

# New guidance for people to seek mental health treatment

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In spite of many clinical options, people with mental health problems including eating disorders often do not access professional help within the crucial first 12 months—in part because of lack of information in the community about accessing targeted services.

Anxiety and depression are normal reactions to situations such as pandemic lockdowns but arming yourself with some useful strategies can alleviate this, says Flinders University Distinguished Professor of Psychology Tracey Wade.

For example, a randomized trial of 'unguided' low intensity cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) was found to decrease signs of anxiety and depression in the [comparative study](#) led by Curtin University and international experts, including Matthew Flinders Professor Wade.

The results of the study of 225 adults in Australia and the UK found that low intensity cognitive behavior therapy has efficacy in reducing anxiety and depression during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The majority of participants (96%) rated the intervention as useful, and most (83%) reported they spent 30 min or less reading the guide, with 83% agreeing the intervention was easy to read.

The evaluation of self-management of anxiety and depression—using an accessible online program of 'low intensity cognitive behavior therapy' funded by the WA Government via Curtin University's Department of Psychology—confirmed its usefulness, particularly during the pressures created by the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic.

"There is an urgent need to disseminate low intensity psychological therapies to improve [mental health](#) in this challenging time," conclude researchers led by Curtin University Associate Professor Sarah Egan in the new paper in Behavior Research and Therapy.

Meanwhile, eating disorder expert Professor Wade has helped to launch a new consumer guide on the National Eating Disorders Collaboration (NEDC) website.

The consumer checklist aims to help people navigate the system, including people between 16-24 years who might delay or have trouble finding the 'right' kind of help.

"The checklist forms a basis for a useful consumer tool in their treatment journey," says Professor Wade, who says presentations for eating disorders have escalated over COVID-19 and the associated lockdowns.

"We also hope to monitor its uptake and impact on outcomes for consumers seeking treatment."

A study last year ran a survey about the checklist, sending it to people with lived experience and clinicians to seek endorsement and feedback on each checklist item's helpfulness.

Seventeen people with lived experience and 11 clinicians gave feedback, with both groups rating the [checklist](#) as likely to help locate effective treatment earlier.

**More information:** Tracey Wade et al, A co-designed consumer checklist to support people with eating disorders to locate evidence-based treatment, *International Journal of Eating Disorders* (2021). [DOI: 10.1002/eat.23529](https://doi.org/10.1002/eat.23529)

Provided by Flinders University

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