

# TREATING ANXIETY DISORDERS: WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

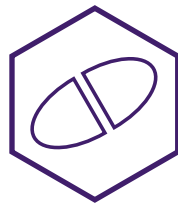
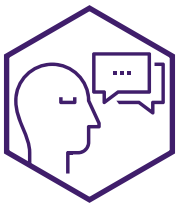
Medicines and psychological treatments are the main options for treating anxiety disorders. They can be used separately or together. This guide can help you decide which treatment to choose, and what questions to ask your health professionals.

## 1 Learn about the options

- ▶ Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) teaches you different ways to react to and think about situations that make you anxious. CBT has been tested and works for most people.
- ▶ Antidepressant medicines can be prescribed for anxiety, not just depression. A 'selective serotonin reuptake inhibitor' (SSRI) is the recommended medicine to treat anxiety.

Both kinds of treatment take up to 6 weeks to start working, both reduce anxiety symptoms for most people, and used as directed, both treatments lead to recovery for 5 out of 10 people treated.





There are costs for each too, but they depend on your particular situation. Your GP can discuss the options with you.



<b>CBT</b> (recommended psychological treatment)	<b>SSRI</b> (recommended medicine)
<p><b>What's involved?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ CBT may be delivered face-to-face with a therapist or online (not all programs require a GP referral).</li> <li>▶ CBT is recommended weekly for 8-12 weeks and you will need to practise exercises between sessions.</li> <li>▶ As you get better, it is important to reduce fear of stressful situations through gradual exposure.</li> </ul>	<p><b>What's involved?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Your GP will need to prescribe this medicine and review your progress regularly.</li> <li>▶ You will need to take the medicine at the same time every day, and for at least 6-12 months after your symptoms have improved.</li> <li>▶ As you get better, it is important to reduce fear of stressful situations through gradual exposure.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ CBT exercises are challenging and need significant emotional effort.</li> <li>▶ CBT exercises take time to complete.</li> <li>▶ It may take time to find the right therapist or program for you.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Other considerations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Possible side effects can include difficulty sleeping, diarrhoea, headache, nausea, and sexual problems. Some will improve over time.</li> <li>▶ Your anxiety symptoms may worsen before they improve.</li> <li>▶ It may take time to find the right medicine for you.</li> </ul>

## 2 Decide what matters to you

Respond to the statements below to work out what matters most to you about your current treatment options.

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
 I want to learn life-long skills I can use any time to cope with anxiety			
 I am willing to discuss my feelings with others			
 I am open to controlling my anxiety with medicines			
 I don't have time to do exercises and homework for CBT			

If you agree with the first 2 statements CBT programs may be an option to consider. If you agree with the last 2 statements an SSRI may be an option to consider.

What else matters to you?

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## 3 Do you know enough?

### NO

#### Talk with others:

- ▶ your GP or other health care professional
- ▶ a trusted family member or friend
- ▶ a support group

#### Visit trusted websites:

- ▶ **NPS MedicineWise** [nps.org.au/consumers/anxiety](https://nps.org.au/consumers/anxiety) or call Medicines Line on 1300 MEDICINE (1300 633 424)
- ▶ Department of Health **Head to Health** [headtohealth.gov.au](https://headtohealth.gov.au)
- ▶ **beyondblue** [beyondblue.org.au](https://beyondblue.org.au) or phone 1300 22 4636.

### YES

When you feel that you understand your options, decide which treatment you think might be most suitable for you. This isn't final – you can always change your mind.

I am interested in taking an SSRI medicine

I am interested in a CBT program

I am interested in considering either an SSRI or CBT, or possibly both.

Now that you have followed these steps, discuss next steps with your health professional or visit the Department of Health's **Head to Health** website at [headtohealth.gov.au](https://headtohealth.gov.au)