

General
Medical
Council

Your health matters

Practical tips and sources of support



Your health matters

Medicine is a challenging and stressful profession and doctors are at particular risk of certain health problems as a result. This leaflet offers some useful tips and contacts for when you, or your colleagues, are finding it difficult to get the balance right.

Doctors are at increased risk of some health problems – don't wait to ask for help if you need it

Most doctors are in good health. But the very qualities that make a good doctor, such as empathy and attention to detail, can also make you more vulnerable to stresses and burnout or to turning to drugs or alcohol. Pressures within the healthcare system, such as the often rapid pace of change, can also contribute.

If you are finding it difficult to cope for any reason, please don't wait to seek support. If, with the right support, you are able to manage

a health problem so that the care that you give your patients is not affected, then your fitness to practise won't be affected.

So there will be no need for us to be involved or even to know about it. For example, if you seek and comply with appropriate treatment and restrict your practice as necessary until you have recovered.

However, if you don't seek support and the situation worsens, there could be serious, long-term consequences.



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If things get worse, there could be serious consequences

A small number of doctors are referred or refer themselves to us each year because of their health and we deal with these as sensitively as we can, including getting expert advice on the situation and dealing with it confidentially.

We are here to protect patients, not to punish doctors. So, wherever possible, we want to support doctors' recovery and return to safe practice. We have a number of ways that we try to work with doctors with health conditions that are, or may be, affecting their fitness to practise to achieve this.

Our website sets out what happens when we need to investigate whether a doctor's fitness to practise medicine is compromised by a health problem. It also outlines how we protect your confidentiality, who is involved, and it includes a real case study of a doctor who has been through the process. You can look at this at www.gmc-uk.org/concerns/information-for-doctors-under-investigation/health-assessments.



Keep the card at the end of this booklet with you. In times of difficulty, call either service to speak to an adviser anonymously and in confidence.



We understand that having your regulator question your fitness to practise will always be stressful and upsetting, but we hope that making the process as clear as possible will help.

If you think patients might be at risk, you can call us in confidence

We run a confidential, anonymous advice line that you can call Monday to Friday, 9 am–5 pm, for advice on what to do if you have concerns about a doctor. You do not have to tell us your name or the name of the person you are calling about.

You can call us on 0161 923 6602 or email practise@gmc-uk.org.

There are some practical ways you can reduce your risk

- Make sure you are registered with a GP and trust them to give you confidential help.
- Seek help as early as possible when you are unwell and avoid self-diagnosis and self-prescribing for anything but minor ailments.
- Note early warning signs of illness and take them seriously. For example, feeling low or irritable, or having poor concentration and low energy may be signs of burnout.



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- Avoid 'corridor consultations' with colleagues. If you think you need to consult a doctor then do so in privacy.
- Be sensitive to the needs of your colleagues and encourage them to seek help if you are concerned about their health.
- Try to maintain a healthy work-life balance. If you develop problems it may help to try sharing with friends, colleagues or family.
- If you are worried about your drinking, or someone close to you has raised concerns about it, then the chances are that you are drinking too much. Get help before it gets out of control.



Where to go for support

If you need someone to talk to about your health or that of a colleague, the following organisations provide confidential support and advice to doctors in the UK.

Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland

020 7631 1650

Members can contact the organisation about any health and well-being issues.

Email: wellbeing@aagbi.org www.anaesthetists.org/Home/Wellbeing-support

British Doctors and Dentists Group

07792 819966

A mutual support society for doctors and dentists who are recovering, or wish to recover, from addiction to or dependency on alcohol or other drugs.

Email: jpsecbddg@gmx.co.uk

www.bddg.org

British International Doctors' Association

0161 456 7828

Promotes equality and fairness for all doctors and dentists working in the UK.

Email: bida@btconnect.com

www.bidaonline.co.uk

Doctors' Support Network

Fully confidential, friendly self-help group for doctors with mental health concerns.

Email: info@dsn.org.uk

www.dsn.org.uk

Mind

0300 123 3393

Mind, the mental health charity, ensures that anyone with a mental health problem has somewhere to turn for advice and support.

Email: info@mind.org.uk

www.mind.org.uk

GP Health Service

0300 0303 300

A free, confidential service for GPs and GP trainees. The service offers specialist mental health support for a range of conditions, including common and complex mental health conditions and substance misuse.

Email: gp.health@nhs.net

www.england.nhs.uk/gphealthservice

Practitioner Health Programme

020 3049 4505

Free and confidential services for doctors living in a London borough with a mental health, addiction or physical health problem affecting their work. Referrals from the NHS outside the area are also accepted on a cost per case basis.

Contact form: <http://php.nhs.uk/contact-us>

www.php.nhs.uk



BMA Wellbeing Support Services
Counselling | Peer Support

0330 123 1245

www.bma.org.uk/wellbeingsupport

Psychiatrists' Support Service

020 7245 0412

A free, confidential support service for members, trainee members and associates of the Royal College of Psychiatrists who find themselves in difficulty.

Email: pss@rcpsych.ac.uk

Rethink

0300 5000 927

Offers expert, accredited advice and information – on everything from treatment and care to benefits and employment rights – to everyone affected by mental health problems.

Email: info@rethink.org.uk

www.rethink.org

Royal Medical Benevolent Fund

020 8540 9194

Offers support to members of the medical profession and their dependants who are in financial hardship as a result of illness, disability or other unexpected crisis.

Email: help@rmbf.org

www.rmbf.org

Royal Medical Foundation

01372 821 010

Supports doctors and their dependants who find themselves in financial hardship.

Email: caseworker@royalmedicalfoundation.org

Fax: **01372 821 013**



The BMA Counselling and Peer Support services are completely confidential. They are available to all doctors and medical students, even if they are not members of the BMA.

Email: gmc@gmc-uk.org

Website: www.gmc-uk.org

Telephone: **0161 923 6602**

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General Medical Council, 350 Euston Road, London NW1 3JN

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