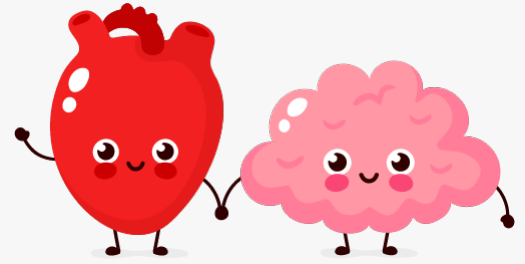




HeartKids

Mental health and your heart



Information about mental health for teens and young adults living with a heart condition.

What is mental health?

Mental health is a state of social and emotional wellbeing.¹

Mental health is an important part of your overall health. Feeling good mentally helps you to enjoy life and reach your goals in things like school, work and relationships.

A bit of stress in life is normal. When you are feeling good, it's easier to cope with the change and challenges that life presents. This is why looking after our mental health is an important thing to do.



Mental health can mean different things to different people. Your understanding of mental health may vary based on your social, emotional, cultural and spiritual beliefs and experiences.¹

How is my mental health related to my heart?

When you have grown up with a heart condition, some of the things you experience may have been unique to the people around you.²



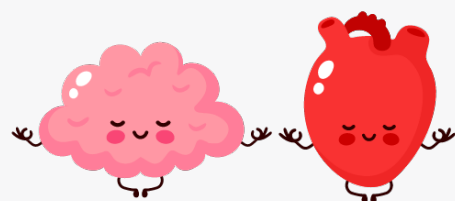
Sometimes I feel different to other young people because of my heart

Managing my condition on top of the other responsibilities I have in life can feel stressful at times

Sometimes I get anxious about my health and my future



You may have thought or felt some of these things before. You are not alone. There are over 72,000 people living with childhood heart conditions in Australia.



How do I look after my mental health?

Mental health, just like our physical health, is something we all need to work at and look after.



→ Do the things you love.

Making time to do the things you enjoy can help to lift your mood and boost your energy levels. Having hobbies can help you cope with stress and connect with people.



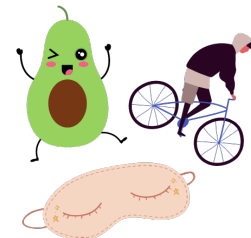
→ Hang with friends and family.

Building a network of supportive people around you is one of the best things you can do for your mental health.



→ Eat, sleep, move.

Eating healthy food, sleeping well and staying active is really important for your mind and body. Talk to your cardiologist about the right amount of exercise for you.



→ Connect with others.

Talking to other people with a heart condition, who understand your experiences and feelings, can be helpful too.



→ Learn about your condition.

One of the first steps to taking control of your health is finding out more about what you can do to help it, like making sure you go to your health care appointments.



What if I need more support?

Everyone has times where they might feel sad, anxious, angry or stressed. When these feelings don't go away, or start to affect your everyday life, then it could be a sign that you need some additional support for your mental health.

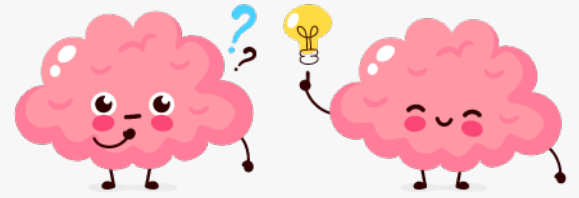
Experiencing mental health challenges is nothing to be embarrassed about.

In fact, as we move into adulthood, being able to recognise when you are not feeling good is an important skill.

There is lots of support available if you are feeling like this.



6 ways to get support for your mental health



1 Talk to your health team.

Your team is there to help you manage all aspects of your health and heart condition, including how you feel about it. Your doctor (GP) is one of the best people you can go to for face-to-face support.

➤ [Find a doctor](#)

2 Drop into headspace.

If you want to talk to someone face-to-face and live near a headspace centre, this could be a good option for you. It is free and the staff at these centres are specially trained to help young people.

➤ [Find a headspace centre](#)

3 Try the school or uni counsellor.

If you are at school or university, you may be able to access a counsellor there. Talking to one of these counsellors is free and confidential.

4 Call a helpline.

If you prefer to talk over the phone, there are plenty of options. The people on the other end will listen to you and help you find the right support for you:

☎ [Kids Helpline 1800 55 1800 \(24/7\)](#)

☎ [HeartKids Helpline 1800 432 785](#)

☎ [headspace 1800 650 890](#)

5 Go online.

You can access online support with experts at:

➤ [ehespace](#)

➤ [Kids Helpline WebChat](#)

6 Connect with others.

You can meet other young people with a heart condition at:

➤ [HeartKids MyHeart FB Group](#)

➤ [Heart Foundation Supporting Young Hearts Program](#)

What do other young people say helps them?

If I'm feeling down and out, or anxious about anything, I turn to my support network immediately. For me that's mainly my mum and my family.

Kennedy – 22 years, Sydney

The gym helps me focus on regaining my physical strength which makes me feel better mentally.

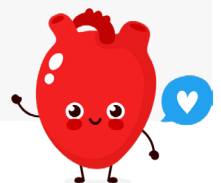
Bryanna – 20 years, Queensland

When I am stressed about my Uni workload or just life in general, I like to do jigsaw puzzles to relax and focus on myself.

Alisha – 18 years, New South Wales

I like to listen to music and chill when I'm not feeling so good.

Lily – 16 years, Canberra



Professional support

What is a Mental Health Treatment Plan?

This is a plan you make with your GP about how you can access the right mental health support for you.

Your plan might include a referral to a mental health professional, like a psychologist. Through a Mental Health Treatment Plan, you can claim up to 20 sessions with a professional each year. This means that the Government, through Medicare, will pay for some or all of the cost of the sessions.

How do I get a Mental Health Treatment Plan?

The first step is to speak with your GP.

At the appointment, your GP will ask you some questions about your mental health. They may get you to fill out a questionnaire about how you have been feeling lately. It helps to be as open and honest with them as possible, so that they can make the best support plan for you.

You might feel a bit nervous when answering these questions, and that's okay. Sometimes it can feel hard talking about our mental health, but it's an important step in getting support. Remember that GPs have lots of conversations like this. They are trained to listen and to help you.

References

¹ World Health Organization (WHO). 2018. Mental health: strengthening our response. [ONLINE] [Accessed 3 March 2022]

² Kasparian, N., Winlaw, D. and Sholler, G., 2016. 'Congenital heart health: How psychological care can make a difference', *Medical Journal of Australia*, vol. 205, no. 3, pp. 104-107.

Illustrations by Freepik

Where to find more information and support

headspace

 headspace.org.au

 1800 650 980

ReachOut

 au.reachout.com

Kids Helpline

 kidshelpline.com.au

 1800 55 1800

Beyond Blue

 beyondblue.org.au

Head to Health

 headtohealth.gov.au

The BRAVE Program

This free online program gives teenagers info and skills to help cope with anxiety.

 brave4you.psy.uq.edu.au

HeartKids

Learn more about CHD and the support HeartKids can offer you.

 heartkids.org.au

 1800 432 785

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