Dissociation in one page

What it is

What is dissociation?

Dissociation is a break in how you connect your thoughts, feelings, memories, body and the world around you. Mild forms, like daydreaming, happen to everyone. It becomes a problem when it is frequent or intense and gets in the way of daily life.

The signs

What are the symptoms of dissociation?

Signs of dissociation include feeling unreal or outside your own body, the world looking foggy or flat, gaps in memory, and feeling emotionally numb. Some people lose time or feel unsure who they are. Brief moments are common; frequent, distressing ones are worth checking.

How a diagnosis happens

What happens in an assessment?

An interview about specific experiences, sometimes with a structured interview or a long questionnaire added. No source found sets how many sessions it takes, so ask when you book. A short questionnaire cannot settle it alone.

Treatment

Which talking therapies are used for dissociative disorders, and what does therapy involve?

Talking therapy, also called psychotherapy, is usually needed for the long term. No Australian guideline names a therapy for dissociative disorders. The Better Health Channel gives cognitive therapy and psychoanalysis as examples. Overseas experts describe therapy that builds safety and stability first, with any trauma work carefully paced. Ask each clinician which therapy they use and what training they have.

Medication

I already take medicine: what do I tell a new clinician?

Tell the new clinician every medicine you take, and keep taking it while you change clinicians. The process mostly stays the same. Your GP's referral lists your current medicines, so the new clinician sees them. Bring a written medicine list and any earlier reports. Ask the doctor who prescribes your medicine before you stop or change anything.

- Keep taking your medicine for now
- Ask your prescriber before any change
- Bring a written list of your medicines

Who diagnoses and who prescribes

Who can diagnose a dissociative disorder?

A psychologist or a psychiatrist assesses it, usually after your GP refers you. Your GP does not need to name it to write your plan. A short questionnaire or online test cannot settle it on its own.

What it costs

How many sessions does Medicare cover each year?

Up to 10 individual and 10 group sessions each calendar year. Your GP refers you for up to 6 sessions first. After a review, a new referral can take you to the 10. The count starts again each calendar year. Practices set their own fees, so you may pay a gap, and gaps count toward the Medicare Safety Net.

- Up to 10 individual and 10 group sessions a year
- The first referral covers up to 6 sessions
- A GP review and new referral cover the remaining sessions

In danger? Call 000. Lifeline 13 11 14, text 0477 13 11 14, or chat online.

Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467. Free counselling by phone or video, any hour.

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