

## The bottom line: Stress, depression and mental health

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A significant number of people with HIV suffer from stress, anxiety or depression. In the Futures 5 survey, almost one-third of respondents said they had taken antidepressant medications in the previous six months, and one-quarter had been prescribed medication for anxiety.

Getting an HIV diagnosis and living with the threat of serious illness are significant stresses for anybody to live with, so perhaps it's not surprising that mental health problems like stress and depression are more common among people with HIV compared with the general population. Some [antiretrovirals](#) [1]A medication or other substance which is active against retroviruses such as HIV. (e.g. efavirenz) and changes in the brain chemistry in people with advanced HIV disease can also trigger depression.

Living with these problems adds to the burden of illness that we all have to bear, reduces quality of life and can have a serious impact on treatments adherence, so it is worthwhile doing what you can to respond to stress and depression if it affects you.

There are lots of options for preventing and managing these health problems. Meditation, yoga, peer support, counselling and exercise have all been recommended by positive people as effective strategies to help reduce stress and manage mental health problems, but there's no 'one-size-fits-all' approach, so you have to find what works for you. If you're diagnosed with depression, there are a range of therapies available including psychotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy and antidepressant medications – your doctor can provide information.

- [stress, depression, anxiety](#)

### Links:

[1] <http://www.napwa.org.au/glossary/term/122>