



# Your health matters

Practical tips and sources of support

General  
Medical  
Council

Regulating doctors  
Ensuring good medical practice

# 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 practise as necessary until you have recovered.

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

## **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.



## BMA Counselling and Doctor Adviser Service

**08459 200 169**

[www.bma.org.uk/doctorsfordoctors](http://www.bma.org.uk/doctorsfordoctors)

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.

We have developed a new website to make it as clear as possible what happens when we need to investigate whether a doctor's fitness to practise medicine is compromised by a health problem. The website sets out what happens and how we protect your confidentiality, who is involved, and includes some real case studies of doctors who have been through the procedures. You can look at this at [www.gmc-uk.org/yourhealthmatters](http://www.gmc-uk.org/yourhealthmatters).

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, 9am-5pm 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 6402 or email [practise@gmc-uk.org](mailto:practise@gmc-uk.org).

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



### 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.
- 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 difficulty in the UK.

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### Association of Anaesthetists of Great Britain and Ireland 020 7631 1650

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Contact from members about any health and well-being issue is welcomed.

Email: [wellbeing@aagbi.org](mailto:wellbeing@aagbi.org)

[www.aagbi.org/memberswellbeing.htm](http://www.aagbi.org/memberswellbeing.htm)

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### British Doctors and Dentists Group 07792 819966

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The British Doctors and Dentists Group can be contacted at [www.bddg.org](http://www.bddg.org)

Email: [jpsecbddg@gmx.co.uk](mailto:jpsecbddg@gmx.co.uk)

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### British International Doctors Association 0161 456 7828

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ODA House, 316A Buxton Road, Great Moor, Stockport, SK2 7DD.

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### Practitioner Health Programme 020 3049 4505

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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.

[www.php.nhs.uk](http://www.php.nhs.uk)

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### Primary Care Support Service 01248 675899

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The Primary Care Support Service is a direct access, confidential counselling, support and educational service for GPs in Wales.

Email: [pcssinformation@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:pcssinformation@wales.nhs.uk)

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### Psychiatrists' Support Service 020 7245 0412

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

Email: [psychiatristssupportservice@rcpsych.ac.uk](mailto:psychiatristssupportservice@rcpsych.ac.uk)

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### Royal Medical Benevolent Fund 020 8540 9194

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The RMBF 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. The website [www.support4doctors.org](http://www.support4doctors.org) also provides a wide range of other sources of help and support.

Email: [help@rmbf.org](mailto:help@rmbf.org)

[www.rmbf.org](http://www.rmbf.org)

Fax: 020 8542 0494

## Doctors' Support Line

**0844 395 3010**

**www.dsn.org.uk | info@dsn.org.uk**

Peer support group for doctors with a wide range of mental health problems

**Doctors' Support Network: 0871 245 8376**

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### Royal Medical Foundation

**01372 821 010**

The Royal Medical Foundation exists to support doctors and their dependants who find themselves in financial hardship.

**Email: caseworker@royalmedicalfoundation.org**

**Fax: 01372 821 013**

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### Samaritans

**08457 90 90 90**

Confidential emotional support 24 hours a day. A network of national branches also provides drop-in face to face listening support.

**Email: jo@samaritans.org**

**www.samaritans.org**

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### Sick Doctors Trust

**0370 444 5163**

24-hour confidential telephone helpline for doctors, dentists and medical students with drug and alcohol problems.

**www.sick-doctors-trust.co.uk**

Medical royal colleges may have their own support services for members – check the college websites for details.

**Email: gmc@gmc-uk.org**

**Website: www.gmc-uk.org**

**Telephone: 0161 923 6602**

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