

# Brief psychological therapy is effective in primary care

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Brief therapy at the GP's surgery can effectively treat anxiety and depression. Researchers writing in the open access journal *BMC Medicine* found that cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) was effective for treating anxiety disorders, while CBT, problem solving therapy (PST) and counseling were all equally effective in treating depression and mixed anxiety and depression.

John Cape worked with a team of researchers from University College London to pool the results of 34 studies involving 3962 patients. He said, " Our meta-analysis suggests that brief CBT, counseling and PST were all effective in treating [depression](#) and mixed anxiety and depression. No significant difference was found between CBT, counseling and PST on metaregression, when controlling for diagnosis. But so far only brief CBT has been studied for treatment of anxiety disorders".

[Psychological therapy](#) provided within [primary care](#) settings for depression and anxiety is usually brief. In the UK, for example, six sessions is a common treatment length. The researchers found that such brief therapies are effective for routine delivery in primary care, but they caution that effect sizes are low when compared to patients receiving these treatments over a longer duration in secondary care. Speaking about these results, Cape said, "While our study indicates that brief CBT appears to be particularly effective for [anxiety disorders](#), there appears little to choose between brief CBT, counseling and PST for treatment of depression and mixed anxiety and depression"

**More information:** Brief psychological therapies for anxiety and depression in primary care: meta-analysis and meta-regression, John Cape, Craig Whittington, Marta Buszewicz, Paul Wallace and Lisa Underwood, BMC Medicine (in press),  
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