

Depression or anxiety later in life: getting back to feeling well

This guide helps you talk to your health professional or to someone you trust

Why am I feeling this way?


Depression and anxiety can happen to anyone at any time of their life. As we get older, changes in our health, losing loved ones, or feeling lonely can leave us sad or anxious. However, feeling down or anxious for many weeks is not a normal part of ageing.

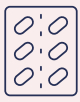
What choices do I have?

There are many ways to get back to feeling well. It can take time to find what works best for you. There are changes that you can make to your day-to-day living. There are also options involving health professionals or medicines.

	Keeping active 	Self-care actions 	Staying connected 
 What should I know?	Exercise can help: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve mood • Reduce feelings of depression or anxiety • Improve sleep • Raise confidence • Connect with others. Speak with your health professional about what activity might be best for you.	Healthy life actions are good for the body and mind. Work with people close to you, including healthcare professionals, to work out actions you can do yourself, and actions you may need help with.	Having strong ties to others can give people happiness, security, support and a sense of purpose. Research shows that social connections are important for mental well-being.
 What can I do?	Be active by doing things you enjoy. You could try: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardening • Walking with a friend or group • Joining a local exercise group or dance class • Trying yoga, tai chi or qigong 	Keep healthy by trying to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the best food choices you can • Set up good sleep habits • Practise self-care If you smoke or drink alcohol, try to cut down, or stop if you can.	Find ways to connect with others . Some ideas include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to a close friend or family member • Join a social or community group • Learn a new skill or hobby • Take up volunteering

Some people may need extra support with psychological therapy, a medicine or both.

	What should I know?	What does this involve?
 Psychological therapies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological therapies can work well for depression and anxiety. • It may take 4 to 6 weeks to start feeling better. • It can take time to find a therapist or an appointment. • Some therapies may have out-of-pocket costs. • You may need to travel to a clinic or practice for appointments. • A mental health treatment plan from your GP can help with costs of psychological care. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychological therapies can help you understand your feelings and thoughts, making it easier to cope with life's challenges and improve your mental well-being. • If psychological therapy is a choice it can take time to find what works best for you.

	What should I know?	What does this involve?
 Antidepressant medicines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Antidepressant medicines don't work straight away. It may be 6-8 weeks before you start to feel better. • They work best when used with self-care and psychological therapy. • Most people will have at least one unwanted effect (side effect). • If you have side effects, some will go away over time like nausea or feeling dizzy. Others are longer lasting, like weight gain, low sex drive or problems having sex. • Older adults may be more sensitive to side effects. You may need more regular checking by your health professional. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The effects of antidepressant medicines are variable in older people. They help improve mood and function in some people but not others. • You may need to try different doses or medicines to find one that works for you. • Not everyone needs to take them long-term. • Have an agreed plan with your health professional for when to talk about stopping this medicine.

Understanding what matters most to you about treatment and your mental health and well-being

It can be hard to know what treatments will work for you. These questions can help you think about what matters most. The choice is yours because you are more likely to stick with a treatment you pick yourself.

	What are your treatment goals?
	How do you feel about taking medicines?
	How do you feel about possible treatment side effects?
	Are you willing to talk about your feelings? Is face-to-face or online better for you?
	How do you feel about learning life-long skills to help improve your mental health and well-being?
	Are there treatments you have tried before that worked, or that did not help?

Do I have enough information and support to make a decision?

YES

NO

I would like to talk to someone about how these choices will meet my needs.
I would like more information about choices I am interested in.

Changes I can try on my own	What support is available in my local area?
<p>I will keep active by:</p> <p>I will try to be healthy by:</p> <p>I will try to stay connected by:</p>	<p>Look for more information at your local council or library, community centres, Men’s Shed, places of worship or by speaking with people you trust.</p>
Changes I can make with my health professional	
Psychological therapies:	Antidepressant medicines:

Don’t be afraid to talk to your GP about the things you want to try. This will help them work with you to create a plan just for you.

My next medical appointment

Date and time: _____ Name: _____ Location: _____