



let's talk

seeing a GP about your  
mental health



Talking to a general practitioner (GP) is a good place to start when you're looking for help and advice about your mental health. They're trained to assist with both mental and physical health problems and can tell you where you can find help and support.

If you're worried about your mental health, here's what you can do...

## book it in

Contact a GP practice to make an appointment.

If you don't have a regular doctor you're happy with, you can ask for a GP who is experienced or interested in mental health.



It can be hard if you're in a small town and there aren't many doctors, but it's important to remember that they are bound by confidentiality and can't share your information without your consent, except in the very rare circumstance that your life, or the lives of others, are at risk.

Appointments will usually take 10-15 minutes, but it can be helpful to ask for a longer appointment if it is the first time you've seen this doctor or spoken about your mental health.

When's your first appointment?



GP:		Day:	
Date:		Time:	
Address:		Phone:	

# prepare

Think about what you might like to talk about. It can be helpful to write a few things down and take them along to your appointment. You could try writing about:



- Changes in your feelings, thoughts or body that you're worried about. Think about your sleep, appetite, mood, social interests, motivation and anything else that may have changed.
- How these changes are impacting on your life; are they affecting your social life, work or personal life, and for how long?
- Any stressful events or things you've been worried about.
- Your medical history; what have you seen doctors about in the past? Are you taking any medications, supplements or using natural therapies?

What would you like to tell your doctor?

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Think about whether you'd like to take a family member or friend along with you for support. They might help you to feel more comfortable, remember questions you want to ask or things you'd like to tell the doctor. Think about what you might want to ask.

Maybe you're wondering:

- What type of mental health problem might I have?
- What are my treatment options?
- What can I do to help myself?
- Are there information sheets, books or websites I can look at?

What questions would you like to ask?

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## show up

Talking about your mental health for the first time can be tough, but be honest with your doctor, they're there to help.

Your doctor should ask you a range of questions about your health, lifestyle, family history, employment and preferences for types of treatment. They may also do some tests to rule out any physical health problems.

They might give you a likely diagnosis and a plan for treatment and follow-up, but it may take a few appointments to get there. Your doctor will want to make sure they've got all of the information and that they're fully aware of your situation and your preferences for treatment. They might suggest seeing a counsellor or psychologist, taking medication or things you can do for yourself, like getting some exercise.

If the GP suggests seeing a psychologist or counsellor, they can prepare a Mental Health Treatment Plan, which will mean you can access up to 10 government funded sessions each year. Some professionals do charge an additional fee. If you're concerned about this it can be helpful to ask your GP to recommend someone.

You should be a part of all of these decisions, so ask questions and get a second opinion if you don't feel comfortable. Your doctor is there to help you to manage your mental health and get better.

What did you and your doctor discuss?

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Remember, mental health concerns are very common and treatable. GPs see patients about these issues all the time. If you don't feel comfortable and supported, ask questions, go back and discuss what is worrying you or get a second opinion. The earlier we notice a problem and find help, the better chance we have of a quick recovery, and we reduce our risk of mental health problems in the future.

*If you're concerned about yourself or someone else's mental health you can call the NSW Mental Health Line 1800 011 511 for advice. If you or someone else is in immediate danger call 000 or go to your nearest hospital emergency department.*



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