

Anxiety, Worry and Low Mood in Older Adults



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Brochure created by Dr Jessamine Chen, Professor Viviana Wuthrich, and Dr Carly Johnco for Beyond Blue and is freely distributable.

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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 start to stop you from doing things or going to places.

Anxiety is also known as: Worry, fear, concern, dread, shyness, nervousness, panic. Anxiety happens **when you think something bad is going to happen.**

When you are feeling anxious, you might experience:

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

YOU MIGHT FEEL ANXIOUS IN THESE SITUATIONS:

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

EXAMPLES OF WORRIES:

- “What if my grandchildren don’t get a good education?”
- “What if I get dementia?”
- “What if the blood test results are bad?”
- “What if people think I am stupid?”
- “What if I make the wrong decision?”
- “Everyone will laugh at me and think I am an idiot!”
- “Something bad is going happen”
- “I made a terrible mistake and have ruined everything!”

WHAT IS LOW MOOD?

Low mood are feelings of sadness, emptiness, numbness or a lack of pleasure in life. It is also feeling unmotivated or uninterested in doing things we used to enjoy. For example, 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 withdraw more and more from family and friends.



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NEGATIVE THINKING

When we are feeling down, we think negative things. They are usually negative thoughts about ourselves, our past and the future. The more down thoughts we think, the worse we feel. Some examples are:

- “Things are never going to change”
- “I am not good enough”
- “No one cares about me”
- “I am a failure”
- “There is nothing I can do to make things better”

When people feel down, they tend to do fewer activities and hobbies:

They often spend more time in bed, in front of the television, or sometimes busying themselves on the computer. They tend to seek out more situations where they can be alone.

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



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:

Ageing Wisely

**Centre for Emotional Health Clinic,
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

CRICOS Provider: 00002J | ABN: 90 952 801 237.