



Australian Government
Department of Defence

Anxiety

Defence Mental Health & Wellbeing





*'Mental health and wellbeing is the state in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with normal stress of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community'**

Defence's vision is that our people – military and public servants – experience positive mental health and wellbeing. *They are Fit to Fight – Fit to Work – Fit for Life.*

*World Health Organization

What is anxiety?

Most people will know what it feels like to be stressed or worried. You might have experienced this before a big or important event, as a result of work demands or change, or from family and relationship problems. These feelings usually subside once the stressful situation has passed.

Anxiety is when these feelings continue after the 'stressor' has been removed and there is no longer an obvious reason or cause.

Anxiety disorders are one of the most common mental health problems, and the term covers a wide range of conditions. Anxiety disorders are not a character weakness or a matter of having a 'bad case of nerves'. Feeling anxious is not your fault; it is not something you have brought upon yourself and is certainly not something to be ashamed of or to hide away from others who may be able to help you.

Anxiety can be a serious problem that can affect your work, your family and your social life. People may also have problems working out the difference between feeling anxious and feeling depressed.

Sometimes these go hand in hand, sometimes not — your doctor or mental health professional can explain this in more detail.

What are the signs?

Anxiety can manifest in a wide range of signs or symptoms, sometimes dependent upon the type of anxiety disorder that a person may have. However, some of the very basic signs may include:

- nausea
- racing heart or chest pain
- muscular aches, pains and headaches
- trembling, shaking or dizziness
- hot and cold flushes
- trouble sleeping
- fearing that you are losing control
- excessive worrying
- obsessive thinking and compulsive behaviour.

These are only a few signs and the signs do vary. Some of these signs can also be symptoms of serious physical problems and so it is important that you have your symptoms checked out by your doctor as soon as possible so that they can assess what is causing the symptoms.



What can I do?

Today, we know a lot more about the causes and treatment of this problem. We also know that there are as many causes of anxiety disorders as there are people who have them. Anxiety can come from a variety of factors, and it is best to talk through your own situation with a doctor or mental health professional. The good news is that there is a range of treatment options available and you can start on the road to recovery by acknowledging that today is a perfect time to seek help and start feeling better.

Anxiety related difficulties often respond very well to simple lifestyle changes and to changes to the way you think about yourself, your world and your life. It is also important to know that not all anxiety conditions need medication.

You may like to use some of the following strategies to help yourself:

- a healthy lifestyle — eat nutritious meals
- learn controlled breathing and relaxation techniques — the DVA produced ‘High Res’ mobile phone app can help you learn these
- limit your alcohol and caffeine intake
- try to ensure you get enough sleep
- get some regular exercise
- schedule time to relax or unwind.

Your local Medical Officer, Mental Health Professional or Chaplain will be able to provide you with more ideas and techniques.

Where to seek help

If you or someone in your workplace is in crisis and you think immediate action is needed, call **Emergency Services 000**, contact your doctor or local mental health crisis service, or go to your local hospital emergency department.

Emergency contact information – 24 hours

If you or someone you know needs help, call:

- Emergency on **000**
- Lifeline on **13 11 14**
- Suicide Call Back Service on **1300 659 467**.

ADF

Contact your local on base Health Centre, Mental Health Professional or the Duty Officer/Officer of the Day for immediate assistance and referrals.

The ADF Health and Wellbeing Portal is an online health information resource tool for ADF members and their families www.defence.gov.au/health/healthportal/

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support.

Military Chaplains are connected to all ships/units/bases around Australia and on Operations. They can provide all-hours support and appropriate referral. To access Defence Chaplaincy support, call **1300 333 362** and ask to speak to the Duty Chaplain from your area and service.

The ADF Mental Health All-hours Support Line (ASL) is a confidential telephone service for ADF members and their families available 24/7 on **1800 628 036** or if calling from overseas **+61 2 9425 3878**.

If you are away from base, or for out-of-hours assistance, you can call **1800 IMSICK (1800 467 425)** to locate the nearest support.

Defence Family Helpline (1800 624 608) The Defence Family Helpline is available 24/7 for ADF Members and their families, and is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists. Defence Community Organisation website is: www.defence.gov.au/dco

The National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC)

Serving Families of Deployed Australian Defence Personnel.

As part of the Headquarters Joint Operations Command, the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) provides a 24 hour support, referral and information service for families of Defence personnel deployed on operations and exercises.

1800 801 026 or **+ 61 2 6127 1812**.

Sexual Misconduct Prevention and Response Office (SeMPRO)

SeMPRO offers advice, guidance and support to current and former Defence personnel who have been affected by sexual misconduct, whether the incident is current or historical.

This includes support to ADF cadets, officers and instructors of cadets, APS personnel, commanders, managers, supervisors, support people and families affected by sexual misconduct. **1800 736 776 (1800SeMPRO)**.

Open Arms – Veterans and Families Counselling (formerly WCS): is a national mental health service that provides 24-hour free and confidential counselling, group programs and suicide prevention training for current and ex-serving ADF members, and their family. To get support or to find out more, call **1800 011 046** or visit **www.OpenArms.gov.au**

APS (and Reservists)

Defence Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (including the Reserve Assistance Program – RAP). The EAP provides short term confidential counselling and support for employees and immediate family members (if eligible). It is easily accessible, voluntary and can provide support on a range of personal and work related issues. The Defence EAP can be accessed by calling **1300 687 327**.