

Where to seek help

In an emergency, call 000.

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

Other than in an emergency situation, contact your local ADF Medical Centre or Psychology Section. Navy personnel can seek help through their divisional system, local Alcohol and Drug Program Advisor (ADPA) or can directly contact their local Alcohol and Drug Program Coordinators.

Mental Health Resources

Local Medical Centres Your local medical officer can provide immediate assistance and referrals as required.

Psychology Support Section All Psychology Support Sections offer after-hours, critical incident support through the local Duty Officer/Officer of the Day.

Defence Community Organisation

<http://intranet.defence.gov.au/dco/> or www.defence.gov.au/dco/

The DCO provides services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week all year round including public holidays. During normal business hours the first point of call is the Duty Social Worker or Military Support Officer. Outside these core hours and on Public Holidays, calls should be directed to the National Welfare Coordination Centre (NWCC) on 1800 801 026 or if calling from overseas +61 2 93594842.

Chaplains There are Chaplains connected to all units in Australia who can provide support and appropriate referrals.

The Family Information Network for Defence (FIND) (1800 020 031)

FIND is a phone service that provides easy access to personnel information on matters of everyday interest and concern. It is a confidential service that is available to every Service person and family anywhere in Australia.

Lifeline (131 114) If you, or a friend, need to talk to someone about a problem immediately, you can call Lifeline for the cost of a local call.

Veterans and Veteran's Families Counselling Service (VWCS) This service is available to veterans of all deployments and their families. VETLINE – 24 hour emergency line (1800 011 046).

ADF Mental Health Strategy All-hours Support Line (ASL) The ASL is a confidential telephone triage support service for ADF members and their families that is available 24 hours a day, 7 days per week. (1800 628 036) (FREECALL within Australia) and (61 2 9425 3878) (outside Australia)

Australian Defence Force Mental Health Strategy (ADFMHS)

Defweb Address <http://intranet.defence.gov.au/dsg/sites/dmh/>
Internet Address www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/i-dmh.htm
Email DMH.mentalhealth@defence.gov.au



Australian Government
Department of Defence

ADF Mental Health Strategy


ANXIETY

be
well

work
well

live
well

200 31520 09



Everyone knows what it's like to feel anxious. Indeed, most people feel anxious before a big or important event such as a wedding, or before an exam, having a 'private' meeting with the boss, or being pulled over for speeding. It's also the way your heart races when you are in danger. Anxiety gears you up for action, to face a threatening situation, to study harder for that exam or to keep you on your toes with the boss. In general, it helps you cope.

However, when anxiety continues, it can have the opposite effect – it can get in the way of coping and interfere with how you live your life. Anxiety disorders can make you feel 'on edge' most of the time, without any noticeable reason. The feelings that geared you up before just don't rest. You keep being wound up tighter and tighter. These feelings may make you so uncomfortable that you may even stop doing your normal everyday things. Sometimes these feelings can be so strong that they can terrify you and make you freeze up.

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 it is certainly not something to be ashamed of or to hide away from others who may be able to help you. Feeling anxious is a serious problem that can affect your work, your family and your social life. Sometimes people also have problems working out the difference between feeling anxious and depressed. Sometimes these go hand in hand, sometimes not – your doctor or mental health professional will explain all this.

What are the signs?

Anxiety can present with 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
- chest pain or discomfort
- muscular aches, pains and headaches
- trembling, shaking or dizziness
- sweating
- feeling as if you are choking or having trouble breathing
- fearing that you are losing control or going crazy
- excessive worrying
- constant and persistent thoughts about a particular situation or event.

These are only a few signs and the signs do vary. Some of these signs can also be symptoms of serious physical problems and it is important that you DO NOT assume that any of these are just anxiety—get them checked out by your doctor as soon as possible.

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 individual 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 of recovery by saying to yourself that 'today is a perfect time to seek help and start feeling better'. It is also important to know that not all anxiety conditions need medication. Often anxiety related difficulties will respond very well to some simple lifestyle changes as well as some changes to the way you think about yourself, your world and your life.

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

- maintain a healthy lifestyle – eat nutritious meals
- try to ensure that you get enough sleep
- try to get some regular exercise
- try to schedule some time to relax or unwind
- practise basic stress management principles
- limit your caffeine intake (i.e. less than 3–4 cups of coffee or 4–6 cups of tea per day).

Your local medical officer, psychologist, social worker or padre will be able to provide you with more ideas and techniques.