



Constructing a Healthier Industry
Information Partner



the help is out there

"I felt no one would take me seriously, [that they] would put me down by saying, "it's all in your head. Now that I am seeking help, I wish I had done so years ago." Danielle

Depression's an illness and it's an illness that often won't get better by itself. It may make you feel overwhelmed, upset, angry, unmotivated—it affects people differently. You might feel as if things will never improve, that there's no way of getting through it.

The good news is that the help you need is out there. There are lots of services in the community that can give advice and suggest treatment options for mental health problems.

On this factsheet we've listed a few of the more common people and services that you might approach for help. We've included information about costs, booking appointments, about what may happen during an appointment and about how each service is designed to help you.

GENERAL PRACTITIONER(GP)

Your family doctor (otherwise known as a general practitioner or GP) is a good place to start. General practitioners are used to recognising and treating common health problems, including depression, alcohol and drug concerns, family hassles and medical issues. GPs won't let other people know you've had an appointment with them, or about anything that happened during your appointment. If you feel like you need to talk to someone else about what's going on, GPs can also refer you to people who are specialists in mental health problems, such as counsellors, social workers, psychologists and psychiatrists.

How do I go about seeing a GP?

If you don't have a family doctor or if you'd prefer to see someone you don't know so well, you can check the Yellow Pages to find a GP in your area. You usually need to make an appointment to see a GP, but often if you just turn up, a doctor will see people who don't have appointments in the order in which they arrived. If you need to see someone quickly, let the staff know—say it's urgent that you see a doctor. If you're not happy with your GP, you can ask to see someone different on your next visit or go to another clinic.

What will it cost?

Some GPs require you to pay a small fee. A part of this will be refunded through Medicare. Other GPs bulkbill, which means that you sign a Medicare form at the time of your visit and the GP sends this to Medicare for payment. In this case you need to provide the GP with your Medicare number. At the age of 15, you can apply for your own Medicare card.

"Being diagnosed gave me relief. It helped me to understand that there's something that's not working properly in my body, which makes me physically and mentally sick." Hannah, 18

COUNSELLOR

Counsellors have been professionally trained to talk you through a variety of problems. Issues you might discuss with a counsellor include building up your confidence, bullying, family and relationship issues, school/work problems and troubles with alcohol or drugs. If necessary, a counsellor might refer you to a psychiatrist or psychologist who can help you with your specific problems.

How do I go about seeing a counsellor?

Counsellors work in a variety of settings, such as youth services, private practices, community health centres, schools and universities. To see a counsellor you will normally need to phone and make an appointment. To find one in your area, look in the Yellow Pages under Counselling.

What will it cost?

What it costs to see a counsellor often depends on where they're working. Some counsellors may be free if they're working at a community agency, hospital or school. Counsellors who work in private practices will charge a fee. Counsellors are not covered under Medicare, but if you've got 'extras' private health insurance, part of the fee may be covered. When making an appointment, check first how much it'll cost.

"I eventually decided I really needed to talk to someone who wasn't emotionally involved so I started seeing my school counsellor. She was the best—she became like the big sister I never had. With her help I made it through year 12 and can now say I'm very happy." Renae, 18.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Psychologists are health professionals who provide 'talking therapies' (psychotherapy) to treat mental health problems. The therapy they use may include changing some of the things you do, or the negative ways you think, so that you can feel better. Therapy may also improve your communication skills and how you get on with people. In Australia, psychologists can't prescribe medication. Some examples of why you might see a psychologist include eating disorders, family and relationship problems, upsetting events, extreme fears, anxiety, panic attacks, depression, sleep difficulties or stress.

How do I go about seeing a psychologist?

There may be a psychologist based at your place of study or work, or at your local community health centre. You don't need a referral to see a psychologist. You can look in the Yellow Pages under Psychologists or the Australian Psychological Society can help you find a psychologist to suit your needs.

The phone numbers for the Australian Psychological Society are phone numbers are 1800 333 497 (outside Melbourne) or 03 8662 3300 (in Melbourne).



On this factsheet we've listed a few of the more common people and services that you might approach for help.

Email: referral@psychsociety.com.au.

Website: www.psychology.org.au/psych/referral_service/default.asp

You may have to wait a while for your first appointment, so if your problem is urgent, let the receptionist know when you're making your booking.

What will it cost?

The fee to see a psychologist again varies depending on where they work. For example, psychologists might be free if they're working at your school or local community health service. However, psychologists who work in private practice will charge a fee—it's best to check what this will be when you ring to make your appointment. Again, psychologists are not covered under Medicare but private insurers may pay part of the cost.

PSYCHIATRIST

Psychiatrists are medical doctors who specialise in mental health problems. They are able to treat illnesses such as depression, severe anxiety, schizophrenia and bipolar disorder with both talking therapies and medications if necessary.

How do I go about seeing a psychiatrist?

To see a psychiatrist, you'll need to get a referral from a GP. Psychiatrists work in hospitals, community mental health services or in private practice. Again, it might take a while to get your first appointment, so let the receptionist know if your problem is urgent.

What will it cost?

Medicare covers psychiatrists who work in public hospitals or community health centres. However, if you see a psychiatrist in a private practice, you may have to pay at the time of your visit. If the psychiatrist doesn't bulk-bill, Medicare will cover some of the costs, but you'll have to pay a 'gap' amount. Check about the costs when you make your appointment.

PUBLIC HOSPITALS

Some of the public hospitals in the metropolitan areas have their own mental health units. For young people, these units are known as the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. This means that people who have mental health problems can be treated by health professionals employed at the hospital either as an inpatient (staying in the hospital) or as an outpatient (staying at home but visiting the hospital regularly). If someone's experiencing severe depression or feeling suicidal, they may need to stay in hospital for a period of time. Many hospitals also have an Accident and Emergency Department, where you can go if there's a crisis. They're open 24/7.

SPECIALIST COMMUNITY SERVICES

There are a number of services available in the community, many of which are specifically for young people. You can access them by phoning your local council, or looking in the White Pages or on Justlook.org.au.

CRISIS ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT (CAT) TEAMS

Crisis Assessment and Treatment (CAT) teams for both adults and young people may be accessed by contacting your local hospital. Professionals who work on these teams may come to the person who's experiencing a mental health crisis. These teams are most likely to attend a situation where a person is threatening to harm themselves or another person. In such cases, the person may be admitted to hospital.

TELEPHONE-BASED SERVICES

- **The OzHelp Foundation**

1300 OZHELP (1300 694 357)

www.ozhelp.org.au

- **BeyondBlue**

For information about depression, anxiety and related drug and alcohol problems visit

www.beyondblue.org.au or call the *beyondblue: the national depression initiative* info line on 1300 22 4636

- **Lifeline 13 11 14**

Lifeline is a 24-hour telephone counselling service, where you can talk about a wide range of problems. To find out the mental health services available in your area, you can call Lifeline's Just Ask information line on 1300 131 114 or check out their database at www.justlook.org.au.

- **Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800 (freecall)**

Kids Help Line is a 24-hour counselling service for people aged between 5 and 18. There is also online counselling available at their website: www.kidshelp.com.au.

- **Web-based services**

beyondblue: the national depression initiative [<http://www.beyondblue.org.au>] *beyondblue*, while not a counselling service, exists to provide information and promote awareness about depression. On the *beyondblue* website you can complete interactive checklists to see if you might have depression or anxiety, download factsheets, read personal experiences and much more.

- **Centre for Adolescent Health [<http://www.rch.org.au/cah>]**

The Centre for Adolescent Health aims to improve the health and wellbeing of young people aged between 10 and 24 through providing clinical services, education, training and research.

- **It's Allright [<http://www.itsallright.org>]**

It's Allright is SANE Australia's website for young people with a parent or friend affected by mental illness.

- **MoodGYM [<http://moodgym.anu.edu.au>]**

MoodGYM is an interactive web-based program designed to prevent depression in young people. It delivers cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) which has been shown to be effective in the treatment and prevention of depression.

- **ReachOut! [<http://www.reachout.com.au>]**

ReachOut! is an information and referral service where you can get information about a wide range of health issues—from depression to sexual health to drugs and alcohol. They do not operate as a counselling service.

