
MENTAL HEALTH SET TO SPIKE WITH COVID-19 LOCK DOWN

Queensland doctors are urging employers to watch for signs of anxiety and depression amongst their employees, even those working from home during the COVID-19 lock down.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia warned that many people will feel isolated as a result of COVID-19 restrictions and anxious about the uncertainty of the future, triggering a rise in mental health issues.

“Every year, about one in five Australians experiences a mental illness but it is times like these, when people are forced out of their normal routines and everything seems uncertain, it can become harder to cope,” he said.

“Of course, we need to follow the official guidelines to reduce the impact of the outbreak, but be aware that social isolation and a lack of certainty about what the future holds will unfortunately lead to poor mental health for some people.”

Dr Dhupelia urged employers to check in with staff regularly and encourage them to call their GP if they experience mental health issues.

“It’s not just about checking that tasks are being completed, but it’s also about making people feel connected,” he said. “Whether they are working in the office or from home, take time to see how they’re coping with all the changes to their daily lives.”

[See the Signs](#)

Dr Dhupelia said there were [seven typical signs](#) of mental health distress:

- Continued poor sleep with ongoing nightmares.
- Feeling easily overwhelmed, tearful or fragile.
- Using drugs or alcohol to suppress intense emotions or to try and achieve sleep.
- Withdrawing and not engaging in day to day discussions.
- Struggling to concentrate on the job at hand.
- Startling easily.
- Increased or unreasonable irritability.

Dr Dhupelia said employers could take a free Mental Health First Aid Australia online course at <https://mhfa.com.au/> to learn skills to help people manage mental health issues.

AMA Queensland has also called on the State Government to relax regulations so that staff without holiday entitlements could draw on long service leave if required to self-isolate.

“We also wrote to Queensland Treasurer for the payroll tax waiver for six months to make it more affordable for employers to continue trading and keep staff employed,” he said.

“Anything that helps alleviate uncertainty for people during this time will help reduce anxiety and other mental health issues.”

Media Contacts: Michelle Hele, Sequel PR – 0411 112 114; Chiara Lesèvre, AMA Queensland - 0419 735 641

Are you at risk?



- ⚠ **Complaints of continued poor sleep with ongoing nightmares.**
- ⚠ **Observations a person is easily overwhelmed, tearful or fragile.**
- ⚠ **The use of drugs or alcohol to suppress intense emotions or to try and achieve sleep.**
- ⚠ **A pattern of withdrawing from family and friends and not engaging in day to day discussions that generally allow people to slowly debrief.**
- ⚠ **Problems performing at work such as struggling to concentrate on the job at hand.**
- ⚠ **Startling easily and declining invitations for social engagements and other usually pleasurable activities.**
- ⚠ **Increased or unreasonable irritability with family, workmates or friends.**

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