

for **adults**



Psykisk helse

ENGELSK

# Mental health care in Norway

Psykisk helse hjelp/Mental health care (Voksne)



A guide to services available to persons with mental health problems

# What can I do when I don't feel ok?

A guide to services for people with mental health problems

## Mental health problems affect many people

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Mental health problems can affect anyone, and approximately half of Norway's population will suffer from some form of emotional problem at some point in their lives. Some people have a genetic predisposition and can become ill in the absence of any particular triggering event; at other times, a crisis such as death or an accident, or a difficult work or family situation can result in your becoming ill. In many instances, the cause is unclear.

## Help is available

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Psychological problems can vary from milder forms of depression and anxiety, to severe psychoses where you lose touch with reality. Your chances of getting better improve significantly if you get help early on, so contact your doctor or other health-care personnel for help. The treatment will vary depending on the type of disorder you have, and how severely you are affected. You will first and foremost be offered various forms of conversational therapy and in some instances medication, as well as information about your disorder.

## Refugees and asylum seekers are particularly vulnerable

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Many people who have undergone traumatic events and severe stress in their lives, experience sadness, fear and nightmares, feelings that can also surface many years after the traumatic event. This can lead to difficulty functioning on a day-to-day basis, and you might experience anxiety, depression or have other psychological problems. If you have only recently arrived in Norway, that in itself can be a source of stress.

It is normal to react to such strain, and the type of reaction varies from person to person.



### Right to an interpreter

If you have problems understanding what your doctor says, you are entitled to an interpreter free of charge. Even if you speak Norwegian, it isn't always easy to understand technical information in a foreign language. If you do need an interpreter, it's a good idea to mention this when you book the doctor's appointment, so that the interpreter can be there when you come. The interpreter is bound by professional confidentiality. In other words, he or she cannot divulge to others what you have discussed during your appointment.

## Anxiety and depression are most common

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The most common psychological disorders are anxiety and depression.

Anxiety is a feeling of uncertainty and inner unrest that can be hard to overcome. Typical symptoms of anxiety include feeling restless and jittery, reacting for instance to sudden noises and movements. Some people become more impatient and irritable than they normally are, and some suffer from sleeping problems and nightmares. It is also common to feel the need to be alone. Anxiety can also manifest in physical ailments such as trembling, sweating, headaches, heart palpitations, pressure in the chest, nausea, stomachaches, lack of energy, and dizziness.

Depression can be triggered by personal crises or stress factors, or may occur spontaneously in the absence of any single apparent cause. The symptoms include sadness or lack of interest in, or joy over, life. Many people experience weight changes, disturbed sleep patterns, restlessness or passivity, tiredness and lack of energy, difficulty concentrating and, in some cases, thoughts of death.

Some people can also abuse drugs and alcohol in an attempt to avoid painful memories and experiences. Other kinds of psychological disorders include eating disorders, psychoses, and obsessive-compulsive disorders.



You can find out more about psychological disorders on the website of the Norwegian Directorate for Health and Social Affairs (Sosial- og helsedirektoratet) - [www.psykisk.no](http://www.psykisk.no).

## When should you seek help?

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When you break a bone or cut yourself, it's easy to see that you're unwell, but with psychological disorders, it's different. Psychological disorders can be difficult to identify, both for the affected person and those around them.

If you feel that your symptoms are severe, or you have had them for a long time, you should seek help straight away. Your General Practitioner (GP) can treat you for mild and moderate psychological problems and refer you to other professionals for further help. Your GP can help you contact a psychologist or specialists at a regional psychiatric center, psychiatric clinic, or hospital. You will find more information about where to get help and how to proceed on page 7 of this booklet.



### You can be honest

All health personnel in Norway are bound by professional confidentiality. What you tell your doctor, psychologist, or psychiatrist cannot be repeated to other individuals or authorities without your consent. You can therefore speak freely about your problems.



### The helpline is always open

Do you need someone to talk to? The Mental Health Helpline is available 24 hours a day, year round. The helpline allows you to talk with people who can listen and provide support and comfort when you need it. The helpline is independent and does not represent the Norwegian authorities. You can remain anonymous if you wish. **Mental Health Helpline 810 30 030** (6 kroner per half-hour)

If you do not wish to talk on the telephone, you can write to Mental Health's Internet service via **[www.sidetmedord.no](http://www.sidetmedord.no)** and get answers to any questions you may have. Remember: Nothing is too small or too big if it is important to you.

## What should I do when I feel unwell?

- 1** In critical or life-threatening situations, you should immediately call the Emergency switchboard (**113**) for help. Explain what has happened, the address where you need help, and the telephone number from which you are calling.  
  
If the situation is less urgent, that is where there is no risk to life or health, you can contact your GP or nearest casualty clinic.
- 2** The doctor will talk with you and examine you in order to find out more about your psychological problems. Then the doctor will discuss with you what to do from there. The doctor can treat you for mild and moderate psychological disorders, through both conversational therapy and medication.
- 3** Your GP may refer you to a specialist at the district Psychiatric Outpatient Services (DPS), where both people with acute problems and those who need long-term follow-up can receive help. In less severe cases, the GP can also give you a referral to a psychologist or psychiatrist who can treat you.
- 4** If you are very unwell and need significant help you may be admitted to a hospital emergency department. When you come home after such treatment, you will be followed up by your GP or a district Psychiatric Outpatient Service (DPS).

## Who can help?

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Healthcare in Norway is divided into municipal and specialist health services. Municipal health services include GPs and casualty clinics. In addition, the municipality in which you live has a number of resources available for people suffering from mental illness, including public health nurses, educational psychological services, psychiatric home care, activity centers, and accommodation. If you would like to know more about these services, you can contact the health services or psychological healthcare services in your municipality.

The specialist health services include the district Psychiatric Outpatient Service (DPS) and psychiatric hospitals, as well as specialists in private practice who have agreements for working with the health authority. On the pages that follow you can read more about the various sections of the healthcare service that can help you with psychological problems.

### **Regional Health Authority**

The Psychological Health Service in Norway falls under four regional health authorities. The Norwegian names are Helse Nord, Helse Midt-Norge, Helse Vest and Helse Sør-Øst. The authority under whose jurisdiction you belong depends on where in Norway you live.

The regional health authorities are responsible for the provision of specialist health services for the people living in their area. The health authorities also own the public hospitals, ambulance service, emergency services, laboratories, and hospital pharmacies within the region.

### **General Practitioner (GP)**

Most people with mental health problems are treated by their general practitioner. General practitioners can offer treatment for mild and moderate psychological disorders, through both conversational therapy and medication.

When you phone your GP, you will speak to the secretary or a nurse who will ask your name and date of birth, and what your call is about. If you just request an appointment, you will be placed at the back of the queue. It is therefore important that you explain the urgency of the appointment if you suspect your condition is serious.



### Who is my General Practitioner, or GP?

All people in Norway are allocated a GP. You can choose to have a male or female doctor. If you don't know who your GP is, you can call the GP Helpline (Fastlegetelefonen) 810 59 500, or contact the National Insurance Office in your municipality. For more information, see [www.nav.no](http://www.nav.no).

#### The casualty clinic

If you need help, but are unable to contact your GP, you can contact the casualty clinic. The casualty clinic is especially geared to deal with acute injuries, illnesses, and problems. Some larger cities also have a psychiatric casualty clinic. The Norwegian name for the casualty clinic is Legevakten or Kommunal legevakt in your municipality. The number can be found in the phonebook.

#### District Psychiatric Outpatient Service (DPS)

In some cases your GP may refer you to the district Psychiatric Outpatient Service (DPS). The GP can also use the DPS for guidance.

The referral process requires that the doctor writes a letter to the treating institution. The referral contains necessary information about you as a patient, and the reason for the referral.

The district Psychiatric Outpatient Service is organized into outpatient clinics, day care, or 24-hour wards. These centers

offer help both for those with acute problems and where there is a need for long-term follow-up.

Some outpatient clinics treat all forms of psychological disorders in one location, whilst others are divided into sub-departments, specializing in specific disorders. Here, everything from simple consultations to patient treatment of a more long-term nature can take place.

Day wards in specialist health services have specific treatment programs for people with for example anxiety, eating disorders, compulsive disorders, or similar ailments.



### Waiting period

There is a waiting period for non-acute admissions and consultations. The length of the waiting time varies from place to place and between treating institutions. If your condition worsens during the waiting period, you have the right to have your application reappraised. In such an instance, contact your GP.

#### Psychiatric hospitals

Psychiatric hospitals specialize in psychological disorders. This includes both acute cases and those requiring care of a more long-term nature.

The hospitals are often separated into special departments or so-called wards, which specialize in various psychological disorders.

The majority of psychiatric hospital admissions are voluntary. In other words, you or your doctor acting on your behalf will have asked for hospital admission. You are free to leave the hospital any time you wish.

### **Psychologists or psychiatrists**

In less severe cases, the GP can also refer you to a psychologist or psychiatrist who can treat you.

Many psychologists and psychiatrists have cooperative agreements with the health authorities to provide treatment. If you want an appointment with such a public psychologist or psychiatrist, you need a doctor's referral. Your GP will have an overview of available services as well as psychologists and psychiatrists with a practice close to where you live.



Psychologists and psychiatrists are both professionals who specialize in psychological disorders and work with the individual's problems, particularly in connection with family, friends, school, work, and society. The difference is that the psychiatrist is also a trained doctor.

## Children and adolescents

The school health service consists of a nurse, doctor, and physiotherapist and is available to all students in elementary and secondary school. The school health service is an important arena for creating security, identifying children and teens that need help, and for preventing more serious psychological problems.

If you are concerned about a child's developmental or health situation, you can contact the public health nurse at the school or the child's GP. The GP can refer children and young people between 0 and 18 years to the Children and Adolescents' Psychiatric Polyclinic Services (BUP). BUP has outpatient clinics, day services, and sometimes offers inpatient care. Here you can receive help in the assessment and treatment of various psychological problems in collaboration with the family.

The Educational and Psychological Counseling Service (PP-tjeneste, or PPT) offers advice and assistance in connection with problems related to learning difficulties. The Child Welfare Service can also be an important player regarding children and young people with problems.

### What does it cost?

When you seek out health services in Norway you have to pay a deductible, while the government covers the rest of the expense.

Read more at [www.nav.no](http://www.nav.no) under Helsetjenester og Egenandeler.







Psyiskisk helse

IS-1472

## Where to seek help

Emergency – call 113  
Doctor/Casualty  
Support phone: 810 30 030

## Useful information

[www.psyiskisk.no](http://www.psyiskisk.no)  
[www.psyiskiskhelse.no](http://www.psyiskiskhelse.no)  
[www.mentalhelse.no](http://www.mentalhelse.no)  
[www.psykopp.no](http://www.psykopp.no)  
[www.nyinorge.no](http://www.nyinorge.no)  
[www.nakmi.no](http://www.nakmi.no)

## Broshures on mental health



Anxiety  
IS-1465



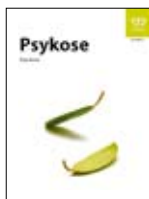
Depression  
IS-1466



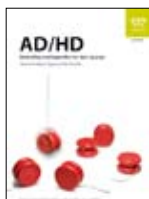
Obsessive Compulsive  
Disorders IS-1469



Eating disorders  
IS-1470



Psychosis  
IS-1471



AD/HD  
IS-1468



Legal protection  
IS-1467



Mental health care in Norway  
• For adults, IS-1472  
• For young people, IS-1474  
• About young children, IS-1473



BUP  
• Children, IS-1301  
• Young people, IS-1302  
• Adults, IS-1303

Brochures can be downloaded at [www.psyiskisk.no](http://www.psyiskisk.no)  
under Information Material.

This brochure can be found in 'bokmål' and 'nynorsk', the two official  
languages of Norway, English, Arabic, Farsi, French, Kurdish/Sorani,  
Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Lappish, Serbian/Croatian, Somali, Spanish,  
Turkish, Urdu, and Vietnamese.



Sosial- og helsedirektoratet