

# Tips for managing anxiety

## What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a common condition. It's a normal, human reaction to stressful situations. Anxiety disorders affect one in three women at some stage in their life.

There are several women's health conditions that can cause anxiety – for example, endometriosis and polycystic ovary syndrome. Different life stages can also cause anxiety, such as puberty, pregnancy after childbirth and menopause.

It's good to know there are many ways to manage anxiety so it doesn't affect your daily life. You may need to try a few different approaches before you find one that works for you.



## Be kind to yourself

- Try not to judge yourself as this can make you feel worse. Instead, acknowledge your feelings and remember you're doing the best you can.
- Be aware of your self-talk – try to make sure it's kind rather than critical.
- Check in with your thinking during the day – make sure you're being fair and balanced.

## Change negative thoughts to positive thoughts

- It can be helpful to change negative thoughts like "I can't do this" to positive thoughts like "it's hard, but I will get through this."
- Try to imagine a calm or coping thought, for example, "this too will pass."
- Remember: anxiety is a feeling, not a fact.

## Identify and understand your triggers

- Try to recognise your triggers and write ideas about how you might reduce your anxiety during these times. For example, if you feel anxious about going to a social function, you could organise to go with a friend.

## Deep breathing

- You can try deep breathing as part of your daily routine or when you start to feel anxious.
- Focus on your breath. Take a slow, deep breath through your nose and let it fill your tummy. Then breathe out gently through your mouth.
- When you breathe in, imagine you are bringing energy into your body.
- When you breathe out, let go of any tension in your body.

## Mindfulness

- Mindfulness is when you pay attention to what's happening in the present moment. It helps you to focus on one thing at a time.
- Remember, mindfulness takes focus and practice, so keep trying!
- Next time you go for a walk, breathe deeply and notice what's happening around you. Focus on what you see, hear, smell, feel and taste. Be interested and curious. Try to stay in the moment.

## Progressive muscle relaxation

- Muscles tense up when our body is anxious. Progressive muscle relaxation can help lessen your anxiety.
- Try tensing different muscle groups (e.g. shoulders) then slowly relaxing them.

## Meditation

- Meditation is a type of mind-body relaxation therapy. It involves concentrating your mind on one thing, such as breathing, body movements, sounds or even a mantra (chant).
- Meditation can help you to stay calm and focused on the present moment, rather than worrying about the past or future.
- There are many different types of meditation, including mindfulness meditation, visualisation meditation and yoga.

## Talk to someone you trust

- When you share your feelings and concerns with people you trust, you will feel better and may even learn some new strategies. For example, you might talk to your partner, a friend, a family member or a work colleague.

## Change your focus

- It can be helpful to change your focus from thinking to doing. You can distract yourself with things like household tasks, or creative activities like journaling or knitting.

## Look after yourself

- When you put yourself first and look after your health, this may help to improve your mood and reduce feelings of anxiety.

For example:

- eat healthy foods and choose water over sugary drinks
- do physical activities you enjoy, like walking, swimming or group training
- spend time with people who make you feel good
- follow a good sleep routine
- avoid taking drugs or drinking alcohol.

## When to see your doctor

If anxiety disrupts your daily life or you feel fearful most of the time, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor. The earlier you seek help, the sooner you can feel better.

For more information, visit [jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/anxiety](https://jeanhailes.org.au/health-a-z/anxiety)

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This fact sheet is designed to be informative and educational. It is not intended to provide specific medical advice or replace advice from your medical practitioner.

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Jean Hailes takes a broad and inclusive approach to the topic of women's health. The terms 'women' and 'girls' are used throughout this resource to refer to all women, girls, and gender-diverse people.

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