\\_sheets/bullying](http://www.psychology.org.au/publications/tip_sheets/bullying)
- Cybersmart – [www.cybersmart.gov.au](http://www.cybersmart.gov.au)



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**References:** <sup>1</sup>Hemphill, SA, Tollit, M, & Kotevski, A. (2012). Pastoral Care in Education, 30(2), 99-112. <sup>2</sup>Bowers L, Maughan B, Caspi A, Moffitt T, & Arseneault L. (2010). Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 51(1), 809-17. <sup>3</sup>Connors-Burrows N, Johnson D, Whiteside-Mansell L, McKelvey L, & Gargus R. (2009). Psychology in Schools, 46(7), 593-604. <sup>4</sup>Fekkes M, Pijpers F, & Verloove-Vanhorick S. (2005) Health Education Journal, 20(1), 81-91. <sup>5</sup>Goodman K, De Los Reyes A, & Bradshaw C.(2010). Clinical Child & Family Psychology Review, 13(4), 366 <sup>6</sup>Holt M, Kaufman-Kantor G, & Finkelhor D. (2008). Journal of School Violence, 8(1), 42-63. <sup>7</sup> Australian Institute of Family Studies (2008). Working with families concerned with school-based bullying. Australian Family Relationships Clearinghouse Briefing No. 11



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# Depression



## Normal feelings vs. depression

We all feel sad or 'down' from time to time – it's part of being human.

For young people, it's normal to have occasional mood swings, feel irritable sometimes, and to be sensitive to rejection and criticism.

This can make it harder to tell whether you're experiencing "normal" feelings or whether you are becoming depressed.



## What is depression?

Depression is one of the most common health issues for young people in Australia<sup>1</sup>.

Depression ("major depression") is a mental illness characterised by feelings of sadness that lasts longer than usual, affect most parts of your life and stop you enjoying the things that you used to.

## Symptoms of depression

You may be experiencing depression if, for more than two weeks, you've felt sad, depressed or irritable most of the time, or you've lost interest or pleasure in your usual activities. Other symptoms may include:



Loss of interest in food or eating too much, leading to weight loss or gain



Having trouble sleeping (getting to sleep and/or staying asleep), or over-sleeping and staying in bed most of the day



Feeling tired most of the time, or lacking energy and motivation



Difficulty concentrating and making decisions



Feeling worthless or guilty a lot of the time



Feeling everything has become 'too hard'



Having thoughts of death or suicide

People with depression might have other mental or physical health problems as well, such as anxiety, or using cigarettes, alcohol or illegal drugs excessively.



# Depression



## Getting help for depression

Even though it may seem hard, it is important to talk with someone that you trust about how you feel. You could talk with a parent, teacher, school counsellor, family member or friend. A general practitioner (GP) is another good place to start when seeking help and information.

Most people are able to recover from depression with the right help. The sooner you get help, the sooner you can recover.



An important part of professional support is often psychological therapy. Psychological ('talking') therapy focuses on helping you to build skills to deal with the stresses in your life and change negative thinking patterns. Antidepressant medications can also be added if they are needed. Depending on the type of treatment most people start to feel better or notice an improvement after about two to six weeks.

Apart from seeking professional help there are a number of things you can do to maintain good mental health. Regular physical exercise, eating well, practising relaxation, expressing your feelings, and doing things that you enjoy are just some of the things that can help. For more tips on looking after yourself, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au) to download the 'Tips for a healthy **headspace**' fact sheet.

## IMPORTANT!



If you have thoughts of suicide or plans to harm yourself, it's really important to seek immediate help. Talk to someone you trust, such as a family member, friend or teacher. There are health professionals at **headspace** centres and **eheadspace** (online and phone support) who can help you to work out a plan to keep you safe.

## Depression – suicide and self harm



Depression is one of the main risks for suicide and self harm.

If someone you know is self harming or talking about suicide try to arrange some support from close, trusted friends or family. Help the person be safe and remove dangerous things like tablets, guns or other weapons and try to encourage them to see a health professional. If in doubt, don't be afraid to **call 000**.



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References: <sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Young Australians: their health and wellbeing, Canberra, 2007.

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# Eating disorders



## Eating disorders

**A person has an eating disorder when their beliefs about food, weight and body image lead to unhealthy patterns of eating and/or exercising.**

This can interfere with their life and relationships with others. Eating disorders often begin in adolescence and early adulthood and they are more common in females but can also affect young males. Mortality rates are two to six times higher in people with an eating disorder compared to the rest of the population<sup>1</sup>.



Many young people have concerns about eating or their body image but generally they do not develop an eating disorder. Body image and eating disorders are not always related.

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Body image or eating concerns become a problem when they begin to affect your physical or mental health, or how you cope in your daily life. Eating disorders can cause significant physical health complications and so they can be life-threatening. It is very important that when the early signs of an eating disorder begin they are treated effectively.  
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Signs and symptoms of having, or being at-risk of developing eating disorders, can include:

Excessive eating, dieting or exercising

Thinking and talking a lot about body image, body weight and food

Avoiding social situations that involve food

Eating only certain types and amounts of food

Becoming irritable or withdrawing from friends and family

Wearing loose fitting clothing to hide weight loss

Wanting to eat alone

'Playing' with food rather than eating it

Feeling faint, dizzy and weak

Going to the bathroom straight after meals

Difficulty concentrating

Often feeling tired and low

Irregular menstrual cycles (if female).

## Types of eating disorders

There are three main types of eating disorder:

Anorexia Nervosa, Bulimia Nervosa and Binge-Eating Disorder.



### A person who has Anorexia Nervosa:

- **Restricts how much they eat;** resulting in a low body weight. In young people eating less may result in either weight loss or not gaining the weight expected as they grow
- **Has an intense fear of gaining weight** or refuses to keep a healthy body weight
- **Has distorted or inaccurate perceptions of their weight**

**and body shape** (e.g. believing they are overweight despite being underweight).

When someone has Anorexia Nervosa they may use extreme weight loss strategies in an attempt to control their weight. These might include fasting, excessive exercising, vomiting after eating, taking diet pills, or misuse of diuretics or laxatives. Their self-esteem is generally influenced by their perceptions

of their weight and body shape. They may experience anxiety, feel depressed or be in an irritable mood, feel very tired and have difficulty concentrating. Often young people experiencing Anorexia Nervosa do not recognise their symptoms, or deny having a problem with weight and body image issues. This can make it challenging to get them the help they need.

### A person who has Bulimia Nervosa:

- **Regularly binge eats;** they eat large quantities of food and feel unable to control their eating. During these episodes they may eat more quickly than normal, and/or until they are uncomfortably full, even if they are not hungry
- **Uses extreme weight loss strategies** in efforts to 'make

up' or 'compensate', for binge episodes and avoid weight gain. This may involve making themselves vomit, using laxatives or diuretics, fasting, or excessive exercising.

Triggers for bingeing include relationship stress, dietary restraint, negative feelings related to their body image, their weight, availability

of food and boredom. Bingeing typically results in intense feelings of guilt, depressed mood and high levels of distress. Repeated episodes of bingeing and compensating create a compulsive cycle that feels beyond a person's control.

# Eating disorders



## Types of eating disorders (continued)

### A person who has Binge Eating Disorder:

- **Binges repetitively** without trying to “make up” or “compensate” for these binges. This causes high levels of distress.

Unlike Anorexia Nervosa, where people are underweight, people with Bulimia Nervosa and Binge Eating Disorder are usually within the normal or overweight range. Due to shame and guilt individuals often try to hide their symptoms from others so it can be difficult to tell when someone has Bulimia Nervosa or Binge Eating Disorder.



## Health problems from eating disorders

**Starvation or repeated cycles of bingeing and self-induced vomiting or using diuretics/laxatives (“purging”) can cause damaging changes in the body.**

Starvation, for example, can lead to osteoporosis (weakening of the bones), headaches, constipation or diarrhoea, fainting and damage to most major organs including the heart and kidneys.

Vomiting after eating exposes the teeth to stomach acid causing decay. It can also cause sore throats, heart problems and abdominal pain.



Laxative abuse can cause constipation or diarrhoea, as well as dehydration and bowel disease.

Individuals who have an eating disorder are also at higher risk of developing other mental health problems including depression, anxiety and substance use disorders.

## How can I help a young person with an eating disorder?

**If you are concerned that a friend or family member has an eating disorder let them know that you are worried and care about them.** Even if they deny there is a problem, or do not want to talk about it, gently encourage them to seek professional help. Often a young person will not want to seek help. In these situations you should seek further advice from a professional about your concerns.

Help is available from general practitioners (GPs), school counsellors, psychologists and specialist mental health workers. Contacting your GP or your local **headspace** centre is a good place to start.

## Treatment of eating disorders

**People with eating disorders will benefit from professional help. Keeping the person safe is the first priority. If their weight loss is severe and there are serious health complications then a stay in hospital may be needed.**



Professional treatment starts with developing a good working relationship with the young person, then the focus changes to providing information, looking after physical health and establishing healthy patterns of eating and exercise. Individual counselling, family work and medication (when appropriate) might all be required and are usually provided by a treatment team. As the problems with eating tend to have developed over a long period of time, treatment can also take time so getting help when problems first begin is really important.

## Other useful websites

Mental Health First Aid Guidelines for Eating Disorders – [www.mhfa.com.au](http://www.mhfa.com.au)

The Butterfly Foundation – [www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au](http://www.thebutterflyfoundation.org.au)



For more information, to find your nearest **headspace** centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

**References:** <sup>1</sup>Arcelus J, Mitchell AJ, Wales J, Nielsen S: Mortality rates in patients with anorexia nervosa and other eating disorders: a meta-analysis of 36 studies. Arch Gen Psychiatry 2011, 68(7):724–731. Clinical definitions are in line with the Fifth Edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5), American Psychiatric Association 2013.

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# Gender identity and mental health



## About gender identity

**Gender identity is generally developed very early in life. It's about how you experience or perceive your gender, how you show this to others, and how you want others to treat you.**

The physical features that you were born with (your biological sex) do not necessarily define your gender. Although gender has traditionally been divided into "male" and "female", it is now widely recognised that gender is not that simple. The gender spectrum includes numerous identities including male, female, a mixture of both, no gender, a fluid gender, or another gender. Whilst people who experience gender diversity identify with a range of different terms, "trans and gender diverse" is often used

as an umbrella term to describe people who identify with a gender that is different to the one assigned to them at birth.

If a young person has confided in you about their gender diversity be sure to respect their privacy and ask before sharing their information with anyone else. They may not be comfortable in letting other people know yet and it is very important that the young person remains in control of their personal information.

## What are the early signs suggesting a possible mental health problem?

Things to look out for in the young person include:

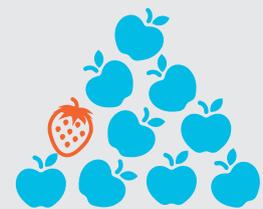
- **Changes in mood** – feeling sadder, more anxious, or more irritable than usual
- **Changes in behaviour** – being less talkative, becoming withdrawn or being more aggressive
- **Changes in relationships** – falling out with friends or their partner, or conflict with family
- **Changes in appetite** – eating more or less than usual, or losing or gaining weight rapidly
- **Changes in sleep patterns** – not sleeping enough, or sleeping too much
- **Changes in coping** – feeling overwhelmed or tired of life
- **Changes in thinking** – more negative thoughts, or thoughts of self harm or suicide.

## Common experiences

Most trans and gender diverse young people experience the same range of mental health concerns as their gender conforming peers. Gender diversity in itself does not cause mental health problems. Trans and gender diverse young people may be more likely to experience a range of stressful occurrences however that contribute to an increased risk of depression, anxiety, self harm and suicide.

Some common experiences that can affect the wellbeing of a trans and gender diverse young person include:

- **Feeling "different"** from other people around them
- **Transphobic bullying**, about their gender identity, whether verbal or physical
- **Feeling pressure** to deny or change their gender identity
- **Feeling worried** that their gender identity will not be accepted by friends and family, along with the possibility of being rejected or isolated
- **Feeling unsupported** or misunderstood by family, friends, fellow students or workers
- **Feeling stressed** and anxious in relation to the pressure to conform with their biological sex
- **Experiencing insensitivity** when seeking support from medical and other support services.



These pressures can be very stressful, especially when combined with all the other issues associated with growing up, such as managing school or university, finding a job, forming relationships and making sense of their identity and place in the world.

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**It's normal to experience some of these changes from time to time. When these changes last longer than expected and begin to interfere with a young person's life, their study, work and friendships, talk to them about seeking help. A good place to start is their general practitioner (GP), their local headspace centre or eheadspace (online or by phone).**

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# Gender identity and mental health



## The role of family and friends



Families can have a major impact on the wellbeing of trans and gender diverse young people. Young people that experience conflict with, or rejection by, their families and loved ones are at higher risk of developing depression and anxiety. They are also more at risk of being affected by homelessness, economic instability, self harm and suicide<sup>1</sup>.

Trans and gender diverse young people who come from families that fully accept their gender identity have better overall health, mental health, higher self-esteem, and are more likely to believe they will

have a good life as a gender diverse adult<sup>2</sup>. The research also shows that small amounts of change from families can reduce risk – so being slightly less rejecting and slightly more supportive (e.g. use

of preferred name and pronouns) can make a difference to the young person's risk of suicide, self harm, general and mental health, and substance use concerns<sup>2</sup>.

## How to support a trans and gender diverse young person

- Improve your own understanding and knowledge of gender identity issues through research, reading and contacting support groups.
- Talk in an open, non-judgmental way about their identity.
- Express acceptance and provide support.
- Require that family members and other people respect their gender identity and expression, including using their preferred name and pronouns. Young people may go through a process of exploring their gender identity and it is important to allow space for a young person to change the way they express or define their gender.

- Welcome any friends or their partner, regardless of gender or sexuality, to family events.
- Believe they can have a full, happy future as an adult.
- Remember that small changes in your level of acceptance and support can make a difference in reducing their risk of suicide, self harm and improve general and mental health outcomes.
- Encourage them to get further advice and support at **headspace** or **eheadspace** if they are going through a tough time.



Don't forget to look after your own needs too and reach out for extra support if you or other family members need it. Talk to someone you trust, and seek professional help.



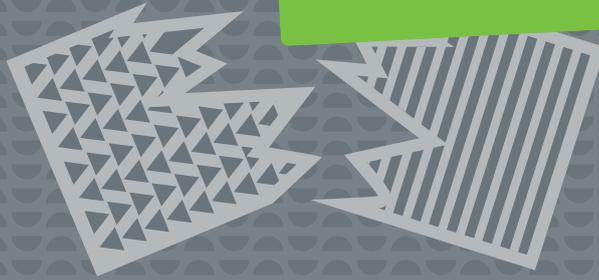
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This information was produced in conjunction with **Transgender Victoria** ([www.transgendervictoria.com](http://www.transgendervictoria.com)).

**References:** <sup>1</sup>Robinson, K. H., Bansel, P., Denson, N., Oveden, G. & Davies, C. (2014). Growing Up Queer: Issues Facing Young Australians Who Are Gender Variant and Sexuality Diverse, Young and Well Cooperative Research Centre, Melbourne. <sup>2</sup>Ryan, C., Russell, S.T., Huebner, D., Diaz, R & Sanchez, J. (2010). Family acceptance in adolescence and the health of LGBT young adults. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, 23(4): 205-213.

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# Grief



## What is grief?

Grief is a natural response you experience when you lose someone close to you. Grieving is a normal part of life and it can begin as soon as someone becomes aware of a loss and can continue over the course of the first 12 months.



Although there are many different kinds of 'loss', this fact sheet looks at grief after the death of someone close.

## Feelings of grief

There is no single 'right' way to cope with the loss of a friend or loved one. Young people may experience:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Shock and disbelief</b> that the person has died   | <b>Longing for the person;</b> wishing they were around to be able to touch them or be comforted by them |
| <b>Anger or resentment for being abandoned,</b> for the unfairness of the loss, or towards those thought to be responsible for the loss | <b>Sadness that the person has gone</b>  |
| <b>Guilt</b> that they were unable to save the person, or that they survived while their loved one did not                              | <b>Anxiety about the future;</b> how things will be without their loved one, or their own safety         |
| <b>Preoccupation</b> with thoughts of the person who has died   | <b>Difficulty concentrating and remembering things</b>   |
| <b>Changes to sleep patterns and appetite</b>   | <b>Physical changes</b> including headaches, feeling tired, muscle aches, and nausea                     |



Grief is experienced in different ways by different people. Young people may have different reactions to adults because of:

- their age and developmental stage,
- the consequences for them may be different and
- their family situation.

## How young people respond to grief

It is important to acknowledge that young people will respond to grief in a range of ways. Some young people will choose to express their grief through rituals or creative expression such as art or music, some will talk about it, while others may appear to be unaffected and getting on with their life.



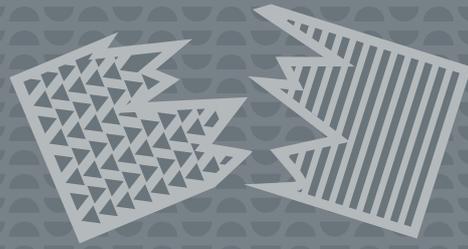
There will also be some young people who behave in ways that are disruptive, frustrating or risky; they might drink alcohol or use drugs to try to cope with their grief. Whatever their response they will need time, support and understanding as they find their way through their grief.

## Grief and mental health problems



Most young people will be resilient and will carry on with their lives while moving through the grieving process. For some however, the loss may be associated with the development of more serious mental health problems that will require specialist assessment and treatment.

# Grief



## How to support young people in the grieving process

Families are extremely important in supporting a young person who is grieving. Continuing your family life and staying connected with friends and activities allows the young person to maintain a sense of safety and security, and to feel hopeful about the future.

It can be particularly challenging for families to support each other when a family member has died because everyone will grieve in different ways. Professional support might be helpful if you're finding it difficult to support each other through a loss.



## Supporting young people to seek help

The grieving process can take time and it is not unusual for young people to experience ups and downs over months or years while dealing with the death of a loved one. People generally find that things get easier as time passes; however, if the young person's grief is persistent and severe, getting help is important. Accessing professional support is particularly important if the young person is grieving for someone who has died by suicide.

It is important to support young people in finding a health professional such as a general practitioner (GP) or counsellor who they trust and feel comfortable with. If they have had a positive experience with a family GP or another health professional in the past encourage them to contact them again. You could also support them to contact your local community health centre or **headspace** centre.

## Some other strategies that may be helpful in supporting a young person include:



**Acknowledging their loss** and the need to take time to grieve



**Providing information about normal patterns of grief**



**Encouraging them to do what's right for them**



**Encouraging their continued participation in enjoyable activities** such as sports or hobbies, and family activities



**Supporting them as they gather stories and memories of the loved one** in ways that appeal to them (e.g. writing, photos, journals, talking, blogs or memorials)



**Helping them to anticipate times that may be particularly difficult**, (e.g. Christmas, birthdays or anniversaries) and develop a plan for coping with these periods



**Helping them find meaning in what has happened** and foster a sense of hope for the future.



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# Psychosis



## What is psychosis?

People with psychosis have problems in the way they interpret the real world. This means that psychosis may cause you to misinterpret or confuse what is going on around you. Psychosis usually affects your beliefs, thoughts, feelings and behaviour. For example, you may have hallucinations (in which you see or hear things that are not there) or delusions (false beliefs or ideas).



A first episode of psychosis is most likely to happen in late adolescence or in the early adult years. It is often frightening for you and misunderstood by others, but psychosis can be treated and most people make a full recovery. Without treatment psychosis can seriously disrupt your life and development, so it's important to get help as soon as you can.



## What are the symptoms of psychosis?

### Confused thinking:

Everyday thoughts can become confused, making sentences unclear or hard to understand. You might have difficulty concentrating, following a conversation or remembering things. Thoughts can seem to speed up or slow down.

### False beliefs (delusions):

You strongly believe something is real, but it's not. For example, you may believe the way that cars are parked outside the house means you are being watched by the police.

### Hallucinations:

You can see, hear, feel, smell or taste something that is not actually there.

### Changed feelings:

How you feel can change for no obvious reason. You might feel strange and cut off from the world, with everything moving in slow motion. Mood swings are common, and you might feel unusually excited or depressed. You may seem to feel less emotion, or show less emotion to those around you.

### Changed behaviour:

You may be extremely active or have difficulty getting the energy to do things. Your family may notice that you laugh when things don't seem funny to them or become angry or upset without any apparent cause.

## What are the types of psychosis?

Psychosis can occur for lots of reasons. Some possibilities include:



### Drug-induced psychosis:

Using or withdrawing from drugs, especially cannabis and amphetamines, can cause psychotic symptoms that last for short or long periods



### Brief reactive psychosis:

Psychotic symptoms appear suddenly after a major stress in the person's life. Recovery is often quick



### Schizophrenia:

An illness in which the symptoms have continued for at least six months. Many people with schizophrenia lead happy and fulfilling lives, and many make a full recovery



### Bipolar disorder:

Involves major changes including extreme highs and lows. People can experience psychotic symptoms as part of this disorder



### Depression:

Psychotic symptoms can occur in people with very severe depression

# Psychosis



## What causes psychosis?

There is no one 'cause' of psychosis. It is often a combination of biological, psychological, social and environmental factors. This includes your genes (inherited factors) and the things you are exposed to in your life (e.g., stress, drug use or severe social problems).



## How do I get help?

Try to seek help as soon as possible if you have symptoms of psychosis, or if things don't seem quite right. Tell someone you trust such as a parent, teacher or friend if you are having some strange experiences that you cannot explain.



Safe and effective treatment for psychosis is easily available. The earlier you seek help the better the results and the quicker your recovery. General practitioners (GPs) and clinicians at **headspace** or your local mental health centre will be able to provide the help you need.

## How is psychosis treated?

Treatments usually involve education about the illness, counselling, family support, practical support (such as helping you get back to school or work) and medications. Avoiding illegal drugs, reducing stress and learning ways to cope with stress can help you to recover and prevent the symptoms from returning in the future.

## How do I help someone cope with psychosis?

Try to be calm and supportive as it can be frightening and confusing to experience psychosis. If you are worried about a friend or family member seek help from your GP, **headspace** centre or local mental health service. Encourage the young person to get

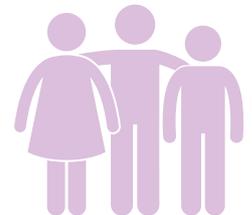
professional treatment as early as possible.

Practical help can assist a person to stay safe and feel secure. This might mean helping them to pay bills or rent, or getting them to medical appointments.



If you think someone needs immediate medical support **call 000** or your local hospital or mental health service. Remember the person may be responding to things that are very real to them but do not make sense to you.

Supporting someone with psychosis can be a stressful experience for the whole family. There are support groups for family and friends so think about what help you may also need.



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# Dealing with relationship break-ups

## Dealing with relationship break-ups

Relationships break-up for lots of reasons. Often it's no-one's 'fault' and nobody is to blame – instead, things just aren't working out.



A break-up can bring a sense of relief, especially if the relationship was making you unhappy. However, it can also bring on a range of difficult feelings such as denial or disbelief ("it's not really over"), guilt, sadness, anger, or fear, and may lead to feeling rejected, lonely or confused.

## Dealing with a break-up

It's normal to feel sad after a relationship split and it can take time to get over the loss of a relationship. You might feel as though your world has turned upside down and that things will never be good again. The strength of your feelings might be overwhelming. You might cry, feel restless, or have less motivation or energy to do things. Your appetite and sleep might also be disturbed.



## Some things to remember



**Whatever you're feeling now won't last forever.** It may take time before you feel you have 'moved on', but you will. Take it one day at a time and realise that there will be good and bad days.



**It's okay to feel angry or hurt, but be sure you are safe in how you express your feelings.** Don't act out your anger or do spiteful things. Don't follow your ex around, call them all the time or harass them online. This sort of behaviour is not acceptable and will make you feel worse in the long run.



**If it was your decision to end the relationship it doesn't necessarily make the break-up any easier to deal with.** It's still normal (and okay) to feel upset and to miss the other person.



**Try not to feel embarrassed or to worry** about how the situation will look to others.



**The end of a relationship doesn't mean that there is anything wrong with you.** Try not to take it personally – relationship break-ups are common.



**Remember that break-ups can have a positive side.** You can learn more about yourself and what you want from future relationships. You can develop coping skills, become more independent, have more time to spend with friends and do the things that you enjoy.



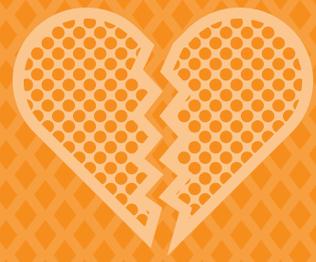
**You don't have to be in a relationship to feel happy.** It's better to not be in a relationship than to be in a bad one.

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It is important to remember that with time and support most people pull through relationship break-ups, sometimes coming out stronger at the other end.

.....

# Dealing with relationship break-ups



## Some things that might help you feel better after a break-up

- **Let yourself be upset.** Dealing with your emotions will help you heal and feel better.
- **Look after yourself.** Try to eat healthy, keep sleeping and exercise routines.
- **Be realistic when thinking about your ex** and the relationship. It's common to remember only the good things about the person and the relationship. But be honest with yourself – it's rare for a relationship or a person to be perfect. Remembering the things that weren't so great will make it easier to move on.
- **Try to limit how much you think about your ex** by finding

things that will distract you. Think positively and try some new things.

- **Give yourself some space.** You don't need to shut your ex out of your life but it might be helpful to try to avoid him/her for a while after the break-up.
- **Keep busy.** You might find yourself with too much free time on your hands, especially at weekends. Plan ahead and do things that you usually enjoy.
- **Take time out for you.** Do things that you find relaxing, like going to a movie, playing or listening to music, meditating, reading or playing sport.

- **Treat yourself.** Buy yourself a treat or do something that you really like.
- **Talk to friends and family** and others who can support you. It's okay to want some time to yourself but being with supportive people can also be a big help. You can also get a different perspective by talking things through with others.
- **Don't use drugs or alcohol** to deal with the pain. Alcohol and drugs might help you feel better at first but the after-effects will leave you feeling much worse.
- **Give it time.** Allow yourself some time to cope with the change.

## Breaking up with someone

If you're breaking up with someone, try to be considerate in ending the relationship. Think about how you would want to be treated in the same situation.

Try to end things in a way that respects the other person, but be honest. Clearly state that the relationship is over and why. Understand that the other person is likely to be hurt and perhaps angry about your decision.

End the relationship face-to-face wherever possible, rather than by text, Facebook or by email.

## When your ex moves on



It can be especially hard when you find out that your ex has a new relationship. If this happens:

**Try to avoid thinking about them** being with someone else as it can be really painful.

**Don't contact your ex** or lash out at them for being in a new relationship. It won't make you feel any better.

**If you are struggling with anger or jealousy** you need to make sure you stay safe when dealing with these feelings. Talk to somebody about it and get some help if you need it.

## Thinking about a new relationship?

Take all the time you need in beginning another relationship. Think about what you want in your next relationship but try to feel confident about being single for a while.

## When should you get some help?

Break-ups hurt but people usually get over them in time and without any serious problems. Sometimes a break-up can play a part in a person developing other problems such as depression. If you are struggling to move on after a break-up, or if you feel unsafe in any way, it is important to talk things through with someone you trust. This may be a friend or family member. If you'd prefer to talk to someone outside your family and friends, your general practitioner (GP), a counsellor, or someone at your local **headspace** centre can provide you with confidential support.

### HELP!



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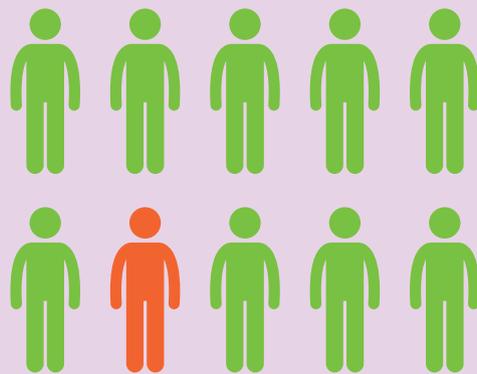
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# Self harm



## What is self harm?

Self harm refers to people deliberately hurting their bodies. Common types of self harm among young people include cutting (e.g. cutting the skin on arms, wrists or thighs), burning the skin, picking at wounds or scars, self-hitting, or deliberately overdosing on medication, drugs or other substances that cause harm.



About

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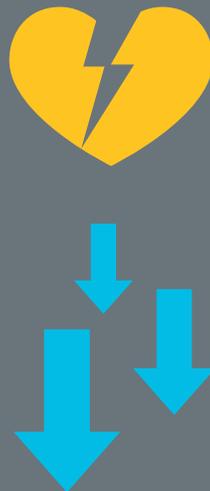
of adolescents say they have self harmed at some point in their lives<sup>1</sup>.

For some young people self harm is a one-off event, but for others it becomes a repeated behaviour that can be hard to change.

## Why do people self harm?

Most self harm is in response to intense emotional pain or a sense of being overwhelmed by negative feelings, thoughts or memories.

For some young people it may seem there is no other way of dealing with what is going on, or expressing what they are feeling. Self harm may offer temporary relief but it does not help a person to overcome a problem over time.



Some people are more likely to self harm than others, including those who have experienced emotional, physical or sexual abuse or have a mental health problem such as depression. It is usually a build up of negative, stressful life events rather than one event that triggers self harm in young people.

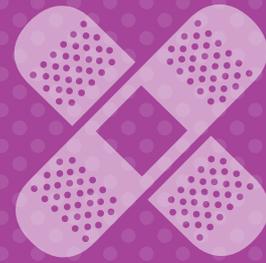


## Self harm and suicide



There is an overlap between self harm and thinking about suicide however not everyone who self harms is suicidal. Sometimes people do very risky things and accidentally die or seriously injure themselves as a result of their self harm.

# Self harm



## What can you do if you self harm?

It is important to know that there is support available if you are self harming. Seeking help when problems begin to develop is really important and a good first step is telling a trusted family member, friend or teacher what you are going through.

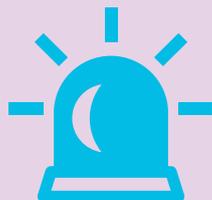


## How can I help a young person who self harms?

**The best way to help someone is to provide support and encourage them to ask for professional help.**

Be as open with the person as possible and try to make them feel safe to discuss their feelings. Remain calm while recognising they might feel ashamed of their actions and worry about your judgements. Do not try to make ultimatums or force the person to stop, this could make things worse.

Ask the person directly if they are considering suicide and call your local hospital or mental health service if you think they are. Call 000 or take the person to the emergency department of the local hospital if they need urgent medical attention.



Supporting someone who self harms can be a stressful experience so consider if you need to get some advice or support for yourself.

## Not ready to talk to someone you know?

You can contact **eheadspace** to talk to a counsellor online or on the phone, talk to your general practitioner (GP) or call a helpline for confidential support (e.g. Lifeline 13 11 14 or Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800).

↓  
If you need immediate medical attention, call 000.



There are health professionals at **headspace** centres who can provide counselling to help you develop effective coping skills to deal with your problems, so that you don't have to rely on self harming.



For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

**References:** Moran B., Coffey C., Romaniuk H. et al. (2012). The natural history of self-harm from adolescence to young adulthood: a population-based cohort study. *Lancet*, 379(9812): p. 236-243

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# Sexuality and mental health



## Sexuality and mental health

The term sexuality refers to a person's sexual attractions, experiences of the attraction and sexual preferences. Some sexualities include homosexual (attracted to the same sex), heterosexual (attracted to the opposite sex), and bisexual (attracted to more than one sex). A young person close to you may identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, straight, pansexual, queer, asexual, or something else or they may not yet be sure of their sexuality.

If a young person lets you know that they identify with a diverse sexuality you are being trusted with very private and personal information. They may have never talked to anyone about this before, or they may have only just begun to understand



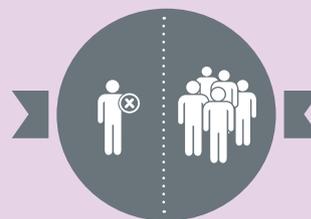
and feel comfortable with their sexuality. They trust that you will support and accept them.

If a young person has confided in you, take the time to ask them how you can support them. Reassure them that you will respect their privacy and ask their permission before sharing their information with anyone else. They may not be comfortable to let other people know about their sexuality as yet, and it is very important that the young person remains in control of their personal information.

## Common experiences

There are a range of stressful experiences that may increase the risk of depression, anxiety, self harm and suicide for same sex attracted (SSA) young people. Some common experiences that can affect the wellbeing of a young person can include:

- **Feeling "different"** from other people around them
- **Homophobic bullying**, whether verbal or physical
- **Feeling pressure** to deny or change their sexuality
- **Feeling worried** about "coming out" to friends, family, fellow students or workers, along with the possibility of being rejected or isolated
- **Feeling unsupported** or misunderstood by friends, family, fellow students or workers.



These pressures can be very stressful, especially when combined with all the other issues associated with growing up, such as managing school or university, finding a job, forming relationships and making sense of their identity and place in the world.

## What are the early signs suggesting a possible mental health problem?

Things to look out for in the young person include:



**Changes in mood** – feeling sadder, more anxious, or more irritable than usual



**Changes in behaviour** – being less talkative, becoming withdrawn or being more aggressive



**Changes in relationships** – falling out with friends or their partner, or conflict with family



**Changes in appetite** – eating more or less than usual, or losing or gaining weight rapidly



**Changes in sleep patterns** – not sleeping enough, or sleeping too much



**Changes in coping** – feeling overwhelmed or tired of life



**Changes in thinking** – more negative thoughts, or thoughts of self harm or suicide

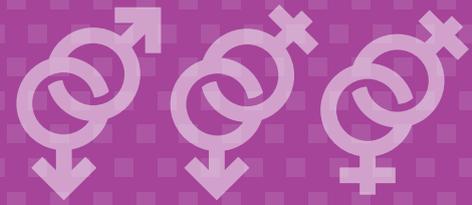


It's normal to experience some of these changes from time to time. When these changes last longer than expected and begin to interfere with a young person's life, their study, work and friendships, talk to them about seeking help.

A good place to start is their general practitioner (GP), their local **headspace** centre or **eheadspace** (online or by phone).



# Sexuality and mental health



## The role of family and friends

Families can have a major impact on the wellbeing of SSA young people. Young people that experience conflict with, or rejection by, their families and loved ones are at higher risk of developing depression and anxiety. They are also more at risk of homelessness, economic instability, self harm and suicide<sup>1</sup>, substance abuse and sexually transmitted infections<sup>2</sup>.



SSA young people who come from families that fully support their sexuality have better overall health, mental health, higher self-esteem, and are more likely to believe they will have a good life as an adult<sup>2</sup>. The research also shows that small amounts of change from families can reduce risk – so being slightly less rejecting and slightly more supportive can make a difference to the young person's risk for suicide, general and mental health, and substance use concerns<sup>2</sup>.

## How to support a young person with a diverse sexuality

- Talk in an open, non-judgemental way about their sexuality.
- Express acceptance and provide support.
- Require that family members and other people respect their sexuality.
- Welcome their friends or partner to family events.
- Believe they can have a full, happy future as an adult.
- Remember that small changes in your level of acceptance and support can make a difference in reducing their risk of suicide and improve general and mental health outcomes.
- Encourage them to get further advice and support at **headspace** or **eheadspace** if they are going through a tough time.



## Remember

Don't forget to look after your own needs too and reach out for extra support if you or other family members need it. Talk to someone you trust, and seek professional help.

# How headspace can help

## headspace is here to help

**headspace centres across Australia provide face-to-face information, support and services to young people, aged 12 to 25 years, and their families and friends.**

headspace can help you with:



### Mental health and wellbeing

headspace can help if you're experiencing significant changes in thoughts, feelings and/or behaviour, if you're being bullied, hurt or harassed or just not feeling yourself.



### General health

headspace has youth friendly general practitioners (GPs) and health nurses who can help with any physical health issues. A GP can also help you with issues related to contraception, sexual health, drug or alcohol use, relationship problems or feeling down or upset.



### Alcohol and other drug services

If drugs and alcohol are starting to affect things that matter to you, like your mental health, wellbeing or friendships, headspace can help.



### Work, school and study

headspace work and study specialists can help you if you're struggling at school, unsure what course you want to do, need a hand writing a resume, or if you are searching for a job.

Online and telephone support is also available through eheadspace. (There is more information about eheadspace over the page.)

## Aged between 12-25 years?

headspace can help if you:

Are feeling down, stressed or can't stop worrying

Don't feel like yourself anymore

Can't deal with school/uni/work or are finding it difficult to concentrate

Are feeling sick or worried about your health

Have questions about, or want to cut down on alcohol or other drug use

Want to talk about sexuality, gender identity or relationships

Are having difficulties with your family or friends

Have sexual health issues or want information about contraception

Are being bullied, hurt or harassed

Are worried about work or study or if you're having money trouble

Need someone to talk to.

Getting support can help you to keep you on track at school, study or work, and in your personal and family relationships. The sooner you get help the sooner things can begin to improve for you.

## headspace centres



headspace centres help you to access the type of health worker you need. This could be a GP, psychologist, social worker, alcohol and drug worker, counsellor, vocational worker or youth worker. A number of centres also have Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers, welfare workers and family therapists.

You can visit a headspace centre no matter how big or small your problem may seem.

## Making an appointment at headspace

It's as simple as phoning or emailing your nearest headspace centre to find a time that suits you. You can also ask a friend, teacher, parent, other family member, health worker or community agency to contact headspace for you.

Your local headspace centre might also have a 'drop in' service where you can visit anytime in their visiting hours. Call your nearest headspace centre or check out [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au) to find out more about what services are available.



# How headspace can help



## Your first appointment at headspace

Appointments at a **headspace** centre can vary in length but are usually 50 minutes to an hour.

It's okay to feel nervous about getting help for the first time. It can be helpful to bring along a family member, carer or friend to help support you.

You'll probably be asked a lot of questions on your first visit. This is to make sure that

all the important issues are covered, and to help develop the best solution for you. As you get to know and trust your **headspace** worker you will probably find that talking about what is going on gets easier.

The appointment is your time. Feel free to ask questions about anything that's on your mind so the **headspace** worker can help you find the best

solution, or find the information that you need. It also helps the **headspace** worker to understand what is worrying you.



## Cost

Services at a **headspace** centre are either free, or have a low cost. You can ask if there is a cost when you make your appointment.

Some services require you to have a referral from a doctor. But don't worry; **headspace** can help you with this as well.

All **headspace** services are free but if you call from your mobile your usual call charges apply.

## eheadspace

If you don't have a **headspace** centre nearby or you don't feel ready to visit a centre, **eheadspace** provides confidential online and telephone support 7 days a week.

To access **eheadspace** for the first time all you need to do is register at [eheadspace.org.au](http://eheadspace.org.au) or phone **1800 650 890**. You will need to provide some information like your email address, postcode and age. **eheadspace** sessions are generally for 30-60 minutes.



If you are receiving support from a **headspace** centre or another service, **headspace** may ask your permission to speak with your worker to ensure **eheadspace** is providing the best possible support.

## Confidentiality

When you talk to a **headspace** worker what you say is kept confidential. This means nothing you say can be passed on to anyone else without your permission however there are a few exceptions.

If **headspace** is seriously worried about your safety or the safety of someone else they must – by law – try to keep everyone safe.

This means they might have to share their concerns with someone else. Talk to your **headspace** worker about confidentiality to ensure you understand how it works.



If you need immediate medical attention, call 000 or call Lifeline on 13 11 14 or Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800.



## Getting the help that's right for you

When you talk with a **headspace** worker it's important that you feel safe and comfortable – **headspace** will do its best to make sure this happens.

If you do not think your **headspace** visits are working out it is important to ask yourself why. There could be a few reasons: it might be because it is hard to talk

about what's on your mind, or it might be that you and your worker are not the right fit. Either way, don't give up. Talk to your worker about how you are feeling and together you can find a way forward.



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For more information, to find your nearest **headspace** centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)



# Tips for a healthy headspace



There are a number of ways you can look after your mental health and wellbeing every day...

## Get informed

Understanding more about what you're going through is an important first step. Information to help you make good decisions about relationships, school, finances and seeking help is available in a number of ways. Read pamphlets, articles or fact sheets, listen to podcasts, talk to or watch videos about others who have had similar experiences, read trusted websites for information, or ask a trusted adult for advice.



## Sleep well

Getting a good night's sleep helps you feel energised, focused and motivated. Adolescence is a time when a number of changes to the "body clock" impact on sleeping patterns and you are more likely to have problems with sleep. Developing a sleeping routine can help you sleep much better. To do this try to wake up around the same time each day, get out of bed when you wake up, and go to bed around the same time each night. Avoiding caffeine after lunchtime, having a quiet, dark and uncluttered bedroom and shutting down your phone, laptop and other electronic devices before bed can also help you get a good night's sleep.

## Eat well

Eating well doesn't only reduce the risk of physical health problems, like heart disease and diabetes, but it can also help with your sleeping patterns, energy levels, and your general health and wellbeing. You might have noticed that your mood can affect your appetite and food intake. A good balanced diet with less of the bad things (e.g. junk food and lots of sugars) and more of the good things (e.g. vegies, fruit, whole grains and plenty of water) will make sure you have all of the vitamins and minerals to help your body and brain function well.



## Physical activity

Physical activity is important for everyone's health and wellbeing. If you're feeling down or finding things are difficult, physical activity may be the last thing you feel like doing. But even small activities like walking around the block can help relieve stress and frustration, provide a good distraction from your thoughts, help you concentrate and can help you look and feel better. Find a physical activity that you enjoy (e.g. swimming, playing sports with friends or cycling) and make a plan to do it regularly.



## Set realistic goals

Setting realistic goals can help you to work towards a healthy headspace. Small, realistic goals can be a great way to work towards feeling well – everyone has to start somewhere. Work towards eating well, getting more active, sleeping better and also think about working towards long-term life goals. Setting and achieving realistic goals can be incredibly motivating and can help build self-confidence.



## Build strategies

We all have coping strategies – some good, some not so good (e.g. using drugs and alcohol). There are various positive coping strategies you can try; exercise, relaxation techniques, talking to someone, writing or art. Experiment with what works best for you.



## Reduce harmful effects of alcohol and drug use

Some people make the mistake of thinking that taking drugs and/or alcohol can help get them through tough times. While it may help people to cope temporarily, drugs and alcohol are one of the leading causes of harm to Australian young people and can contribute to, or trigger, mental health problems over time. Being responsible and reducing your use can improve your health and wellbeing.



# Tips for a healthy headspace



## Change your self-talk

Self-talk is the way that you talk to yourself, that voice inside your head. It can be positive (e.g. "I can make it through this exam") or negative (e.g. "I'm never going to be able to pass this subject"). There are a number of things you can do to change the direction of your self-talk. First, listen to your inner voice – is your self-talk helping you or reinforcing bad feelings? Next, try to replace your negative thoughts with more realistic ones. Try to look for a more rational spin on your situation or think of strategies to tackle your problems, rather than giving up hope. By working on your self-talk the more you'll feel confident and in control of yourself.



## Develop assertiveness skills

Being assertive means standing up for your own rights; valuing yourself and valuing others' opinions without letting them dominate you. This can help build your self-esteem and self-respect. Being assertive is not the same as being aggressive. Remember to always listen, be prepared to compromise and be respectful of the other person's opinion, while still being confident, calm and knowing what you want.

## Relax

There are many ways to relax and different relaxation techniques to use to overcome stress. Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing and relaxing specific groups of muscles from your feet all the way to your head, while focussing on your feelings of tension and relaxation. You could also try breathing techniques, such as deep breathing or focussed breathing (breathing in through the nose and as you breathe out say a positive statement to yourself like 'relax' or 'calm down'). Place a hand over your diaphragm to make sure you're breathing slowly – you should feel your hand move if you're doing it right. Focus on breathing in slowly for 4 seconds, holding your breath for 2 seconds and breathing out slowly for 6 seconds.



## Practice conflict resolution

Having a hard time with friends or family is difficult for most people. Talking through the issues in a calm and thoughtful way is the best approach. Avoid getting personal, be willing to compromise and listen to their perspective.



## Help and be kind to others

Do something to help someone else. Acts of kindness help other people but also make you feel good. Give a compliment, offer to help someone out or volunteer either on a once-off project or an ongoing basis and allow yourself to feel good for making someone else feel good.

## Be socially active and get involved

Social relationships are really important to your general wellbeing. It is okay to take time out for yourself but friends can provide support when you're having a tough time. Spending time with friends is also really important for keeping and building on existing friendships. Getting involved with volunteer work, hobbies, clubs or committees, or sports can help you feel connected to your wider community while also meeting new people. If you're not feeling up to going out, even a phone call, email, text message or Facebook message can help us feel connected to friends and family.

## Play



Play is important for staying mentally healthy. Devoting time to just having fun can recharge your battery, revitalise your social networks, and reduce stress and anxiety.

## Seek help

A problem can sometimes be too hard to solve alone, even with support from friends and family. Be honest with yourself about when you may need support and get professional help. You can see your general practitioner (GP), make an appointment to chat to someone at your local **headspace** centre or visit **eheadspace.org.au**. Finding help might feel scary at the start but it gets easier over time. Getting support can help you to keep on track with school, study or work, and in your personal and family relationships. The sooner you get help the sooner things can begin to improve for you.



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For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

# Getting help from a general practitioner (GP)

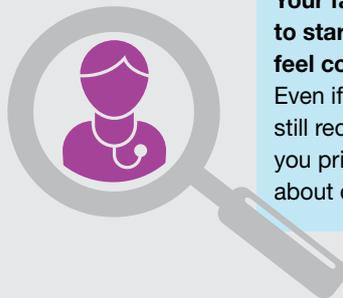


## What is a general practitioner?

General practitioners (GPs) are doctors who are trained to help you with any type of physical or mental health issue. They keep your health issues private and their services are either free or at a low cost. This means that seeing a GP is a great place to start when you are concerned about any health issues including contraception, sexual health, drug or alcohol use, relationship problems, or feeling down or upset.

GPs are widely available around Australia.

## Finding a GP



**Your family GP is often a good place to start if you need some help and feel comfortable talking to them.**

Even if they know your family they are still required to keep information about you private. (There is more information about confidentiality over the page).

Another way of finding a GP is to ask your friends, family or someone at school or work who they would recommend. There might also be a medical centre in your area where you can simply drop in and ask about their services. Schools, TAFEs and universities often know about local GPs and sometimes have their own medical services. A quick search online will also help you find a GP nearby.

Most **headspace** centres have a GP and can also link you in with other health workers at the **headspace** centre if you need it.

## Costs and Medicare

When you make your appointment ask the receptionist about the costs of your visit. Many GPs 'bulk bill' the full cost of the consultation to Medicare, so you won't have to pay anything. This is usually the case with a **headspace** GP.

You will need to show a Medicare card or give your Medicare number to be bulk billed. With some GPs you may need to pay a small fee but with a Medicare card you will be able to get most of the money back later.

You can use a parent's or family's card but if you are Australian and over 15 years of age you are entitled to have your own Medicare card. Having your own card means that your parents are unable to review your visits to the doctor. You can apply for your own card by filling out a form available at a Medicare office, or through the Medicare website ([www.medicareaustralia.gov.au](http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au)). Your GP and some pharmacists might have forms as well.

## Making an appointment

**You'll usually need to make an appointment to see a GP, either by phoning or dropping into their medical practice.**

The receptionist doesn't need to know the reason why you want to see the GP but on your first visit you will have to provide your personal contact details. If you don't feel comfortable going on your own consider taking someone else to the appointment; a friend, parent or relative.



Some GPs may not have appointments for new patients for a week or two, or sometimes even longer. Let them know if it's an urgent problem. **If you need immediate medical attention call 000** or go to a hospital Emergency Department.

Appointments are usually for 10-15 minutes. For your first appointment, or if you have a number of issues you want to talk about, ask for a longer appointment so you have plenty of time to cover everything.

First appointments with GPs at **headspace** centres are usually



longer so that they can get to know you. If your concerns are about a physical health, sexual health or contraception issues you will probably get an appointment quite soon. If you are asking for help with mental health issues, including feeling worried, upset or down, you may be seen by another health worker before seeing a GP.



# Getting help from a general practitioner (GP)



## What to expect when you visit a GP

At your first visit the GP will usually ask a range of questions about your general health and lifestyle, your family background, how you are thinking and feeling, and how you are getting on at school/work/study and with your family and friends.



GPs need to know about you as a 'whole person' so that they can understand the problem and give you the right advice. They are not prying into your life for no reason, and they are not making judgments about you.

The GP might want to give you a physical check-up, for example by taking your blood pressure, heart rate and temperature, or examining other parts of your body relevant to your problem. A GP cannot perform any type of physical examination without your permission.

The GP will then discuss the problem and what to do next. Ask questions so you understand what is going on and what you can do to feel better.

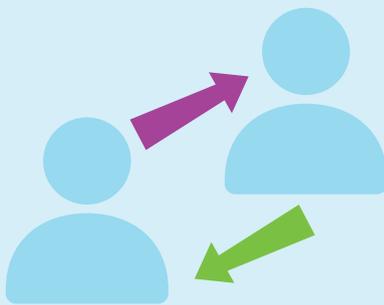
Sometimes the GP will ask you to come back for a return visit to check on your progress, discuss the results of any tests, or just to have some more time to explore the problem. To make sure everything is going okay for you or to monitor other health problems, the GP may also want to see you regularly.

The GP may talk with you about seeing someone like a psychologist or counsellor to support you with your mental health. They will explain how this might help, what services are available and how to get started. They can also fill out a mental health care plan to help you access these services for free.



## Changing GPs

If you are not feeling comfortable and safe with your GP you can change to another GP and ask that your medical records get transferred.



## Confidentiality

All GPs have to keep information about their patients private. This means they cannot discuss your visit with anyone else but there are some exceptions.

If a GP thinks you are likely to harm yourself or someone else they have a 'duty of care' to make sure you stay safe so they may need to tell other people. There are also some circumstances by law that require GPs to share information.



If you want to know more about your rights to privacy and confidentiality ask your GP to talk it through with you at the beginning of your first appointment.



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For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

# If your friend is not okay...



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## If your friend is not okay...

Getting help for a friend can take a bit of time and effort but it is worth it. As part of being a good and supportive friend, there are times when we will need to check in with our friends, to ensure that they are okay. Good help will assist your friend to deal with their problems and help them get on with life.



ARE YOU OKAY?

## If your friend tells you that they're not okay...

**1 Listen and try not to judge or "fix things" straight away** – taking the time to listen lets them know that you care and that their feelings are important. If someone has been going through a tough time, it can be a big relief to talk about what has been going on. Listening can be helpful, even without taking any actions, it might just be what they need. And don't panic, the fact that your friend sees something is wrong is a really important first step.

**2 Let your friend know that they don't have to go through this on their own** and that you are there to help and support them.

**3 Some people need 'time' or 'space' before they're willing to accept help.**

Just giving them information about where to get help or providing them with fact sheets can be useful.

**4 Suggest they read stories at [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au) about other young people who have made it through difficult times;** it may help reduce their feelings of being alone and give them hope for the future.

**5 Be honest about why you are worried** and ask if anyone else knows about how they are feeling.

**6 Encourage them to try some self-help strategies.** Things like eating well, exercising, writing feelings down, getting enough sleep, doing things they enjoy and avoiding alcohol and other drugs are just a few self-help tips that your friend could try. (Visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au) to download the 'Tips for a healthy headspace' fact sheet).

**7 Don't be too forceful in encouraging self-help activities.** It's important to understand that your friend may not feel able to use them because of how they are feeling, or they may not be enough to help them to feel better. If they're interested, you may be able to do some of the strategies with them (e.g. going for a walk, watching their favourite movie).

**8 Encourage them to talk to a trusted adult** about what is going on and how they are feeling (e.g. a family member, teacher, sports coach).

**9 Sometimes, self-help strategies and/or talking to family and friends is not enough and that's okay.**

There are a lot of professionals out there who can help. Suggest they make an appointment with their general practitioner (GP) or their nearest **headspace** centre if things don't begin to improve. You could offer to go with them if they need some extra support.

**10 Let them know about eheadspace** if your friend would prefer to seek help online rather than face-to-face. **eheadspace.org.au** provides free online and telephone support (1800 650 890) for young people. Lifeline (13 11 14) and Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800) also provide free and confidential support over the phone.



# If your friend is not okay...



## If your friend doesn't want to get help and you are still worried

Continue to support them in a respectful way. Try not to judge them or become frustrated.

Let their family or another trusted adult know that you are worried. You have to strike the right balance between your friend's right to privacy and the need to make sure they are safe. If you decide to tell someone else, try to let your friend know first that you are planning on doing this.

## What not to do or say

Don't tell them to cheer up or get over it – this is not helpful.

Don't encourage them to have a night out involving drugs or alcohol. Substance use may help them cope with their concerns temporarily, but is likely to make things worse.

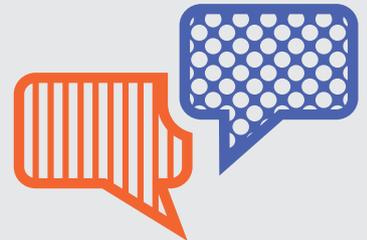
Don't make promises you can't keep – if your friend is at risk of harming themselves or somebody else, you need to seek immediate help, even if they ask you not to.



If you are worried that your friend needs urgent medical help or might hurt themselves or somebody else, you need to tell somebody immediately, even if they have asked you not to. This could be a parent, teacher, their GP, someone from a local health service or by calling 000.

## Some things you can say or ask to encourage someone to seek further help

- **Have you talked to anyone else about this?** It's great that you have talked to me, but it might be good to get advice and help from a health worker.
- **Getting help doesn't always mean sitting on a couch with a psychologist or taking medication.** Did you know that GPs can help with this sort of stuff? Find one that bulk bills then all you need is your Medicare card (i.e. you don't have to pay)
- **There are some great websites you can check out to get more information:** [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au); [reachout.com.au](http://reachout.com.au); [youthbeyondblue.com](http://youthbeyondblue.com)
- **Did you know that you can get free and confidential support online or over the phone?** You can log on to [ehheadspace.org.au](http://ehheadspace.org.au) to get online and telephone support from a mental health professional. You can also call Kids Helpline or Lifeline to speak to someone. All of these services are anonymous.
- **I know you're not feeling great now, but with the right help and support, you can get through this.**



Supporting a friend through a tough time can be difficult. Remember to look after yourself and your needs. Following the 'Tips for a healthy **headspace**' fact sheet may be a good way to look after your own wellbeing to prevent any problems developing. If at any stage you feel overwhelmed you should consider getting some support from a trusted adult (e.g. parent, teacher or GP). You can also contact **headspace** or Kids Helpline.



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For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

# Information for Parents and Carers



## Changes in young people

**Young people can go through many different changes as they grow up. Raising sensitive issues and resolving problems that arise along the way can be challenging for them.**

It can often be hard as a parent to know the difference between normal behaviour, such as

occasional moodiness and irritability, and an emerging mental health problem.

If a young person develops a mental health problem it is important that they get support from both their family and friends and health professionals.



★  
The information in this fact sheet is designed to help you better understand mental health and what you can do to support young people who might be going through a tough time.  
★

## Mental health and mental health problems in young people

**Good mental health is about being able to work and study to your full potential, cope with day-to-day life stresses, be involved in your community and live life in a free and satisfying way.**

A young person who has good mental health has good emotional and social wellbeing and the capacity to cope with change and challenges.

Feeling down, tense, angry, anxious or moody are all normal emotions for young people, but when these feelings persist for long periods of time, or if they begin to interfere with their daily life, they may be part of a mental health problem. Mental health problems can also influence how young people think and their ability to function in their everyday activities, whether at school, at work or in relationships.

If you think you know a young person whose mental health is getting in the way of their daily life, it is important to let them know you are there to support them.



## Warning signs

Most parents can tell when something is out of the ordinary, but there are also signs that suggest a young person might be experiencing a mental health problem. These are new, noticeable and persistent changes in the young person, lasting at least a few weeks, including:

|   |  |   |  |
|---|--|---|--|
| Not enjoying, or not wanting to be involved in things that they would normally enjoy                                  | Changes in appetite or sleeping patterns           | Being easily irritated or angry for no reason                     | Their performance at school, TAFE, university or work is not as good as it should be or as it once was |
| Involving themselves in risky behaviour that they would usually avoid, like taking drugs or drinking too much alcohol | Experiencing difficulties with their concentration | Seeming unusually stressed, worried, down or crying for no reason | Expressing negative, distressing, bizarre or unusual thoughts  |

# Information for Parents and Carers



## »» Mistakes happen ««

Learn from mistakes – whether by you or the young person – to learn and keep moving forward. Having some conflict and then repairing the relationship is more important than avoiding doing anything because you fear upsetting the young person.

## What affects a young person's mental health?

There is no one "cause" for mental health concerns. Instead, it seems that a number of overlapping factors may increase the risk of a young person developing a mental health problem. These can include:

- **Biological factors** – family history of mental health problems
- **Adverse early life experiences** – abuse, neglect, death or a significant loss or trauma
- **Individual psychological factors** – self-esteem, coping skills or thinking style
- **Current circumstances** – stress from work or school, money problems or difficult personal relationships, or problems within your family
- **Serious illness or physical injury**
- **Drugs and alcohol** – use and experimentation.

## How to help the young person you are worried about

HELP

When someone in your family has a mental health problem:

- **Keep communication open**, show empathy and don't rush into judgements
- **Be available** without being intrusive or 'pushy'
- **Spend time with the person**. Take an interest in their activities and encourage them to talk about what's happening in their life
- **Take the person's feelings seriously**
- **Encourage and support positive friendships**
- **Encourage activities that promote mental health**, such as exercise, healthy eating, regular sleep, and doing things the person enjoys
- **Give positive feedback**
- **Let the person know that you love them**. They may not always admit it, but this is likely to be very important to them.

## How to find help

If you are worried about the health and safety of a young person:

Talk openly and honestly with them, and let them know that you are concerned

Reassure them that you will be there for them, and ask what they need from you

Let them know that there is lots of help available

Help find an appropriate service, such as a **headspace** centre ([headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)) and support them in attending

Ask direct questions if you are concerned about suicide. For example, have you been thinking about death? Have you thought about ending your life?

Help them build a support network

Look after yourself as well. Get some support by talking to someone you trust, and seek professional help for yourself if you need it.

## Some important things to remember about young people

- **Young people need a sense of belonging**, connectedness to their family, friends and community, and to make a meaningful contribution
- **Firm and consistent boundaries** are essential, but try to involve the young person in negotiating acceptable 'rules'
- **A balance between self-responsibility and support** helps a 'child' grow to an 'adult'
- **Young people need to do things differently** from their parents and become individuals in their own right
- **Teenagers and young adults often question everything** their families say and do
- **Try to stay confident in yourself**, but also be open to learning





# Sleep



**Sleep is a really important part of our life.** It helps us to feel well, focused and happy. Most people experience a bad night's sleep now and again, but if you regularly don't get enough sleep it can really affect how you feel and what you can get done during the day.



## How much sleep do I need?

Everyone is different, and the amount of sleep you need might be different to what your friends need. In general though:

**People aged 14-17 need between**



**People aged 18-25 need between**



## Why is sleep important for good mental health?

Good sleep habits have been shown to improve mood, concentration and performance at school or work. They may also help control overeating and help prevent obesity.

Lack of sleep is linked to symptoms of depression such as feeling down, hopeless, irritable, having thoughts of suicide, and using alcohol or other drugs.

Research suggests that for every hour of sleep you miss at night, there is a:



increase in risk of unpleasant emotions or feelings that affect day to day function



increase in the chance of feeling sad and hopeless



increase in the chance of having thoughts of suicide



increase in the chance of suicidal behaviour



increase in the chance of using tobacco, alcohol or marijuana.

People who regularly go to sleep very late each night and don't wake up until the afternoon may have Delayed Sleep Phase Syndrome, and are at an increased risk of developing insomnia and depression.

Very short sleepers (less than five hours each night) are more likely to experience long-term mental health issues than people who get enough sleep.

On the other hand, if you sleep more than the recommended amount each night, find it hard to wake up in the morning or still feel tired during the day, something else might be going on.

If you're worried about any aspect of your sleep, or are experiencing any of the negative consequences of bad sleep, get in touch with your GP.

## What gets in the way of a good night's sleep?

For young people, not getting enough sleep might be caused by:

**Biological factors:** such as puberty or changes in your body clock

**Environmental factors:** such as social pressure, school or university workload, use of electronic devices, or using alcohol or other drugs



# Sleep



## Some tips for a good night's sleep

**If you're having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, here are a few things you can try:**

- **Aim to get to bed and wake up around the same time each day**, including on the weekend. This helps your body to get into a routine. Try not to take naps in the day as this affects your body's routine.
- **Turn off your screens (such as your phone, TV and laptop) at least 30 minutes before bed time.** The light from screens can stop your brain producing the sleep chemical melatonin, which is important in helping you get to sleep.
- **Try not to worry about having a bad sleep.** A lot of people underestimate how much sleep they get – so you might find it useful to use a sleep app to see how much sleep you're getting.

However, if you find that this makes you focus on how much sleep you're not getting, you may be better off without it.

- **Natural sleep cycles are based on your body clock, which is mainly set by when you're exposed to light.** Light is needed in the morning, so aim to be outside for 30 minutes, sit by a bright window, or use a specially designed artificial light sources. In the evening, your body needs less stimulation, so try dimming the lights.
- **Exercising during the day is a good way to make you tired at night.** This might mean going to the gym, walking around the block at lunchtime or playing sport. Try to avoid exercising last thing at night though, as this can keep you awake.

• **It's best to try and keep your bed for sleep and sex.** Working, watching TV or being online in bed can cause your brain to associate bed with being alert and awake.

• **Your bedroom should be dark, cool (around 16-18°C) and quiet.**

• **Try to limit how much caffeine you have, including coffee, energy drinks and soft drinks.** Also, try to avoid caffeine entirely after lunchtime.

• **Avoid drinking alcohol before bed.** It might make you sleepy, but you're less likely to get good, restful sleep with alcohol in your system.

• **Avoid smoking before bed.** Discuss ways to quit smoking as well as any other problems with drugs or alcohol with your GP.

• **Sleep medications are not usually required to help with sleep problems.** While they can help in the short term, they also have a number of side effects and may not give good quality sleep. Your body can also get used to these medications quickly so the effect wears off.



For more information about sleep, go to

[www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au](http://www.sleephealthfoundation.org.au)

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



## ... Getting help ...

If you find it hard to fall or stay asleep, or you feel tired a lot of the time, a healthcare professional may be able to help. In a first instance try contacting **headspace** or get in touch with your GP.



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For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)

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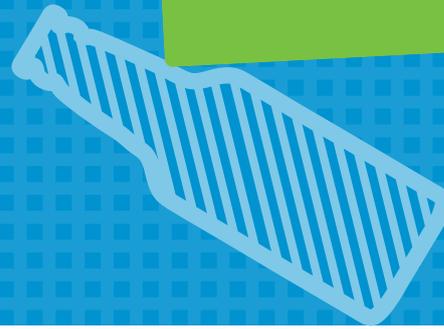
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# Alcohol



Alcohol AKA **booze, piss, grog, drink.**

## What is it?

A lot of people don't think about alcohol as a drug – but it's the most widely used drug in Australia and is really easy to get. There are many different kinds of alcohol, like beer, cider, wine and spirits.



Many people feel pressured to drink. If you choose to drink alcohol, it should be on your terms. There is no "safe way" to use alcohol; however, if you are choosing to drink, it is important that you drink as safely as possible.

## What does it do?

How alcohol will make you feel depends on lots of things like how much you weigh, how healthy you are, how regularly you drink, the kind of mood you're in when you drink and the people you are drinking with. But as a general rule, alcohol will relax you, make you feel more confident and less inhibited, slow down your reflexes and affect your balance and coordination.

Drinking too much can give you headaches, make you feel dizzy, sick or cause you to vomit. In extreme cases you might even pass out and not remember what happened.

The effects of alcohol can last for hours, especially if you have drunk a lot. When it wears off you may feel tired, thirsty, headachy and sick or have an upset tummy. This usually won't last longer than a day.

## Alcohol and your mental health

One of the major reasons people drink alcohol is to change their mood. This is why people think drinking alcohol is so much fun. You can pretty much expect whatever mood you were in before you started drinking to be amplified. So if you were feeling happy, you will feel really happy.

If you felt anxious or depressed before you started drinking you

will probably feel much worse once the effects have worn off. This can have a big effect on people who have depression and other mental health problems.

Alcohol will make you less inhibited so you might say stuff you wouldn't normally say or do stuff you wouldn't normally do. This can lead to feeling really bad the next day if you said



mean things to a mate, or to your boyfriend or girlfriend, or had a fight with someone.

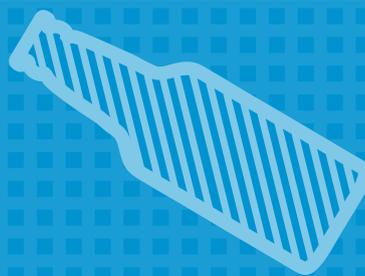
## Alcohol and your physical health



Long term alcohol use can also cause problems with your physical health, such as high blood pressure, heart disease, brain damage, liver disease as well as different kinds of cancers.



# Alcohol



## What happens if I stop drinking?

It can be tricky giving up drinking if you've been doing it for a long time, because your body has to get used to going without it. If you are dependent on alcohol and you suddenly stop drinking, you might get withdrawal symptoms including sweating, feeling sick, anxiety, irritability, problems sleeping, tremors (e.g. shaking hands), even seizures or fits. Because of this, it's a good idea to have



a chat to a general practitioner (GP) to discuss the safest way of cutting down your drinking.

## When someone overdoses

In some cases, drinking too much can cause someone to overdose. How this looks may be different depending on what's happening for the person (e.g. they may have mixed alcohol with other drugs), but too much alcohol can cause fits, irregular or shallow breathing, pale or blue looking skin, or unconsciousness. If something like this happens, some sensible things you can do are:



**Call 000** – you won't get into trouble for asking for help.



**Don't leave your friend alone.**



**Put your friend on their side if they are unconscious** or in case they vomit.



**Keep an eye on their breathing.**

## Staying safe

If you are going to drink, here are some tips to help you and your mates stay safe:

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Don't drink alone.   | Eat before and while you are drinking.         | Drink water in between alcoholic drinks and/or drink low alcohol drinks.  |
| Slow down. Finish one drink before the next and sip instead of scull.  | Avoid rounds (or shouts).                      | Take it in turns to stay sober so that one of you can drive everyone else home safely. If not, keep enough money for a cab. |
| Look out for your mates. Keep an eye on them if they get sick, make sure they are okay to get home and don't let them get into risky situations. | Try having days and weekends without drinking. | Avoid drinking if you have school, uni or work the next day.  |

## Getting help

If your alcohol use is starting to affect things that matter, like your mental health, wellbeing or your friendships, it can be a good idea to talk to someone about your options, such as different ways to reduce or stop your use. Whatever you decide, **headspace** can help.



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# Amphetamines



**Amphetamines AKA speed, ice, fast, crystal meth, whizz, base, paste, dexies, meth.**

## What are they?

Amphetamines are stimulants, so they speed up your brain and your body. They come in a few different forms including powder, tablets, crystal and paste. Some prescription medicines include amphetamines as an ingredient (e.g. dexamphetamine which is used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)). Amphetamines can be swallowed, injected, shafted (put up your bottom), smoked or snorted, depending on the type.



There is no "safe way" to use amphetamines, however, if you are choosing to use, it is important that you use as safely as possible.

## What do they do?



How amphetamines make you feel depends on things like how strong they are, the kind of mood you are in, who you are using with, how much you use and your size. As a general rule, amphetamines will make you feel excited, confident, talkative, energetic and awake. People who like to go clubbing use amphetamines to give them the energy to dance for ages.



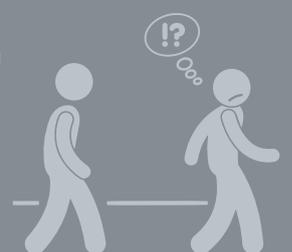
If you use amphetamines, you probably won't feel hungry and you will find it tricky to sleep. They may take a while to wear off and you might even find that you can't sleep for a night or two. When they do wear off you can feel tired, irritable and depressed for a couple of days afterwards.

## Amphetamines and your mental health

One of the reasons people use amphetamines is because they think they will make them feel good. In most cases they do. However if you already have a mental health problem you may find that amphetamines make you feel worse. Lots of people feel anxious, restless, irritable and suspicious when they use amphetamines. In extreme cases you might feel angrier and behave more violently than you would normally.



Amphetamine use can cause paranoia, so you might think that you are being talked about or watched when you aren't. If you use a lot, it can cause drug induced psychosis, where you start to believe strange things or see and hear things that aren't there.



# Amphetamines



## What happens if I stop using?

If you have been using amphetamines regularly, you will probably have withdrawal symptoms when you stop. How bad they are depends on how much you've been using and how often, as well as what kind of shape you are in. Withdrawal symptoms tend to be worst during the first week and then will start to ease off, although in extreme cases some symptoms may hang around for a couple of months.

Some common withdrawal symptoms are:

- Irritability
- Sleeplessness
- Depression/anxiety
- Mood swings
- Headaches
- Feeling hungry
- Difficulty concentrating.

## When someone overdoses

In some cases, taking too many amphetamines can cause someone to overdose. This may lead to things like loss of consciousness or overheating – it will look different depending on what's happening for the person (e.g. they may have mixed drugs or taken lots of amphetamines when they haven't eaten or slept for a few days).

If something like this happens, some sensible things you can do are:



**Call 000** – you won't get into trouble for asking for help.



**Don't leave your friend alone.**



**Put your friend on their side if they are unconscious** or in case they vomit.



**Keep an eye on their breathing.**

## Staying safe

If you are going to use amphetamines, there will always be a risk of bad things happening. You can reduce some of these risks by:



**Going low, going slow. Just use a bit at a time** and wait to see what it feels like before taking more.



**Not mixing with other drugs or alcohol** – it can get out of control quickly.



**Only using with people you trust.** It's good if someone in your group isn't using to keep an eye on you.



**Never sharing needles.** Use clean equipment to avoid the risk of contracting blood-borne viruses like HIV or Hepatitis C.



**Making sure that you eat,** even if you don't feel like it.



**Take a break.** Make sure that you have amphetamine free days and try not to use them before anything big (e.g. exams).



**Calling an ambulance** if things get bad.



If your amphetamine use is starting to affect things that matter, like your mental health, wellbeing or your friendships, it can be a good idea to talk to someone about your options, such as different ways to reduce or stop your use. Whatever you decide, **headspace** can help.



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# Benzodiazepines



**Benzodiazepines AKA** **benzos, sleepers, jellies, rohys, vallies, roofies, moggies.**

## What are they?

Benzodiazepines (often called benzos) are a group of drugs known as minor tranquillisers. Benzos are generally prescribed by doctors to help people with anxiety or sleep problems to help them to relax. Used in the short term, they can be really helpful however people often use them recreationally as well. There are a lot of different types of benzos and they are all sold under different brand names – same class, different drug.



The only "safe way" to use benzodiazepines is under close medical supervision, however, if you are choosing to use recreationally, it is important that you use as safely as possible.

## What do they do?

What benzos do to you depends on the type of benzo you are using, how many you've taken, whether you are using them on their own or with something else, your size and the kind of mood you are in. Generally speaking, benzos help you to relax, feel less anxious and make you feel sleepy. They can also make you feel really warm and fuzzy.



## Benzos and your mental health

People often take benzos because they feel anxious or worried and they want to relax. When you stop taking benzos, you can get this thing called "rebound anxiety" which is where your anxiety comes back and it feels twice as strong. Coming off benzos can also cause panicky feelings and insomnia.



## The effects of benzos



The effects of benzos depend on what you've taken. They all last for different amounts of time in your body - this is called a "half-life". Generally the effects will last up to 24 hours and you may find it difficult to sleep once they have worn off. It might take only a little while to develop a "tolerance" (having to take more to get the same effect) to benzos.

# Benzodiazepines



## What happens if I stop using?

Giving up benzos can be tricky because your body has to get used to functioning without them. If you are dependent on benzos and you suddenly stop taking them, you might get withdrawal symptoms including insomnia, anxiety, depression, restlessness, muscle pains, twitching and seizures. It's a good idea to have a chat to a general practitioner (GP) to discuss the safest way of cutting down your benzo use.



## When someone overdoses

In some cases, taking too many benzos can cause someone to overdose. How this looks may be different depending on what's happening for the person (e.g. they may have mixed benzos with other drugs), but overdose can cause irregular or shallow breathing, loss of consciousness, even coma or death. If someone looks like they may have overdosed, some sensible things you can do are:



**Call 000** – you won't get into trouble for asking for help.



**Don't leave your friend alone.**



**Put your friend on their side if they are unconscious** or in case they vomit.



**Keep an eye on their breathing.**

## Staying safe

If you are going to use benzos recreationally, there will always be the risk of bad things happening. You can reduce some of this risk by:



**Going low, going slow. Just use half or one at a time** and wait to see what it feels like.



**Not mixing with other drugs or alcohol** – it can get out of control quickly. If you use benzos with other depressants (e.g. alcohol) it can increase your risk of overdose.



**Only using with people you trust.** It's good if someone in your group isn't using to keep an eye on you. Keep an eye on your mates too.



**Avoiding injecting benzos.** They are intended to be swallowed in tablet/capsule form.



**Take a break.** Make sure that you have benzo free days and try not to use them before anything big (e.g. exams).



**Calling an ambulance (000)** if things get bad.

## Getting help

If your benzo use is starting to affect things that matter, like your mental health, wellbeing or your friendships, it can be a good idea to talk to someone about your options, such as different ways to reduce or stop your use. Whatever you decide, **headspace** can help.



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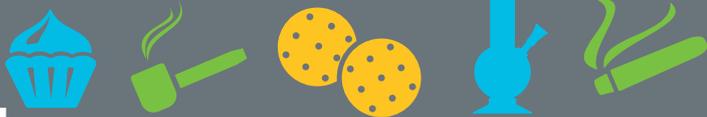
# Cannabis

**Cannabis AKA** marijuana, pot, dope, grass, hash, ganja, hashish, choof, hemp, herb, skunk, smoke, spliff, weed.

## What is it?

Cannabis is the most commonly used illegal drug in Australia and it comes in a number of different forms. For example, pot is the dried leaves and flowers of the cannabis plant and looks like tightly-packed dried herbs, and hash is a black-brown solid material

made from the resin of the plant. Cannabis is usually mixed with tobacco and smoked in joints. It can also be smoked in bongs or pipes, baked into food (e.g. cakes and cookies) or sometimes drunk as a brew.



There is no "safe way" to use cannabis, however, if you are choosing to use, it is important that you use as safely as possible.

## What does it do?

Cannabis contains a chemical called Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) which moves from the bloodstream into the brain. THC is a hallucinogenic, meaning that it changes the way that you see reality. How it affects you depends on how much you use, how strong it is, how you took it, how you are feeling, who you are with and whether you have mixed it with any other drugs or alcohol.



How long being "stoned" lasts, depends on how you used cannabis and how strong it was (e.g. if you ate it, you might stay stoned for a lot longer than if you smoked it). Usually when people smoke cannabis, they stay stoned for two to four hours. If you eat cannabis, the reaction can take up to an hour to come on but it might then last for six or more hours.

## The effects of cannabis



Some effects of cannabis or being "stoned" are feeling chilled out, relaxed and happy, becoming talkative and laughing a lot and experiencing hunger or food cravings (known as "the munchies"). Some of the not-so-good effects can include feeling sick, your heart rate speeding up, a change in the way you experience sensations (colours and sounds), poor concentration, anxiety and panic, suspicion, paranoia and poor coordination which can affect driving and other activities.

# Cannabis



## Cannabis and your mental health

People usually use cannabis because they want to feel good, and in most cases they do. However if you already have a mental health problem, you might find that cannabis makes you feel worse.

Sometimes cannabis can make feelings of anxiety, panic or paranoia more intense. Young people who use cannabis are at risk of developing mental health problems, such as psychosis. Psychosis is when you start to believe strange



things or see and hear things that aren't there. The risk of developing psychosis can be even higher if you start using cannabis when you are young, or if other people in your family have had mental health problems.

## What happens if I stop using?

If you use cannabis for a long time you might become dependent and then find it hard to stop. If you are trying to cut down or stop using cannabis after using it for a while, you might experience withdrawal symptoms. These can include cravings, an upset tummy, not wanting to eat, problems sleeping and sometimes feeling angry, irritable and restless. Withdrawals usually last around a week, although problems with sleep may go for longer.



## Staying safe

If you are going to use cannabis, there will always be the risk of bad things happening. You can reduce some of this risk by:



### Going low, going slow.

Just use a bit at a time and wait to see what it feels like.



### Eating cannabis (in cakes or cookies) rather than smoking it.

Be aware that it's easy to have too much, so start with a small amount and wait up to an hour to see how strong it is.



### Not mixing with other drugs or alcohol.

Things can get out of control quickly.



### Not driving or doing anything that requires coordination after you've used.



### Only using with people you trust.

It's good if someone in your group isn't using to keep an eye on you. Keep an eye on your mates too.



### Having cannabis free days.

Avoid using if you have school, uni or work the next day.



### Calling an ambulance (000) if things get bad.

## Getting help

If your cannabis use is starting to affect things that matter, like your mental health, wellbeing or your friendships, it can be a good idea to talk to someone about your options, such as different ways to reduce or stop your use. Whatever you decide, **headspace** can help.



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**Inhalants have vapours or fumes which can be breathed in and make you feel high, intoxicated or disoriented.**

**A.K.A.:** Solvents, glue, gas, sniff, sniffing, huff, chroming, poppers

Inhalants will slow down your coordination, judgement and response times, but they will not necessarily make you feel depressed. Many everyday products have been used as inhalants, including glue, aerosol sprays, cleaning fluids, liquid paper, paints and petrol.

### How are inhalants taken?

Inhalants are breathed in through the nose or mouth. They can be inhaled by sniffing or 'snorting' fumes from containers, spraying aerosols directly into the mouth or nose, spraying or placing the product in a paper or plastic bag and then inhaling, by huffing from an inhalant-soaked rag, or inhaling from balloons filled with nitrous oxide.

### What are the effects of inhalants?

The effect of inhalants varies from one person to the next. It depends on how much you inhaled, your weight and health, what you have used before (and how much), your mood when you use inhalants, and whether you have taken other drugs. Most inhalants slow down the body's functions. If large quantities are inhaled they can quickly cause intoxication, which usually lasts only a few minutes.

Some of the effects include feeling dizzy and light-headed, feeling confident, and excitement and laughter.

Effects that aren't so good can include:

- Slurred speech
- Feeling thirsty
- Being unable to coordinate your movements, with slow reflexes
- Dribbling, sneezing or coughing
- Feeling tired after the initial high
- Blurred vision
- Nausea (feeling sick and wanting to vomit)
- Nose bleeds
- Headaches and feeling 'hung over'
- Hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there)
- Risky behavior, including aggression and violence, accidents and injury, and unwanted sex.

Repeated use of inhalants can feel good at first, but can make you feel less inhibited and less in control.

Inhalants can make you lose consciousness, and there is a risk of death from heart failure or suffocation. Death is a very real risk of inhalants, and can happen whether you're a first timer or a regular user.



## Inhalants

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### What are the long-term effects of inhalants?

Inhalants are dangerous chemicals, often more so than cannabis or ecstasy. Repeated use can cause severe damage to the brain, liver and kidneys, cause memory loss, confused thinking, tremors, lead poisoning, sores around the mouth and nose, weight loss, depression and irritability.

Use of inhalants can also lead to conflict with friends and family, and perhaps losing contact with them.

### What about withdrawal?

It is possible to become dependant on inhalants. This mean it can be very hard to stop, and stopping suddenly can cause symptoms like anxiety, depression, loss of appetite, irritation, aggression, dizziness, tremors and nausea.

### Managing your drug use

If you, your family or your friends think your drug use is becoming a problem, then get some help and talk to people about it. Changing your drug use can be hard work, but it will be worth it.

Some people can reduce or stop drug use on their own, but think about talking to a trusted family member, friend, doctor or counsellor.

For more information, and to find out how to get help, visit the headspace website: [www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)



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# Tobacco

**Tobacco AKA** ciggies, fags, butts, darts, smokes, rollies.

## What is it?

Tobacco is one of the oldest known drugs. It's a green leafy plant that is grown in warm climates and once it is picked, it is dried, ground up and used in different ways. Most people smoke tobacco in cigarettes, but some people prefer cigars or pipes. It can also be chewed, and sniffed through the nose as 'snuff'.



## What does it do?

Tobacco contains the stimulant drug nicotine. Nicotine speeds up your central nervous system and makes you feel like you have more energy. It can also affect the brain so that you feel 'good' after smoking. Nicotine is highly addictive so you can get 'hooked' fast making it hard to quit.



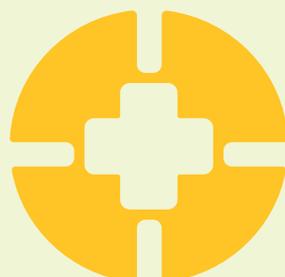
## The effects of tobacco



When you first start to smoke you can feel sick and dizzy. It can make your heart beat faster, give you a headache and make you cough. Most of these effects – the good ones as well as the bad ones – become less as you keep on smoking. Over time, your body gets used to the chemicals in cigarettes, including nicotine.

When you inhale the nicotine in a cigarette, it hits your brain in about ten seconds and it wears off again within a few minutes. This is why most people feel like they need to keep smoking throughout the day and why it is easy to become dependent on smoking.

## Tobacco and your mental and physical health



If you already have mental health problems, smoking can make it more complicated. You might start or keep smoking because you think it helps with your anxiety or depression, and then find that when you try and quit smoking your anxiety/depression becomes much worse.

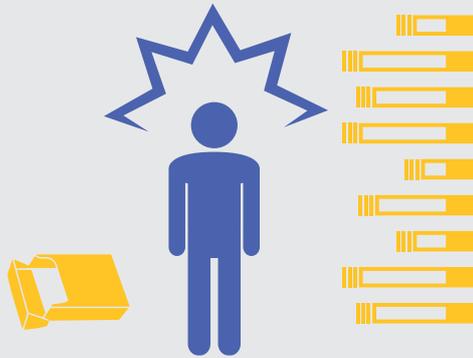
So if you keep smoking, it becomes a vicious cycle. Smoking can also affect your physical health, causing things like shortness of breath, more regular colds or flu, yellow stained fingers and in the long term, heart disease and cancers.

# Tobacco



## Overdose

Although it's hard to imagine, it is possible to have too much nicotine in one go. If you smoke too much (this doesn't often happen) or you smoke or chew nicotine gum while wearing nicotine patches, you might end up feeling confused, being unable to get your breath or in extreme cases, have seizures.



## Staying safe

If you are going to use tobacco, there will always be the risk of bad things happening. You can reduce some of this risk by:

Smoking less. See if you can cut down so that you smoke fewer cigarettes in a day or set limits on the number of cigarettes you will have in a day.

Having smoke free days.

Switching to something that reduces the health risks of smoking (e.g. patches, gum, lozenges and inhalers).

Quitting.

## Quitting



Some people manage to quit smoking without any help, but most people need some assistance.

Your general practitioner (GP) or local **headspace** centre can talk you through the options.

It is normal to crave cigarettes when you first quit, because your body is withdrawing from the

nicotine. Gradually the cravings will become less and less.

You may find that after quitting you 'relapse' and start smoking again – don't worry, every relapse is an opportunity to learn something new about your smoking habits and triggers.

Making the change can be hard work, but it will be worth it.



## Getting help

If your smoking is starting to affect things that matter, like your mental health, wellbeing or your friendships, it can be a good idea to talk to someone

about your options, such as different ways to reduce or stop your use. Whatever you decide, **headspace** can help.



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