

Anxiety



Language

- We take a broad and inclusive approach to the topic of women's health.
- We write health information for people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and identities. We use the terms 'women' and 'girls', but we acknowledge that these terms are not inclusive of all people who may use our content.

Presentation aims



By the end of this presentation, we hope you will:

- be able to recognise some of the symptoms of anxiety
- know some of the causes of anxiety
- have some strategies to take care of yourself and reduce anxiety
- know which health professionals can support you in managing anxiety.

What is anxiety?

Anxiety:

- is a normal reaction to stressful or threatening situations
- is common
- can cause physical, emotional and behavioural symptoms
- can be managed with the right strategies and support.



Symptoms of anxiety

- Physical symptoms: shaking, sweating, shallow breathing
- Emotional symptoms: crying, feeling angry, having trouble concentrating, thinking about worst-case scenarios
- Behavioural symptoms: avoiding situations, struggling to meet commitments



What can anxiety feel like?



Examples:

- Feeling sick in the stomach, sweating a lot and needing to go to the toilet more often than usual before a job interview.
- Thinking about the worst-case scenario and feeling short of breath when taking off in an aeroplane.
- Constantly feeling worried about the health or wellbeing of your newborn baby.
- Making up excuses to avoid going to social events.

What causes anxiety?

A range of things can make you more likely to develop anxiety. These include:

- family history
- personality, beliefs and attitudes
- other health issues
- hormonal changes
- experiences of discrimination
- stressful or traumatic events.



Anxiety disorder

- You might have an anxiety disorder if you feel anxious for no reason, your anxiety doesn't go away or your anxiety affects your quality of life.
- 1 in 3 women in Australia will experience an anxiety disorder at some point in her life.



Managing anxiety

Strategies you can try for managing anxiety

You can try some strategies to manage your anxiety. For example:

- positive self-talk
- meditation
- progressive muscle relaxation
- mindfulness
- deep breathing
- talking to someone.



Identifying your triggers

When you understand what triggers your anxiety, you can find ways to manage it.

Some common triggers are:

- caffeine, alcohol or tobacco
- stressful or loud environments
- socialising
- phobias.



Looking after yourself

Looking after yourself and living a healthy lifestyle can help keep anxiety under control.

You can:

- eat a healthy diet
- move your body
- get enough sleep
- minimise alcohol and drugs.



Looking after yourself – eat a healthy diet

Eating a healthy diet can help to reduce anxiety.

You can:

- eat food from the 5 food groups every day
- eat lean protein, fruit and vegetables, healthy fats and complex carbohydrates (e.g. brown rice and lentils)
- cut back on sugary food and drinks.



Looking after yourself – move your body

- Exercise releases hormones that make you feel good!
- You need 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week.
- Choose an activity you enjoy so you'll do it regularly.



Looking after yourself – get enough sleep

There are things you can do to get a better night's rest. For example:

- go to bed and wake up at the same time every day
- no screens before bedtime
- keep your phone out of your bedroom
- avoid drinking caffeine after lunchtime.



Looking after yourself – cut down on alcohol and drugs

- Try not to use alcohol and other drugs to manage anxiety.
- Alcohol and drugs might make you feel better in the short term, but they can make anxiety harder to manage in the long term.
- Talk to a doctor if you're worried about your alcohol or drug use.





Getting professional help

When to get help from a professional



You might benefit from professional help if:

- you feel you need help
- self-help strategies aren't working
- anxiety is affecting your daily life
- you're avoiding situations that make you anxious
- you're having trouble sleeping, concentrating or relaxing.

If you're feeling suicidal, call Lifeline on **13 11 14** straight away.

Talk to your GP

Your doctor can:

- give you strategies to manage anxiety
- discuss treatment options
- help you develop a mental health treatment plan
- refer you to a mental health professional.



Other health professionals

Other health professionals can help you to manage anxiety.

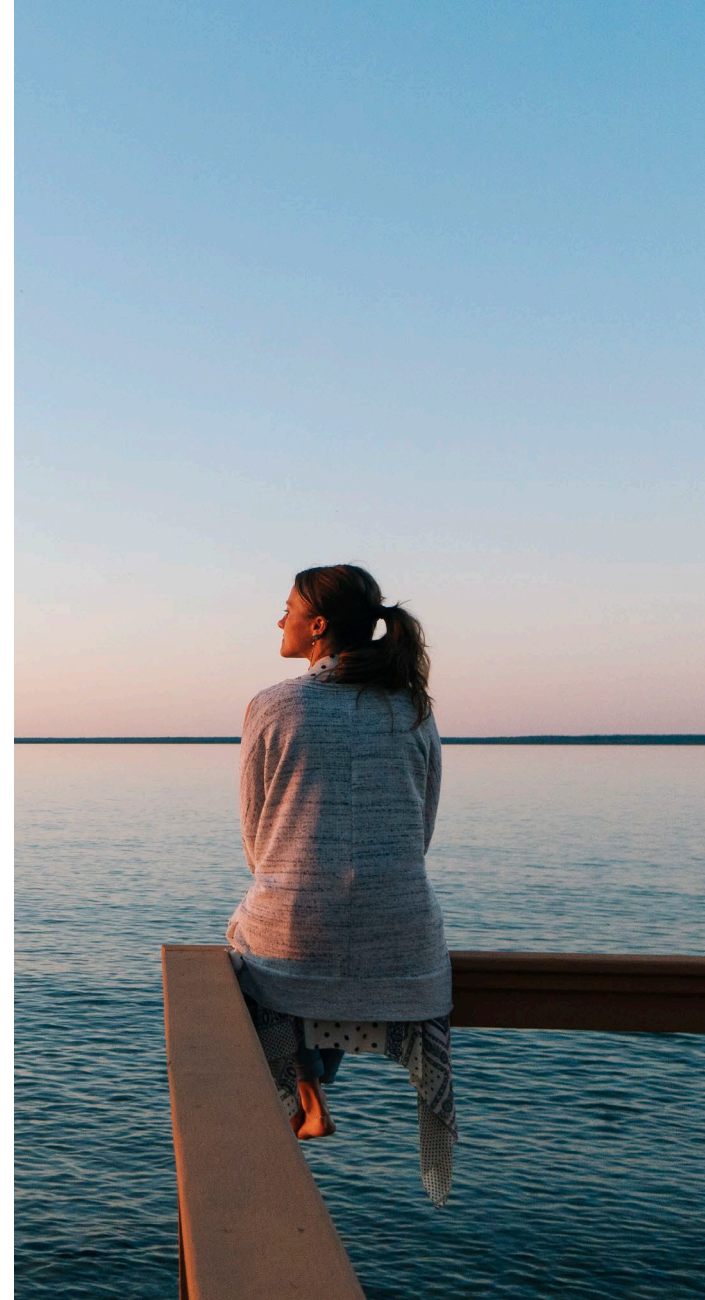
For example:

- psychologist
- mental health social worker
- psychiatrist
- registered counsellor.



More information and resources

- Jean Hailes for Women's Health
jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/anxiety
- Smiling Mind
smilingmind.com.au
- Black Dog Institute
blackdoginstitute.org.au/resources-support/digital-tools-apps



Thank you

Go to jeanhailes.org.au/subscribe for updates on the latest in women's health



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Disclaimer. This information does not replace medical advice. If a person is worried about their health, they should talk to their doctor or healthcare team.

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