

## Alcohol, anxiety and depression

**We can all experience times of poor physical health in our life, and it is the same for our mental health.**

There are many signs that might indicate you are suffering from depression, anxiety and/or alcohol problems. These are the most common mental health problems affecting people in Australia. Depression affects one in five people, and anxiety disorders affect at least one in eight people in Australia at some time in their lifetime. A GP can provide effective treatment for these problems, or can refer you to a specialist for extra help. Effective treatments are available and early identification and care can reduce harm and improve quality of life.

### **When a person is depressed and/or anxious they may feel:**

- Tired and run down.
- Sad and hopeless.
- Irritable much of the time.
- Confused and not knowing what is happening to them.
- Worried and anxious much of the time.
- Withdrawing from normal activities.
- Feeling knots and butterflies when faced with a difficult situation, or avoiding situations that cause uncomfortable feelings and anxiety.

### **Some signs that may indicate alcohol problems:**

- Thinking you drink too much.
- Friends, relatives or a doctor showing concern about a person's drinking.

- Regularly consuming more than four drinks on any one occasion.
- Drinking to cope with stress, loneliness, anger or sleeplessness.
- Trying to cut down or to stop drinking without success.

### **Actions you can take:**

- Let your GP know if you are getting help from anyone else, such as other doctors, self-help groups, family and friends, or natural therapists.
- Remember to provide your GP with your full list of medications (including over-the-counter medications, vitamins and natural therapies).
- If you are uncertain or nervous about speaking to a GP, take a friend or family member with you. He or she can also help you to remember information provided by your GP.
- Ask your GP for a general health check to see what else might be adding to the way you feel.
- Many general practices can provide a practice nurse to help you with your appointments. You can speak to a practice nurse if you are uncertain or nervous about speaking to a GP.

For counselling services call Lifeline on 1300 13 11 14