

Depression

Depression is very common - one in five people become depressed at some point in their lives. Anyone can get low at times, but someone is said to be suffering from depression when these feelings don't go away quickly or become so bad they interfere with their everyday life.



Why do people get depressed?

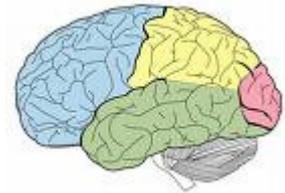
Sometimes there may be an obvious reason for becoming depressed, sometimes not. There is usually more than one reason and reasons are different for different people. The reason may seem obvious – a relationship breakdown or a bereavement or even the birth of a child – sometimes it is not clear. Either way, these feelings can become so bad that you need help. Women seem to get depressed more often than men and are more likely to have the double stress of having to work and look after children.

What does it feel like to be depressed?

The feeling of depression is deeper, longer and more unpleasant than the short episodes of unhappiness that everyone experiences occasionally.

Symptoms include:

- losing interest in life;
- finding it harder to make decisions;
- not coping with things that used to be manageable;
- feeling exhausted;
- feeling restless and agitated;
- loss of appetite and weight
- difficulties getting to sleep.
- physical symptoms such as constant headaches or palpitations
- some people are troubled with suicidal thoughts, or recurrent thoughts of death



What help is available?

There are two types of treatment available: talking treatments and medication. Both can be accessed through your doctor.

What are talking treatments?

There are several different types of talking treatments. Counselling enables you to talk about your feelings to an objective, professional person. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy helps people overcome the negative thoughts that can sometimes be the cause of depression.

What sorts of medication might work?



As well as tablets, there is an alternative remedy called St John's Wort available from chemists. There is evidence that it is effective in mild to moderate depression. If you are taking other medication, you should tell your doctor before taking St John's Wort.



Antidepressants can be effective if your depression is severe or goes on for a long time. They may help you to feel less anxious and cope better so that you can start to enjoy life and deal with problems effectively again. It is important to remember that you won't feel the effect of antidepressants straight away. People often don't notice any improvement in their mood for 2 or 3 weeks.

What can I do to help myself?

- Talking to someone close to you about how you feel can help. Going over a painful experience several times and crying it out can allow the mind to heal.
- Another strategy is to do something – go outside for a walk or some other form of exercise. This will help you to keep fit and hopefully, sleep better. You can also do jobs around the house to try and take your mind off thoughts that make you depressed.
- Make sure that you have a healthy diet and you eat well
- If you think you know what is causing your depression, it can help to write down the problem and then think of the things you could do to tackle it. Pick the best actions and see if they work.
- Also try to keep hopeful. Remember this is a very common experience and you will come through it, probably stronger and more able to cope than before.
- Try not to get worried if you can't sleep but do something relaxing in bed such as reading or listening to the radio.



How can I help someone who is depressed?

Listen to them but try not to judge them. Don't offer advice unless they ask for it but if you can see the problem that is behind the depression, you could work with the person to find a solution.

Spending time with them, listening over and over to their problems and encouraging them to keep going with activities in routine is all helpful.



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If they are getting worse, encourage them to visit their doctor and to accept and follow their treatment.

Contacts for further help:

- Your GP
- Depression Alliance have self-help groups throughout the country such as www.batleypselfhelp.org.uk or www.depressionalliance.org and can be contacted on Tel: 01924 446413
- The Samaritans on www.samaritans.org or Tel: 08457 90 90 90