



A community of patients, carers
and healthcare professionals
advocating for the rights of people
living with Sickle Cell Disease
within Australia



CONTACT US

P.O Box 62 Craigieburn VIC 3064 Australia
P: 1300 148 824

E: info@aussicklecelladvocacy.org
W: <https://aussicklecelladvocacy.org/>

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All brochures created by ASCA are reviewed by
adult and paediatric haematologist.

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caregivers to sickle cell disease patients, not replace, the
relationship that exists between patients and health care
professionals.

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Australian Sickle
Cell Advocacy

Dealing With Mental Health in Sickle Cell Disease



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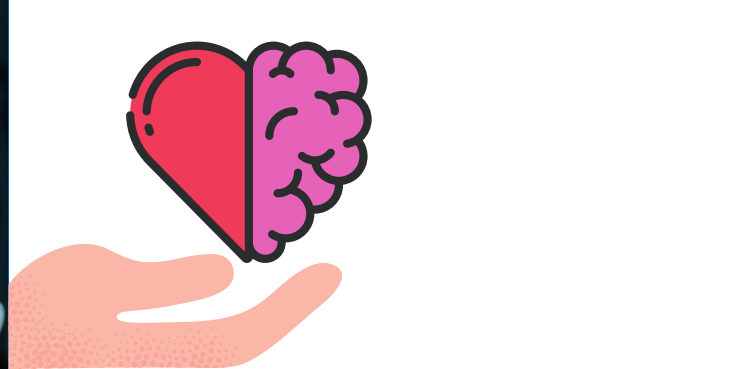


WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

- Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.
- Almost half of all Australians aged 16 to 85 years – 7.3 million people – will experience mental illness at some point in their life.
- The most common conditions are:
 - Anxiety
 - Affective disorders, especially depression
 - Substance use disorders, especially alcohol use

References

- <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/chronic-illness-mental-health/index.shtml#f>
- <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>
- <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/mental-health>
- <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/illness-anxiety-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20373782>



PEOPLE WITH OTHER CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITIONS HAVE A HIGHER RISK OF DEPRESSION.

- Depression is common among people who have chronic illnesses such as Sickle Cell Disease.
- Usually, symptoms of depression may follow a recent medical diagnosis but disappear as you adjust to the condition or as the condition is treated.
- In other cases, certain medications used to treat the illness may trigger depression.
- In other occasions, depression may persist even as physical health improves.

ANXIETY AND CHRONIC ILLNESSES

- Illness anxiety disorder, sometimes called hypochondriasis or health anxiety, is worrying excessively that you are or may become seriously ill, even if there are no physical symptoms.
- You may experience extreme anxiety that body sensations, such as muscle twitching or fatigue, are associated with a specific, serious illness. This excessive anxiety – rather than the physical symptom itself – results in severe distress that can disrupt your life.

For more info, visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/sicklecell/index.html>

SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS ANXIETY DISORDER

- Worrying that minor symptoms or body sensations mean you have a serious illness.
- Being easily alarmed about your health status.
- Finding little or no reassurance from doctor visits or negative test results.
- Worrying excessively about SCD.
- Having so much distress about possible illnesses that it's hard for you to function.

WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

- Because symptoms can be related to health problems, it's important to be evaluated by your primary care provider if this hasn't already been done.
- If your provider believes that you may have illness anxiety disorder, he or she may refer you to a mental health professional.

MEDICARE ASSISTANCE

- Through your GP, Medicare offers free sessions for counseling, up to 10 sessions in most states and with a possibility to get more sessions.

HAEMATOLOGIST/GP SUPPORT

- Check on patients/caregivers routinely.
- Remind them about free counseling services from Medicare.
- Connect them to ASCA members / other patients/ caregivers.

ASCA ASSISTANCE

- Join a support group in your area
- Join ASCA executive team to contribute to change
- Contact ASCA to help someone dealing with depression or anxiety