

# Feeling Depressed?

You are not alone with depression

## Depression

It is normal to have ups and downs in moods, but when you cannot shake your feelings of despair or emptiness over many weeks, you may have depression. It may have become tough to get through each day, and seem as though you cannot get any pleasure out of life any more. Don't ignore these feelings, talk to someone you can trust. You are not alone.

## Symptoms may include

- Little pleasure in usual activities
- Feeling low or hopeless
- Changed sleep habits, more or less
- Tired and little energy
- Change in appetite, more or less
- Feeling bad about yourself
- Trouble concentrating
- Constant negative thoughts

## Causes of depression

There are many different reasons why people may become depressed, like ongoing life and work stresses, relationship problems, financial strain or unemployment. Or there may be health problems; hormonal changes, chronic pain, drug abuse, a family history of depression, or childhood trauma.

## Top tips

- **Talk to someone**  
Talking with someone (either personally or professionally) and supporting others is much better than being isolated
- **Manage underlying issues**  
Identify what is negatively affecting you and take practical steps to solve it, if it is in your control.
- **Make healthy changes**  
Regular exercise, good sleep and healthy food.
- **Manage stress**  
Practice relaxation techniques like meditation, yoga and mindfulness.
- **Have a plan**  
Pay attention to how you feel, and take early action to support yourself, through contacting someone, distracting yourself, or doing something fun.

## Further help

If you have tried these ideas and are still having problems with a low mood or depression after a few weeks, see your doctor, who will be able to check if your medications are affecting you, and what other help may be available. You can also call the Depression Helpline - 0800 111 757.

## More on managing depression

As the symptoms and causes of depression can be very different for different people, so too are the ways that work best to deal with it. Start by reaching out for both personal and professional support. Let your family and friends know what you are going through and how they can support you.

### Get support from others

Having someone to talk to can make all the difference. In depression, if your brain is giving you lots of negative thoughts and feedback, it can be very useful to get some perspective from someone who cares about you, whether it is a friend, whanau, a doctor or a counsellor. Talk about it. Find a way to manage your depression more effectively by gaining an insight into your thoughts, symptoms, triggers, and the root of your depression. Your doctor may advise medication or therapy.

### Reduce or resolve underlying issues

If your symptoms of depression are caused by an obvious factor, like a particular life stress, financial worry, or work issue, try to find a way to deal with it, to reduce how much it affects you. A visit to your doctor or a counsellor may offer solutions.

### Make healthy lifestyle changes

Increase your energy and wellbeing to enable your body to give you the best support to manage your depression.

You can achieve this by making small changes to improve your health.

- Regular exercise increases positive moods, reduces stress and relieves muscle tension.
- Regular sleep maintains your body's health and energy.
- Eat well, minimise sugar intake and eat mind-boosting foods like bananas, brown rice, spinach and omega-3 rich food such as fish.

### Actively manage your stress

Practice relaxation techniques like meditation, yoga, and Qigong. Do this with others, by joining a regular group. Mindfulness is used to focus on the present moment, watching your thoughts and feelings without judging them, letting them go without needing to do anything about them, just seeing them for what they are. Our bodies get rebalanced with daily exercise so try to incorporate 30 minutes each day (e.g. walking).

### Make a plan

Be aware of what triggers your symptoms of depression and be prepared with a plan. Know what works for you to protect yourself. Divert your attention through distraction or an activity that occupies your mind. Spend time with people who have a positive effect on you, or phone them. Watch a comedy, play with a pet, pay attention to a hobby. Do one thing, no matter how small.