



MACQUARIE
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**LIFESPAN HEALTH
AND WELLBEING
RESEARCH CENTRE**

Anxiety, worry and low mood in older adults



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What is anxiety?

Anxiety is a normal emotion, and everyone experiences it some of the time. However, when it goes on, it can prevent you from doing things or going to places. Anxiety is also known as: worry, fear, concern, dread, shyness, nervousness, and panic.

When people are feeling anxious, they might experience:

- Feeling jittery or on-edge
- Dry mouth
- Racing thoughts
- Difficulty concentrating
- Tightness in chest or throat
- Difficulty sleeping
- Shakiness
- Nausea
- Racing heart
- Dizziness or light headedness
- Muscle tension



People often feel anxious in these situations:

- New and unfamiliar places
- Talking in a group
- Thinking about the future/past
- Worrying about your health
- Worrying about finances
- Worrying about becoming a burden to others
- Riding on buses or planes
- Going into crowded places
- Going away from the house for long periods of time

Anxiety happens when people think something bad is going to happen

Some examples include:

- Thinking something bad will happen in the future
- Thinking that something bad will happen to their friends or family
- Worrying about their health
- Worrying what people will think of them
- Worrying about making the wrong decision
- Thinking that they will not be able to cope
- Thinking they are going to get hurt
- Thinking they will not know what to do

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What is low mood or depression?

Low mood are feelings of sadness, emptiness, numbness, depression, irritability or a lack of pleasure in life. It is also feeling unmotivated or uninterested in doing things we used to enjoy such as meeting up with friends, going for a walk, or reading a book.

It is normal to feel down sometimes. It is not okay if these feelings last for weeks or months.

Continued low mood makes people do less of the things they used to enjoy and this leads people to withdraw more and more from family and friends. Sometimes it is associated with thoughts of self-harm or wishing they were no longer alive.

Negative thinking

When people are feeling down, they think negative things. They are usually negative thoughts about themselves, their past and their future. The more down thoughts they think, the worse they feel. Some examples are:

- Thinking things are never going to change
- Thinking they are not good enough
- Thinking no one cares about them
- Thinking they are a failure
- Thinking there is nothing they can do to make things better

When people are feeling down, they often:

- Spend lots of time in bed or in front of the television doing nothing
- Avoid doing things they need to do by procrastinating on the computer or other tasks
- Spend most of their time alone
- Stop attending social groups, clubs or other hobbies.
- Seek out situations where they can avoid other people.



These withdrawal behaviours can maintain feelings of low mood especially when they occur day after day, week after week. They can also cause loneliness.

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Lifespan Health and Wellbeing Research Centre

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If these symptoms of anxiety, worry, and low mood have started to interfere with your happiness and ability to live your life productively, you might like to discuss these concerns with your GP.

There are many good options for getting help. Psychological therapies and medications can be helpful. Talk to your GP for more information, or contact these organisations:

Emotional Health Clinic

Lifespan Health and Wellbeing Research Centre

Macquarie University

Telephone: 02 9850 8715

Email: AgeingWisely@mq.edu.au

Treatment is available in person and via telehealth.

Beyond Blue

Telephone: 1300 22 4636

Website: www.beyondblue.org.au

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