

Worried about your mental health?

How to get treatment and support

This factsheet explains how you can get help if you are worried about your mental health.



KEY POINTS

- Mental health problems rarely happen overnight and usually appear gradually. They often start with gradual changes in your thoughts, feelings and behaviour.
- Mental health problems are common. 1 in 4 people will have a mental illness at some point in their lives.
- You may want support if you have noticed changes in the way you think or feel which cause problems in your day-to-day life.
- If you think you need help, try to get treatment as soon as you can. Seeking help early can speed up your recovery.
- If you would like treatment, speak to your GP.

This factsheet covers:

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1. How common are mental health problems?

Mental health problems are common. Up to 1 in 4 people will experience poor mental health at some point in their lives.¹ They could be caused by stressful events such as losing a job, bereavement or money issues. These feelings can often be intense, but are often temporary. With the right support and help people make good, positive steps towards recovery.

Some people will experience more serious problems with their mental health. These types of mental health problems often occur as gradual changes that a person may not notice or realise. People might start to behave differently, or start having thoughts or beliefs they didn't have before.

You can find more information about:

- Anxiety disorders
- Depression
- Bipolar disorder
- Personality disorders
- Psychosis
- Schizoaffective disorder
- Schizophrenia
- Stress – how to cope

at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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2. What are the signs that things may not be right?

Most people will feel low, anxious or irritable at some point in their lives. But if you have several symptoms at the same time, this could mean you have a mental illness, especially if you have had them for some time.

If your day-to-day life is getting worse because of these symptoms, then this could also be a sign that something is not right.

The following symptoms could be signs of mental health problems.

- Being anxious and irritable.
- Having a low mood for a long time.
- Finding it difficult to concentrate or remember things.
- Sleeping less or too much.
- Changes in your mood.
- Finding it difficult to manage everyday life, for example, preparing food and washing regularly.
- Feeling teary.
- Becoming suspicious and paranoid.
- Becoming isolated and withdrawn.
- Having suicidal thoughts.

- Believing that your family and friends want to do you harm.
- Believing that people or organisations are out to get you.
- Experiencing hallucinations. This means sensing things that other people do not, this can include seeing and hearing things.
- Believing that you have special powers or are on a mission.
- Excessive spending and problems managing your money.

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3. Where can I get help?

Going to see your GP

If you are worried about your mental health, you should try and seek help early. The first step is to visit your GP and explain how you feel.

GPs are experienced in dealing with mental health problems, so try to be open about how you have been feeling.

You might find it hard to discuss personal problems, or struggle to find the words to explain how you feel. If you do struggle you might find it helpful to try the following.

- Ask your GP for a double appointment. This will give you more time to talk to the doctor.
- Take a friend or relative to the appointment. They can help you to explain things to the GP.
- Write down what you would like to say before the appointment. You could also make notes of your symptoms and questions you would like to ask.

Social care

Your mental health problems may mean that you have social care needs. Social care needs can include needing help with:

- getting out of the house,
- preparing meals or going shopping,
- managing your money, and
- having social contact with friends and family.

You can ask your local authority for a social care assessment to assess your needs. Your local authority must do this if you may need care and support.² The assessment could be face-to-face or online.

This sort of assessment does not look at health needs like medication or talking therapy. If the person assessing you thinks you may also have health needs, they can ask the NHS see you. They may call this a 'joint assessment'.³

Carer's assessment to help with everyday life

If you are a carer of someone with mental health problems and you believe that your caring role has had an impact on your mental health you should be able to get a carer's assessment from your local authority.

You can find out more information about:

- GPs – what to expect from your doctor
- Social care - assessment and eligibility
- Social care - care and support planning
- Carers' assessments

at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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4. What should happen when I see a GP?

Once you have told your symptoms to the GP, they should think about whether you have an illness. Your GP should check your health to work out the type of support you need. They should talk to you about your options. These are some options that your doctor may offer.

- Medical treatment. This could be medications or psychological therapy.
- Advice on eating well, sleeping better and exercise.

Your GP may suggest that you watch your feelings over a couple of weeks. If things don't improve you should go back for another appointment.

If you need treatment for a mental health problem, your GP should try to help you first before referring you to a mental health specialist. Most mental health problems can be treated with a combination of medication and talking therapies. GPs can prescribe medication such as antidepressants.

If your doctor feels that you need talking therapies they can refer you to a local NHS service. There may be a long wait before you see a therapist. If there is a long wait you could ask your doctor about other treatment options outside of the NHS.

If your symptoms are particularly bad or if you need expert treatment, your GP may pass your details on to specialist mental health services.

If you have a severe mental health problem, a psychiatrist may manage your care and treatment. You may have help from a specialist team, like a Community Mental Health Team (CMHT). If you get this extra help and support, this could be through the Care Programme Approach (CPA). You can find more about:

- Talking therapies
- GPs – what to expect from your doctor
- Community Mental Health Team
- Care Programme Approach (CPA)

at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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5. Will my GP keep my information confidential?

Your GP should keep information about you confidential.⁴ This means that they should not give information about you to your family, employer, police, solicitor, or other organisations unless you give consent. The only time your GP can share information about you without your consent is when:

- it is in your best interests,
- it is required by law, or
- it is in the public interest.⁵

You can find out more about ‘**Confidentiality**’ at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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6. What if I have problems getting help?

Although all doctors should be trained to deal with mental health, you might feel that your GP isn’t very understanding or able to see that you have a problem.

If this happens you should not give up and still try to seek help. You could try to:

- make an appointment with a different GP,
- change GP surgeries,
- get an independent community advocate to help make your views and wishes heard,
- speak to your local Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), or
- make a complaint.

You can find more information about:

- GPs - What to expect from your doctor
- Advocacy
- Complaints

at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

7. Can I get help without seeing my doctor?

You do not have to go and see your GP if you don't want to. You can use self-help and get treatment without going to see a GP. You could try the following options:

Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT)

'Improving Access to Psychological Therapies' (IAPT) services are part of the NHS and mainly offer cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for mild to moderate anxiety and depression. There should be an IAPT service available in your area.

You may be able to self refer to your local IAPT service but in some areas a GP will need to make the referral.

You can search for local IAPT services [here](#).

Pay for private healthcare

You could pay to see a private psychiatrist. Private psychiatrists can give a diagnosis and prescribe medication for you. They may also refer you to other services such as counselling services which you may have to pay for. Private psychiatrists can be expensive. If you would like to find a private psychiatrist you could:

- ask your GP if they can recommend one to you,
- do a search online or in a phone directory, or
- contact private healthcare providers such as the Priory or Cygnet.

You should check that any private psychiatrist is registered with the General Medical Council. You can check here: www.gmc-uk.org/doctors/register/LRMP.asp#View.

Pay for private therapy or counselling

You could pay to see a private therapist or counsellor. Some private therapists charge less for people on lower incomes.

It is a good idea to check if a private therapist is a member of a professional body such as the BACP. A therapist that is a member of a professional body will have to meet certain professional standards. As well as following the code of ethics and complaints procedure.

Complementary and alternative treatments

Complementary and alternative treatments look at all parts of your recovery and needs, and aim to look at your physical, mental, spiritual wellbeing. This is known as an holistic approach. Many people with mental illness find this approach beneficial.

People use complementary and alternative treatments to treat many different health conditions. The NHS gives information about these treatments for some health needs. However, there is still a lack of reliable scientific evidence about their use in treating mental disorders.⁶ You can

find out more about, '**Complementary and alternative treatments**' at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

Online self-help

There is a lot of useful self-help information available online. Self-help guides on the internet may be able to help you to understand why you are feeling and behaving in a particular way. Understanding the reason for your thoughts and behaviours can help with your recovery. Self-help can also give you coping skills to deal with your problems.

These are some websites you could try.

- www.beatingtheblues.co.uk – for depression
- <http://fearfighter.cbtprogram.com/> – for anxiety and phobia

Both are computer based Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) packages that are available on the internet. They are available free through the NHS. Speak to your GP about whether they can give you log-in details.

You could also try:

Get Self Help

This website has free CBT self-help resources.

Website: www.getselfhelp.co.uk

Moodjuice

A free online self-help resource for different mental health problems and symptoms.

Website: www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk

Moodgym

A free online self-help resource to give you coping strategies for dealing with the way that you think and feel.

Website: www.moodgym.anu.edu.au

Moodscope

A free, social networking tool that allows people to monitor their mood and receive support.

Website: www.moodscope.com

Living life to the full

A free internet self-help resource for different problems.

Website: www.llttf.com

Support from a local organisation

Some charities offer therapy, one-to-one support, group support and peer support. A peer support group is where like minded people come together to share information, experiences and offer emotional support to each other. You might be able to find a local group by searching online. If there isn't a group in your area you may be able to find an online support group or forum.

At Rethink Mental Illness we provide peer support groups and community services in some areas of England. Find out what is available at: www.rethink.org/services-groups.

MIND

A mental health charity that provides local services. Some of them have therapy sessions, support groups and other help. You can search for local services on their website below.

Telephone: 0300 123 3393 Mon to Fri, 9am to 6pm

E-mail: info@mind.org.uk

Website: www.mind.org.uk

Anxiety UK

Provides advice and support to people with all forms of anxiety.. To access low cost therapy you can become a member of Anxiety UK for about £30.

Telephone: 08444 775 774 Mon to Fri. 9.30-5.30

E-mail: support@anxietyuk.org.uk

Website: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Moodswings

Gives practical support and help to people experiencing mood disorders.

Telephone: 0161 832 37 36

E-mail: info@moodswings.org.uk

Website: www.moodswings.org.uk

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8. Can mental health problems affect work?

Having a mental health problem may make it more difficult for you to work. You may find it more difficult to complete tasks if your illness affects your concentration.

If you tell your employer that you have a mental health problem you may be entitled to reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010.⁷ Reasonable adjustments mean that your employer must put things in place to make it easier for you to do your job. For example, your employer could allow you to work flexibly.

It is up to you if you decide to tell your employer that you have a mental health problem. But your employer only has to give you reasonable adjustments if they know about your illness.

An employer should not ask you questions about your mental health during the application process or during the interview process unless you need adjustments to be able to attend the interview.

For some jobs you have to disclose your mental health to your employer. These jobs include doctor, nurse, teacher and social worker. If you are applying to study or are studying one of these professions you may also need to disclose your mental health.

You can find more information about:

- Discrimination and mental health
- Confidentiality
- Work and mental health

at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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9. Can drugs and alcohol cause mental health problems?

Drinking too much or using illegal drugs can cause mental health problems. But if you have a mental illness, you may also use drugs and alcohol to deal with your symptoms. This is known as self-medication. Unfortunately, drugs and alcohol usually make mental health problems worse, even if you feel better in the short term.

Alcohol

If you drink too much alcohol you may develop a mental health problem such as depression or anxiety. You may be able to improve your symptoms if you stop or reduce the amount of alcohol that you drink.

Drugs

Drugs can also cause mental health problems. This includes both illegal drugs and some legal drugs. For example, using cannabis may make it more likely that you get psychosis or depression.⁸

Benzodiazepines can also cause health problems. People also buy them illegally because of their relaxing effects. They can cause memory and concentration problems if you take them for a long time.

If you have problems with drugs or alcohol and have a mental health problem you should discuss this with your doctor as soon as you can.

Alcohol and drugs can:

- make your medication less effective,
- make your symptoms worse,
- make you feel angry or aggressive, and
- make you feel suicidal.⁹

If you have a mental health problem in addition to alcohol or drug misuse, doctors call this 'dual diagnosis'. You will probably need specialist help and treatment.

You can find more information about:

- drugs, alcohol and mental health
- Cannabis and Mental Health

at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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10. Can people recover from mental illness?

Many people have mental health problems and many are able to recover if they get the right sort of support and help. People can often feel much better and more positive about themselves and the future once they have sought treatment.

If you are concerned about your mental health then please consider the options in this factsheet and remember that many services and organisations are there to help and support you.

You can find more information about '**Recovery**' at www.rethink.org. Or call our General Enquiries team on 0121 522 7007 and ask them to send you a copy of our factsheet.

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Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS is an organisation within the NHS that provides information and support to patients. You can search for your local service at:

Website: [www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Patient-advice-and-liaison-services-\(PALS\)/LocationSearch/363](http://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Patient-advice-and-liaison-services-(PALS)/LocationSearch/363).

Samaritans

They offer emotional support for people in a crisis, available 24 hours a day.

Telephone: 116123

Address: Freepost RSRB-KKBY-CYJK, P.O. Box 9090, Stirling, FK8 2SA

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Website: www.samaritans.org

Sane

A national charity aiming to improve the quality of life for people affected by mental illness. They have a 24 hour online support forum and textcare. This service provides support at a specific time of the day through text and have a national, out-of-hours helpline offering specialist emotional support and information to anyone affected by mental illness.

Telephone: 0300 304 7000 4.30pm – 10.30pm daily

Website: www.sane.org.uk

Elefriends

A supportive online community where you can talk about your mental health.

Website: www.elefriends.org.uk/



¹ Health and Social Care Information Centre. *Adult Psychiatric Morbidity Survey in England 2007: Results of a household survey (2009)*
<http://content.digital.nhs.uk/pubs/psychiatricmorbidity07>

(Accessed:14th April 2017)

² s9(1), Care Act 2014 c23

³ Department of Health. *Care and Support Statutory Guidance 2014*. para 6.3
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>

(Accessed 21st April 2017)

⁴ General Medical Council. *Confidentiality: good practice in handling patient information* (2017). http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/ethical_guidance/confidentiality.asp (accessed 28th April 2017).

⁵ General Medical Council. *When you can disclose personal information*. http://www.gmc-uk.org/guidance/ethical_guidance/30610.asp (accessed 28th April 2017).

⁶ The Royal College of Psychiatrists. *Complementary and alternative medicines*.
www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/treatmentswellbeing/complementarytherapy.aspx
(Accessed 21st April 2017)

⁷ s20, Equality Act 2010 c15.

⁸ The Royal College of Psychiatrists. *Cannabis and mental health*.
<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfo/problems/alcoholanddrugs/cannabis.aspx>
(accessed 21st April 2017)

⁹ Department of Health. *Mental Health Policy Implementation Guide, Dual Diagnosis Good Practice Guide (2002)* p9
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20041116071424/http://www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/06/04/35/04060435.pdf> (accessed 21st April 2017) para 1.5.1.

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Rethink Mental Illness Advice Service

Phone 0300 5000 927

**Monday to Friday, 9:30am to 4pm
(excluding bank holidays)**

Email advice@rethink.org

Did this help?

We'd love to know if this information helped you.

Drop us a line at: feedback@rethink.org

or write to us at Rethink Mental Illness:

RAIS

PO Box 17106

Birmingham B9 9LL

or call us on 0300 5000 927.

We're open 9:30am to 4pm

Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays)



**Leading the way to a better
quality of life for everyone
affected by severe mental illness.**

For further information
on Rethink Mental Illness
Phone 0121 522 7007
Email info@rethink.org



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twitter.com/rethink_



www.rethink.org

Need more help?

Go to **www.rethink.org** for information on symptoms, treatments, money and benefits and your rights.

Don't have access to the web?

Call us on 0121 522 7007. We are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and we will send you the information you need in the post.

Need to talk to an adviser?

If you need practical advice, call us on 0300 5000 927 between 9:30am to 4pm, Monday to Friday. Our specialist advisers can help you with queries like how to apply for benefits, get access to care or make a complaint.

Can you help us to keep going?

We can only help people because of donations from people like you. If you can donate please go to **www.rethink.org/donate** or call 0121 522 7007 to make a gift. We are very grateful for all our donors' generous support.



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