

CARING FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS AN ANXIETY DISORDER



Caring for a family member or friend who has an anxiety disorder can be physically demanding and emotionally draining. But taking care of your own health and wellbeing is important in order to cope with the demands of caring.

More than 2.3 million Australians have an anxiety disorder. Anxiety affects one in seven (14%) people, and is the most common class of mental disorder in this country.¹

Families and carers should be recognised, respected and supported as partners in providing care to the consumer.²

Types of anxiety disorders include: generalised anxiety disorder, social anxiety disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder, panic disorder and agoraphobia. People can experience a wide range of symptoms such as irritability, disturbed sleep, shortness of breath and heightened fear. What is common is an uncontrollable and debilitating anxiety that interferes with a person's ability to carry out normal activities.

Caring for someone who has an anxiety disorder might involve a range of supports, including:

- providing emotional support and encouragement
- supervising medication
- accompanying the person to medical and therapist appointments, and
- assisting with daily activities such as shopping, banking, cooking and cleaning.

1. Slade, T et al. (2009) *The Mental Health of Australians 2. Report on the 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing*. Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra.

2. Chief Psychiatrist's Guideline (2005) *Working with Families and Carers*. Victorian Department of Human Services, Melbourne.

QUICK TIPS

When you are caring for someone else you often put your own needs last. These tips are a reminder that your own health and wellbeing is important. Staying strong will help you to better cope with the demands of caring.

- **Eat well** - A nutritious balanced diet will give you the fuel your body needs to keep on caring.
- **Exercise regularly** - Physical exercise can relieve tension and reduce stress levels.
- **Sleep well** - Caring can be exhausting so try and get eight hours sleep every night.
- **Share the care** - Let family members and friends know that their help and support is welcome.
- **Talk it over** - With a friend or family member or with a professional counsellor. Join a Carer Support Group and meet other people to share tips and experiences.
- **Take a break** - Do something that you love... or do nothing but relax and recharge your batteries.

Contact the Carer Advisory Line for more information 1800 514 845.

INFORMATION

It can be frustrating not understanding the symptoms and behaviours of the person you care for. Arming yourself with information can help you (and the person you care for) to feel more in control and confident. For information about anxiety disorders, visit www.beyondblue.org.au or phone 1300 224 636.

SUPPORT FOR THE PERSON YOU CARE FOR

The mental health system is a complex configuration of many different services, comprised of public and private, government, hospital and community based components.

For information about when, how and where to access mental health support speak to your family GP or visit www.headtohealth.gov.au.

SUPPORT FOR YOU

There are a number of organisations which offer supports and services to help families to manage the impact of mental illness on their lives. The Carers Victoria [Carer Advisory Line 1800 514 845](tel:1800514845) is a good place to start. We can give you advice and information about the supports and services to help you.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

See our flyer 'Carers Who Have An Anxiety Disorder'.