

# UNSW Science Student Mental Health Guide and Resources



## What is mental health?

“Mental health is defined as a state of wellbeing in which every individual realizes their\* own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively, and fruitfully, and can make a contribution to their community.”<sup>1</sup>

**World Health Organization**

<sup>1</sup> The original quote used “he or she” which has been amended to “their” in this document to reflect and acknowledge gender diversity in our community

We often associate the term “mental health” with “mental illness.” But mental health, much like physical health, exists along a spectrum. We all have days where our physical health isn’t at its best, maybe due to an injury or a virus, and others when we feel physically great. Likewise, we have days when our mental health isn’t optimal maybe because of a fight with a loved one or impending exams, and others where things are going really well. Sometimes we don’t feel 100% mentally or physically for no apparent reason and that’s okay. The problem emerges when this feeling of ill-health is persistent and impacts our ability to live a rich, satisfying, and full life. Sometimes this can be serious and diagnosable as a mental health disorder.

## Why would I need help?

We can benefit from additional help with our mental health at many points in our lives. Sometimes this is in response to a challenging or traumatic event (e.g., a sexual assault, divorce, death of a loved one). Other times it can be due to a psychological disorder (e.g., an anxiety disorder, depression, or an eating disorder). At other times it may be that we’re not feeling okay, maybe we’re feeling down, upset or nervous about switching jobs or moving homes. The important thing to note is that we’re never not struggling enough nor struggling too much to seek help. There isn’t a threshold that we need to pass to warrant or deserve assistance. Help is always there for us.

## When do I need help?

Asking for help can be really challenging and frightening at times. Socially, we're taught that we should be able to manage things ourselves and that asking for help is a sign of weakness or something shameful. That's what we call a social construct (an idea that's been fabricated), not a truth.

That misunderstanding can be stronger depending on our cultural, familial, and generational background. In reality, one in every five Australians will experience a mental health condition in a given year, and almost half the population has experienced a mental health condition in their lifetime ([Health Direct](#))

While we can seek help at any time, it's especially important to seek professional help when we feel our mood is not in our control or that our mood or behavioural changes have become more than a temporary thing. According to the Black Dog Institute and Beyond Blue, other key signs that may indicate that someone would benefit from professional help include but are not limited to:

- A sense of hopelessness
- Thoughts about harming yourself or others
- Lack of motivation to complete tasks or activities that used to bring you pleasure
- Persistent panicked or anxious behaviours
- Fluctuating mood
- Changes to eating patterns
- Self-harm
- An overwhelming sense of loneliness
- Alcohol or drug misuse
- Changes in sleep patterns

Trustworthy information and reliable support can positively change our life when we are experiencing mental health challenges. We don't need to know exactly what is wrong, as only a trained health professional can specifically diagnose someone with a psychological disorder.

When possible, avoid waiting until a problem has hit "crisis" stage. Early intervention can make a big difference. Just as we wouldn't put up with a dislocated shoulder, we shouldn't tolerate long periods of feeling anxious or depressed. It is important to proactively seek out appropriate help so that we can make changes and ensure that our mental health improves.

## Who can help?

Professional help for mental health concerns can come in many forms. Below is a non-exhaustive list of the different types of professionals that may be able to help. To find out more about these professionals and the differences between them click [here](#).

- General Practitioners (GPs)
- Psychiatrists
- Psychologists
- Mental health nurses
- Accredited Mental Health Social Workers
- Occupational therapists in mental health
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health workers
- Counsellors
- Complementary health practitioners
- Hospitals
- Crisis Assessment or Acute Treatment teams

## Where can I find help?

There is a range of ways to seek help as outlined in the resource sheets attached. A good place to start is with a doctor (GP) who will be able to make an initial evaluation and then refer you to other services for mental health. You can also find e-resources below though it should be noted that this is not a replacement for professional help.

## How can I help someone else?

Given high rates of mental ill-health and psychological disorders in Australia and around the world, it is very likely that someone in our life at some stage will be struggling with their mental health. It can be hard to know what to do when supporting someone with a mental health issue, the best thing is to start with a conversation. The below resources provide some guidance on how to assist someone in need.

- [Mental Health First Aid Training – UNSW](#)
- [Talking to Someone You are Worried About – Beyond Blue](#)
- [Helping Someone Else – Black Dog Institute](#)

## E-Resources

### Fact Sheets, General Resources, and Guides

- [A Guide to What Works for Anxiety – Beyond Blue](#)
- [A Guide to What Works for Depression – Beyond Blue](#)
- [Mental Health Fact Sheet – Beyond Blue](#)
- [Resource Library – Beyond Blue](#)
- [Fact Sheets – Black Dog Institute](#)
- [Head to Health – Australian Government](#)
- [Under the Radar – Mental Health of Australian University Students – Orygen](#)
- [Lifeline](#)

### Student-Specific Resources

- [UNSW Looking After Your Mental Health](#)
- [UNSW Wellbeing and Health](#)
- [UNSW Psychology and Wellness](#)
- [UNSW Mind Smart Guides](#)
- [UNSW Student Support I Need Help With](#)
- [Youth Mental Health Fact Sheets – Orygen](#)
- [The Rubber Brain \(Book\) – Toolkit for Students to Optimise Work, Life, and Study](#)
- [Digital, Phone, and Face-to-Face Services for All Students](#)
- [The Fridge Self-Serve Resources for University Students](#)
- [Mood Gym](#)

### Screening and Symptom Checker

- [Anxiety and Depression Screening Checklist – Beyond Blue](#)
- [Self-Test and Self-Help Tools – Black Dog Institute](#)
- [Health Direct – Symptom Checker – Australian Government](#)
- [This Way Up – St. Vincent’s Hospital and UNSW](#)

### Find a Professional

- [Find a Professional – Beyond Blue](#)
- [Find a Psychologists](#)

## References

- Beyond Blue, 2023, Beyond Blue Ltd, accessed 04 January 2023 <<https://www.beyondblue.org.au>> Black Dog Institute, 2023, accessed 04 January 2023 <<https://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au/>>
- Health Direct, 2023, Australian Government, accessed 04 January 2023 <<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/>>
- World Health Organization, 2023, United Nations, accessed 04 January 2023 <<https://www.who.int/>>

*These guidelines were originally developed in consultation with UNSW Psychology and Wellness (formerly CAPS) in 2019. They are accurate as of 04/01/2023. The information included in this Mental Health Guide was adapted from the resources referenced above. Please note that the resources, links, and advice are subject to change. UNSW Science cannot guarantee the accuracy of third-party links.*

# Mental Health Support

In an emergency situation  
call **000**

If someone has attempted or is at immediate risk of harming themselves or others call **triple zero (000)** immediately.

## Urgent Care

There are several options to access urgent mental health care:

Ring the Mental Health Line on **1800 011 511**. This line is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You will be able to speak with a clinician who can provide recommendations about how to manage the situation or put you in contact with the appropriate mental health team.

In urgent cases you can attend the Emergency Department at your nearest Hospital where there is 24-hour access to specialist mental health care and support.

If the situation is urgent or becoming dangerous ring **Triple Zero (000)** and request ambulance and/or police. They will be able to assist the person safely to the hospital Emergency Department to access mental health care.

## Non-Urgent Care

### Free or Discounted Services

#### UNSW Psychology and Wellness

For Domestic and International Students  
Counselling and Psychological Services UNSW.

\*Only for currently enrolled students\*

[Click to find out more about services and booking appointments](#)

#### Student Wellbeing

For Domestic and International Students

Student Wellbeing and health can help you find support if you need help with your personal life, getting your academic success on track or just want to know how to stay safe.

[Click to find out more.](#)

#### NewAccess

For Domestic and International Students

NewAccess is an early intervention program designed to provide easily accessible, free and quality services for people with mild to moderate cases of depression and anxiety.

[Click to find out more and access the service.](#)

#### Mental Health Connect

For Domestic and International Students

UNSW Mental Health Connect helps you find the support you need for your mental health, whether that be face-to-face or online.

[Click to find out more.](#)

#### Psychological Support Services (PSS)

Only for Domestic Students

PSS provides FREE short-term face to face or telehealth psychological services for underserved groups. You have to see GP to be referred to this scheme as well as fit specific eligibility criteria.

[Click to find out more.](#)

#### Headspace

Only for Domestic Students

Headspace is the National Youth Mental Health Foundation providing early intervention mental health services to 12-25 year olds, along with assistance in promoting young peoples' wellbeing.

[Click to find a centre and book a session.](#)

[Visit eheadspace for online and telephone support.](#)

#### Better Access Mental Health Care Plan

Only for Domestic Students

Under this scheme individuals can get a rebate (money back) on a maximum of 10 sessions in a calendar year with selected mental health services. The first step is to visit a GP (doctor). They are responsible for assessing whether this scheme is suitable for you and if so, will help prepare a Mental Health Care Plan.

This scheme is only free if your GP and mental health care practitioner bulk bills. You can find out if your GP bulk bills by calling ahead. Then make sure you tell your GP that you would like to see a mental health care practitioner who bulk bills.

[Click to find out more](#)

#### Community Mental Health Care

Only for Domestic Students

Community mental health services are free to the public. They are generally available for people with more severe psychological disorders.

The Mental Health Line at **1800 0011 511** is a good first step towards accessing community mental health services.

While not a counselling service the mental health professional who answer calls will advise whether or not a person is in need of mental health services and provide referral information.

[Click to find out more.](#)

### Services at Cost

#### Health Insurance Supported Mental Health Care

For Domestic and International Students

Your health insurance may offer rebates (money back) to help cover the cost of mental health care such as seeing a psychologist.

**How much will it cost?**

For example if you're an international student on the Medibank UNSW Overseas Student (OSHC) Health Cover you can get 100% back of the cost to see a GP and will get back 85% of the cost of seeing a specialist e.g: \$84.80 back for a 50 min+ session with a psychologist.

This covers as many sessions as you need, unlike the 10 session cap Medicare has for domestic students each year.

Click to check UNSW's OSHC Mental Health coverage (comes under psychiatry and "all other medical services provided out of hospital"). You can also call the Medibank 24/7 Student Health and Support Line on 1800 887 283 which provides counselling and interpreting.

If you're not an international student or not with the UNSW Medibank OSHC Health Cover you will need to check with your health insurance for your coverage amounts. You also need to check your mental health care provider is registered with your health fund.

[Click to find a mental health care provider.](#)

#### Full Fee Mental Health Care

For Domestic and International Students

If your health insurance does not cover the mental health care you need or your mental health care provider of choice isn't registered with your health insurance you must pay the full fee which varies from practitioner to practitioner.

[Click to find a mental health care provider.](#)

**How much will it cost?**

That depends how much your mental health care provider charges.

Fees will usually be listed on their website, or you can call ahead and ask.

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Under this scheme individuals can get a rebate (money back) on a maximum of 10 sessions in a calendar year with selected mental health services. The first step is to visit a GP (doctor). They are responsible for assessing whether this scheme is suitable for you and if so, will help prepare a Mental Health Care Plan.

**How much will it cost?**

That depends how much your mental health care provider charges. The amount you get back from Medicare depends on what type of provider is running the session and how long it goes for.

For example you'll get: \$84.80 back for a 50 min+ session with a registered psychologist.

That means if your session with a registered psychologist costs \$160 you'll end up paying \$75.20. You can call ahead and ask how much they charge after the Medicare rebate.

[You can check rebate amounts by clicking here.](#)

These guidelines were developed in consultation with UNSW Psychology and Wellness (formerly CAPS).

They are accurate as of 27/02/23.

Please note that all mental health initiatives, services, insurances and rebate amounts are subject to change. Some of these services are only available to particular student groups such as enrolled domestic (Australian) students or enrolled international students. Best efforts have been used to provide accurate and comprehensive information. However, this document does not cover the full spectrum of mental health services available and should not be used as a resource in isolation.