

## 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/](http://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 (VPCS)** 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](http://www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/i-dmh.htm)

Email [DMH.mentalhealth@defence.gov.au](mailto:DMH.mentalhealth@defence.gov.au)



Australian Government  
Department of Defence

ADF Mental Health Strategy


# PRESENTEEISM – BEING AT WORK UNPRODUCTIVELY

be  
well

work  
well

live  
well

Z00 31520-10



Presenteeism is when an individual is physically present at work but functionally absent. It occurs when a person stays at work even when they are not fully productive due to **illness or emotional disturbance**. It may also include those times when an individual works excessively long hours but fails to function at peak capacity. It is not about malingering (pretending to be ill when you are not), or doing non-work things when you are supposed to be working (like surfing the net).

Underlying the concept of presenteeism is the assumption that the individual who is behaving in this way does not take their job lightly and needs and wants to continue working if they can. These are people who think they are doing the 'right' thing by the organisation by coming to work despite not feeling up to their best. The cause for their decrease in productivity might be something as minor as a cold or nasty headache, or something less visible but equally distracting such as relationship difficulties, child care problems, or financial concerns. Presenteeism may be more prevalent in times of **employment insecurity**—when organisations are downsizing or restructuring for example. People feel less secure in their positions and believe they must be seen to be working harder and longer hours than would normally be expected, or are too afraid to leave their positions unattended for a period of time in case the job is no longer there when they come back, or they fear being passed over for promotion. Presenteeism is also higher for those individuals in positions in which work not performed because of absence must be caught up with by the person on their return.

When presenteeism is evident, an individual's work output is reduced because their energy levels, ability to focus, and ability to work effectively with colleagues is affected. The **threat** that presenteeism poses for the Australian Defence Force (ADF) arises from the **reduced attention span and increased potential for error** that is associated with behaviour of this nature, potentially affecting both the quantity and quality of a member's work. Clearly, the more safety-sensitive or quality-critical a job is, the greater the impact for all in having a worker involved who is not 100% effective.

## Solutions

Presenteeism needs to be seen as a symptom that requires treatment. It may be related to the individual or the work environment. It is especially difficult to address in times of increased operational tempo, when resources are stretched and people are working harder and/or longer to meet increased demands. The key to addressing presenteeism is to focus on enhancing the individual's well-being and overall resilience. In particular, recognition and effective management of chronic health conditions is crucial.

Workplace health promotion programs can be effective in changing worker health risks. The ADF provides a range of health education, assessment, monitoring and treatment programs designed for early identification, intervention and prevention of health risks. More detail of these programs can be found at the Mental Health website [www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/i-dmh.htm](http://www.defence.gov.au/health/DMH/i-dmh.htm) and the Defence Health Services site [www.defence.gov.au/health/](http://www.defence.gov.au/health/)

## Command can help in specific ways:

- ensuring members feel they have permission to take the appropriate steps to manage their illness or emotional difficulty utilising ADF resources
- promoting a culture within the immediate work environment that helps decrease the feeling that one person's absence means a bigger workload for everyone else
- educating members about the range of health promotion activities available within the ADF – teaching someone to better manage their illnesses can mean a significant difference in how they view their situation and how they feel at work
- promoting an environment that supports a balance between work and lifestyle is one of the keys to maintaining overall well-being and resilience
- relieving anxiety about job security whenever possible – this includes dealing with rumours about proposed changes within the workplace which may have significant implications for their career or promotional prospects
- knowing your people – developing a sound structure which will identify any individual who may be having difficulties in order that they can be referred for appropriate assistance at the earliest opportunity.

## YOU can help yourself in the following ways:

- develop a solid work – life balance by ensuring you follow a sensible diet and regular exercise routine
- do not ignore symptoms of ill-health—acknowledge when times are tough for you and seek help from resources available in the ADF, such as your Duty Officer, regional/local Medical Officer, DCO, Padre, and/or Psychology Support Section
- educate yourself on issues that might be concerning you or health conditions you may have and put in place strategies to help you manage your difficulties – look at the Mental Health website [www.defence.gov.au/dpe/dhs/mentalhealth/index.htm](http://www.defence.gov.au/dpe/dhs/mentalhealth/index.htm) for more information.