

Depression

Depression means different things in different cultures. The symptoms of depression and the treatments provided are not all the same. In this document, depression is defined as a mental health issue that causes people to experience feelings of sadness, being miserable most of the time, loss of interest or pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, low energy, and poor concentration.

There is no one type or cause of depression. Everybody's circumstances, history and culture will be different. The causes, duration, symptoms and treatment will all be different for each person.

The World Health Organisation estimates that depression will be the number one health concern in both developed and developing nations by 2030¹.

Symptoms:

Depression signs and symptoms may vary among people but generally encompass a feeling of sadness or hopelessness. The signs and symptoms will be different for every person and include a range of behaviours, feelings, thoughts and physical feelings.

Behaviour

- not going out anymore
- not getting things done at work/school
- withdrawing from close family and friends
- relying on alcohol and sedatives
- not doing usual enjoyable activities
- difficulty concentrating

Thoughts

- 'I'm a failure.'
- 'It's my fault.'
- 'Nothing good ever happens to me.'
- 'I'm worthless.'
- 'Life's not worth living.'
- 'People would be better off without me.'

Feelings

- overwhelmed
- guilty
- irritable
- frustrated
- lacking in confidence
- unhappy
- indecisive
- disappointed
- miserable
- sad

Physical feelings

- tired all the time
- no energy
- sick and run down
- headaches and muscle pains
- churning gut
- sleep problems
- loss or change of appetite
- significant weight loss or gain

Everyone experiences some of these symptoms from time to time and not everyone who is experiencing depression will have all these symptoms. Depression symptoms can vary from very mild to severe depression. If you experience symptoms of depression for most of the day – every day – for more than two weeks, or if you are concerned about any of the feelings you are having, you should seek help from your doctor.



Causes:

Depression is a complex condition and its causes are not fully understood. However, various contributing factors can lead to depression. These can include biological factors (for example, genetics or experience of physical illness or injury) and psychological or social factors (experiences dating back to childhood, unemployment, bereavement, or life-changing events such as pregnancy, migrations, family dislocation, and isolation). Having a long-standing or life-threatening illness, such as heart disease, back pain or cancer, has been associated with an increased risk of depression.

Getting support:

Everyone is different and there is no one proven way to treat depression. Treatment needs to be tailored to your condition, circumstances, needs and preferences. Most people with anxiety or depression benefit from one or a combination of the following:

- lifestyle changes and social support
- psychological or 'talking' therapies
- medical therapies

Common treatment approaches for depression include talking therapies and medication.

Talking therapies

Talking therapies involve speaking in confidence to a trained professional about problems or issues that may be causing concern. Types of talking therapies include counselling and psychotherapy, and your doctor can advise you about which approach you may find most helpful.

Medication

Another treatment option for depression is to take antidepressants. These can be taken on their own or in conjunction with talking therapies.

There are various types of antidepressants available and you can speak with your doctor about what might suit you best. If one medication does not work, you may be prescribed something else. It is important that you take the medicine for the length of time recommended by your doctor.

There may be side effects for taking antidepressants. When seeking support, you can ask questions about the treatments, the side effects and when you can expect to feel better.

If you think you have depression, it is important to speak with your doctor or care provider for more detail and to discuss which treatment may be most appropriate for you.

If you need help now

If you think someone could hurt themselves or others, get urgent help.

Call emergency services

Dial triple zero (000)

Call Lifeline

Dial 13 11 14

About this factsheet:

This factsheet has been adapted from a similar document published on the website of health UK. The original can be viewed at

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/d/depression>.

Other sources include:

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/who-can-assist>

This fact sheet has been informed by members of the Embrace Multicultural Mental Health's CALD Mental Health Consumer and Carer group.

Factsheet produced by:

Embrace Multicultural Mental Health
Mental Health Australia

¹ World Health Organisation. (2008). The global burden of disease: 2004 update.

