**How can I help myself?**

**Talk to someone you trust**

Talking to someone you trust about what's making you anxious could be a relief. It may be that just having someone listen to you and show they care can help in itself. If you aren't able to open up to someone close to you, the [Samaritans](https://www.samaritans.org/) and [Anxiety UK](https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/) both run helplines that you can call to talk to someone.

**Try to manage your worries**

It can be really hard to stop worrying when you have anxiety. You might have worries you can't control. Or you might feel like you need to keep worrying because it feels useful – or that bad things might happen if you stop.

It can be helpful to try different ways of addressing these worries. For example, you could:

* Set aside a specific time to focus on your worries – so you can reassure yourself you haven't forgotten to think about them. Some people find it helps to set a timer.
* Write down your worries and keep them in a particular place – for example, you could write them in a notebook, or on pieces of paper you put in an envelope or jar.

**Look after your physical health**

* **Try to get enough sleep.** Sleep can give you the energy to cope with difficult feelings and experiences.
* **Think about your diet**. Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can make a difference to your mood and energy levels.
* **Try to do some physical activity**. Exercise can be really helpful for your mental wellbeing. I

**Try breathing exercises**

Breathing exercises can help you cope and feel more in control. You can find some suggestions on our page on [relaxation](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/relaxation/) and [on the NHS Choices website](http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/ways-relieve-stress.aspx).

**Keep a diary**

It might help to make a note of what happens when you get anxious or have a panic attack. This could help you spot patterns in what triggers these experiences for you, or notice early signs that they are beginning to happen.

You could also make a note of what's going well. Living with anxiety can mean you think a lot about things that worry you or are hard to do. It's important to be kind to yourself and notice the good things too.

**Try peer support**

Peer support brings together people who’ve had similar experiences to support each other. Many people find it helps them to share ideas about how to stay well, connect with others and feel less alone. You could:

* Contact a specialist organisation. For example, you can find details of support groups, forums and helplines on the [Anxiety Care](http://www.anxietycare.org.uk/docs/home.asp), [Anxiety UK](https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/our-services/self-help-groups/), [No More Panic](http://www.nomorepanic.co.uk/), [No Panic](https://www.nopanic.org.uk/) and [Triumph Over Phobia UK](http://www.topuk.org/topuk-groups/)websites.
* Join Elefriends, Mind's supportive online community (find out more on our page about [Elefriends](https://www.mind.org.uk/elefriends/)).
* Contact [Mind's Infoline](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines/) and ask about support groups near you. Alternatively you could [use our interactive map to find your local Mind](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/local-minds/), and contact them directly.

**Complementary and alternative therapies**

Yoga, meditation, aromatherapy, massage, reflexology, herbal treatments, Bach flower remedies, and hypnotherapy are all types of complementary therapy that you could try, and see if they work for you. Some people find that one or more of these methods can help them to relax, or sleep better.

Many chemists and health shops stock different remedies and should be able to offer advice. (See our pages on [complementary and alternative therapies](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/complementary-and-alternative-therapies/) for more information.)

Food and Mood

**Eating regularly**

If your blood sugar drops you might feel tired, irritable and depressed. Eating regularly and choosing foods that release energy slowly will help to keep your sugar levels steady.

Slow-release energy foods include: pasta, rice, oats, wholegrain bread and cereals, nuts and seeds.

**Quick tips:**

* Eating breakfast gets the day off to a good start.
* Instead of eating a large lunch and dinner, try eating smaller portions spaced out more regularly throughout the day.
* Avoid foods which make your blood sugar rise and fall rapidly, such as sweets, biscuits, sugary drinks, and alcohol.

**Staying hydrated**

If you don’t drink enough fluid, you may find it difficult to concentrate or think clearly. You might also start to feel constipated (which puts no one in a good mood).

**Quick tips:**

* It’s recommended that you drink between 6-8 glasses of fluid a day.
* Water is a cheap and healthy option.
* Tea, coffee, juices and smoothies all count towards your intake (but be aware that these may also contain caffeine or sugar).

**Looking after your gut**

Sometimes your gut can reflect how you are feeling emotionally. If you're stressed or anxious this can make your gut slow down or speed up.  For healthy digestion you need to have plenty of fibre, fluid and exercise regularly.

Healthy gut foods include: fruits, vegetables and wholegrains, beans, pulses, live yoghurt and other probiotics.

**Quick tips:**

* It might take your gut time to get used to a new eating pattern, so make changes slowly to give yourself time to adjust.
* If you’re feeling stressed and you think it is affecting your gut, try some [relaxation techniques](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/tips-for-everyday-living/relaxation/) or breathing exercises.

**Managing caffeine**

Caffeine is a stimulant, which means it will give you a quick burst of energy, but then may make you feel anxious and depressed, disturb your sleep (especially if you have it before bed), or give you withdrawal symptoms if you stop suddenly.

Caffeine is in: tea, coffee, chocolate, cola and other manufactured energy drinks.

**Quick tips:**

* If you drink tea, coffee or cola, try switching to decaffeinated versions.
* You might feel noticeably better quite quickly if you drink less caffeine or avoid it altogether.

**Getting your 5 a day**

Vegetables and fruit contain a lot of the minerals, vitamins and fibre we need to keep us physically and mentally healthy.

Eating a variety of different coloured fruits and vegetables every day means you’ll get a good range of nutrients.

**Quick tips:**

* Fresh, frozen, tinned, dried and juiced (one glass) fruits and vegetables all count towards your 5 a day.
* As a general rule, one portion is about a handful, small bowl or a small glass.
* For ideas on how to get your 5 a day, visit [NHS Choices](http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/5ADAY/Pages/5ADAYhome.aspx).

**Getting enough protein**

Protein contains amino acids, which make up the chemicals your brain needs to regulate your thoughts and feelings. It also helps keep you feeling fuller for longer.

Protein is in: lean meat, fish, eggs, cheese, legumes (peas, beans and lentils), soya products, nuts and seeds.

**Quick tip:**

* Whatever your diet, why not do some research into other foods that contain protein, and find something new to try? For ideas on healthy recipes, visit [NHS Choices](https://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/healthy-recipes/Pages/Healthy-recipes.aspx).

**Eating the right fats**

Your brain needs fatty acids (such as omega-3 and -6) to keep it working well. So rather than avoiding all fats, it’s important to eat the right ones.

Healthy fats are found in: oily fish, poultry, nuts (especially walnuts and almonds), olive and sunflower oils, seeds (such as sunflower and pumpkin), avocados, milk, yoghurt, cheese and eggs.

**Quick tip:**

* Try to avoid anything which lists ‘trans fats’ or ‘partially hydrogenated oils’ in the list of ingredients (such as some shop-bought cakes and biscuits). They can be tempting when you’re feeling low, but this kind of fat isn’t good for your mood or your physical health in the long run.

Let’s get Physical

**1. Take it slow**

If you haven’t been active in several years, start out slow. Always talk to your doctor before starting an exercise program, as there may be precautions you should take.

In general, you’ll want to start out with sessions of only five or 10 minutes. You can gradually increase the length of your sessions over time.

**2. Get your 30**

Your goal for physical activity should be 30 minutes each day. According to the [Harvard School of Public Health](http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/staying-active/), three 10-minute sessions are just as good as one longer session. For example, in one day you could do:

* 10 minutes of dancing before work
* a 10-minute walk around the parking lot at lunch
* a 10-minute walk around the neighborhood as soon as you get home

Of course, more exercise is fine! However, take precautions to avoid injuries, such as muscle strain. It’s better to work out a little less one day if it will help you do it again the next.

**3. Work your muscles**

You don’t just need aerobic exercise. Resistance training or weight lifting is also important. This type of exercise helps strengthen your muscles and bones and improve your balance and coordination. This reduces your risk for osteoporosis. It also helps prevent injuries or falls.

Not sure how to get started? Hire a trainer for a one-time session. If you jot down the routine, you can refer to it later.

**4. Mix it up**

Many gyms and community centers offer free classes with a monthly membership. Take advantage of those opportunities. You may get to experience some of the newest and hottest fitness trends. You never know what you might fall in love with next. Not up for the gym? Look at your local sports stores for outdoor group activities.

**5. Mind your money**

You can get a great workout at home for just pennies. Fitness DVDs are a great way to exercise, and many local libraries have copies you can borrow. Checking out different DVDs can be a great way to find new types of exercise you like.

Another option is to tune in to a fitness show broadcast on TV. Exercise classes of all different types are available on the internet for people of all different levels of fitness.

Other home-friendly workouts that require little or no special equipment include:

* walking or jogging
* jumping rope
* dancing
* squats
* weight training with found objects (bags of beans, a heavy book, a water bottle)
* jumping jacks
* push ups

**6. Stretch**

Stretching after a workout should always be part of your routine. Stretching improves flexibility and range of motion. It may also cut your risk of injury or muscle cramps. Finally, stretching improves circulation throughout the body.

If you need guidance on the best ways to stretch, ask a trainer for a quick tutorial.