

ADF MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

# ANXIETY



JOINT HEALTH COMMAND  
VICE CHIEF OF THE DEFENCE FORCE



## 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, due to 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 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 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:

- maintain a health lifestyle - eat nutritious meals
- learn controlled breathing and relaxation techniques
- 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

Your chain of command is a primary resource that can provide advice, referral and support. You can also contact your local on base Health Centre, Mental Health Professional, Chaplain or the Duty Officer/Officer of the Day for immediate assistance and referrals.

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 **1800IMSICK** to locate the nearest support.

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

The **ADF Health and Wellbeing Portal**  
[www.defence.gov.au/health/healthportal/](http://www.defence.gov.au/health/healthportal/)

The Portal is an online health information resource tool for all current and ex-serving ADF Members and their families.

## Other Resources

**Defence Family Helpline (1800 624 608)**

[www.defence.gov.au/dco](http://www.defence.gov.au/dco)

The Defence Family Helpline is your first point of call for support, information and connection with your community. The Helpline is available 24/7 for ADF Members and their families, and is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists.

You can also email the Helpline on [DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au](mailto:DefenceFamilyHelpline@defence.gov.au) and receive a response within 24 hours.

**Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCSS)**. This 24-hour service is available to veterans of all deployments and their families on **1800 011 046**.