

Do I need to see a GP about my mental health?

This information about mental health and the role of General Practitioners (GPs) is provided to help you decide whether you need to see a GP about your mental health.

If you'd like to see a psychologist about your mental health it's a good idea to see a GP first for a referral and a Mental Health Care Plan.

If you need urgent help or life is in danger dial 000.

This isn't a crisis guide. If you're in crisis please contact

Crisis Support

- [Lifeline](#) — **13 11 14**
National free crisis counselling service. Available 24 hours a day.

- [Beyond Blue](#) — **1300 224 636**
National free mental health counselling service. Available 24 hours a day.

- [1800 RESPECT](#) — **1800 737 732**
National sexual assault, domestic and family violence counselling service. Available 24 hours a day.

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About mental health and mental ill health

Research shows that around 60% of autistic people experience mental ill health. For example, anxiety.

'Good mental health' is a phrase that's used a lot. Having good mental health means more than just feeling good or happy. It means being able to cope, manage and deal with challenges in everyday life. Mental ill health means not being able to cope, manage and deal with challenges in everyday life.

It's normal to feel worried, sad, overwhelmed, or lonely at times. If you have these feelings a lot and/or become overwhelmed by them, it may be a sign of mental ill health. In this resource we use the term 'mental health concerns' to mean any changes to your mental health that you or someone close to you are worried about.

Making an appointment with a GP is a good place to start if you have concerns about your mental health.

Signs of mental ill health, including differences in autistic people

Mental ill health or mental health concerns can look and feel different for autistic people.

Some of the common lists and descriptions of mental health symptoms may not reflect your experiences, or the way you usually feel. For example, 'downhearted' or 'blue' to describe low mood or sadness.

You may have noticed other changes. You may be more sensitive to some things in the environment or need more input from your environment.

You may have noticed changes to eating, sleeping, and how difficult it is to leave home to go to school or work.

Sometimes it can be hard to describe your experiences, particularly when you have mental health concerns.

There are a number of resources that can help you to understand and communicate with health professionals about what your life is usually like. For example:

- [Reframing Autism](#) has videos of autistic people talking about their behaviours and experiences.
 - [The National Autistic Society](#) has resources that describe autistic behaviours.
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What can affect mental health?

A combination of your genes and your environment affect your mental health.

This means that no two people will respond to the same situation in exactly the same way. Situations that may be overwhelming and cause a lot of anxiety for one person, may seem like a small problem that's easy to manage for another person.

It's important to know that changes in your life and routine can cause changes in your mental health. You may feel more stress, anxiety, depression, or other mental health symptoms in response to different events. These events may be personal to you, or events that impact many people.

Big changes that affect you personally can trigger changes to your mental health. Some examples of big changes are the death of a family member or friend, having a baby, a relationship breakup, or changes to your work or living situation.

Global events that affect large numbers of people, like the COVID-19 pandemic, bushfires or climate change, can also trigger changes to your mental health.

Smaller changes can also affect your mental health. Some examples of smaller changes are a change to your daily routine or special interests, changes in your responsibilities at home, school, or work, changes in your relationships and who you are able to see, or changes to your support team. Even changes to your football or other sporting team may affect your mental health.

There's no right or wrong way to cope with different events. The important thing is to make sure you communicate changes you notice in how you're thinking, feeling, or behaving to someone you trust, or a health professional, for example a GP or a psychologist.

How can a GP help me with my mental health?

A GP is usually the first professional you'll see if you have concerns about your mental health.

The GP will often ask you about what's been happening in your life and may ask you to complete some mental health questionnaires. Read more about [completing mental health questionnaires](#).

GPs are skilled at understanding many different types of conditions. A GP will try to work out if the cause of your condition is physical, psychological, or a combination of both.

GPs can also give you information about different options for treatment. These may include medication, counselling, or ongoing sessions with a psychiatrist or an Allied Mental Health professional such as a psychologist.

If your GP recommends that you see a psychiatrist or an Allied Mental Health professional about a particular issue, they'll make a referral. They may also complete a Mental Health Care Plan. The Plan allows you to use Medicare rebates for a certain number of sessions with a range of specialists. [Read more about different mental health professionals.](#)

Rights and advocacy

You have rights when seeking help for your mental health.

Rights are basic freedoms that all people have, regardless of their sex, race, culture, gender, belief system, disability, or neurology. Your rights shouldn't be taken away from you, and it is against the law to deny people their rights in many situations.

- You have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.
 - You have the right to access appropriate healthcare.
 - You have the right to not be discriminated against because you're autistic.
 - Remember: Your experiences are important, and your support needs are valid!
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If you feel unsupported in getting help for your mental health concerns you have the right to speak out. You can make a complaint to the health professional or practice, or you can contact the [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency](#).

What to do next

You may find the following resources helpful in deciding what to do next:

- [The Support person resource](#) describes what a support person is and times when you might choose to have a support person.
 - If you'd like to explore your symptoms and signs more go to the [Visual symptoms and signs resource](#)
 - If you think you need to book an appointment with a GP go to the [Before the appointment checklist](#)
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Read the [references](#) for this resource.

See other sections of this guide or download the complete guide [here](#).