



Depression

What is depression?

Everyone feels unhappy from time to time, but depression is when these feelings last for weeks, months or even years.

You may feel sad on a daily basis, feel worthless, useless and see the future as bleak. Everyday tasks may feel difficult to complete in this frame of mind.

You might often think very negatively about things or yourself which may affect the way you live your life. Friends or family might comment that you are quiet, or don't seem yourself.

Depression can be mild, moderate or severe.

Who gets depression?

Depression is a common mental health problem which currently affects about one in 10 people in the UK at some point in their lives.

It can affect anyone but it is:

- More common in women than in men,
- women are twice as likely to seek help for depression, where as men are more likely to commit suicide, and
- two per cent of all teenagers in the UK are depressed (www.nhs.uk, 2010).

Types of depression

Major depressive disorder

A combination of symptoms that interfere with your ability to work, sleep, study, eat, and enjoy activities. It is disabling and prevents you from functioning normally. An episode of major depression may occur only once in your lifetime but more often it recurs throughout the lifespan.

Dysthymia (mild depression)

You may find it hard to enjoy things but you can still live a normal life. For a diagnosis of dysthymia you will have felt this way for at least two years.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)

The type of weather can make you feel low. For example winter months may make you feel worse.

Bipolar disorder

You may go from feeling really low to really hyper over a given space of time. See our factsheet on bipolar disorder for more information.

Psychotic depression

This occurs when a severe depressive illness is accompanied by some form of psychosis, such as a break with reality, hallucinations and delusions.

Postnatal depression

About one in 10 mothers experience symptoms of depression after giving birth.

Did you know?

Depression is one of the most common mental health problems in the UK and one of the most easily treated.



Symptoms of depression

Physical

- You may be feeling very tired for a lot of the time.
- You may be sleeping too much or perhaps not at all.
- You may eat more or less than you usually would.
- In some cases you find yourself feeling ill, for example having unexplained headaches or stomach aches.
- You may have no energy at all.
- Women may find a change in their menstrual periods.

Emotional

- You may be feeling really down for most of the time.
- You might find yourself becoming upset a lot, crying for no reason or being irritable.
- You may not be able to concentrate on things.
- You may think your memory is getting worse and find it hard making decisions.
- You may have lost confidence in yourself and feel worthless.
- You may feel guilty about things.
- You may feel anxious about things.
- You may have a lowered sex drive.
- In serious cases you may find yourself thinking about ways to harm yourself or contemplating ending your life. If this is the case then go to your local GP or A&E.

Social

- You may avoid other people and see friends less.
- You may have more arguments at home.
- You may find it hard to get up and go to work or school.
- You may not feel like doing things you used to enjoy and may want to stay in bed to avoid doing things.
- Your performance at work or school may decrease.

What causes depression?

There is no one cause of depression. Depression can occur in anyone at any time but often arises if the person has had:

- Stressful life events early in their life, for example abuse history, bullying or a difficult home life,
- distressing events such as losing a loved one, redundancy, relationship break-ups, parental divorce,
- past history of drug and alcohol abuse,
- a possible genetic link as a family history of depression is common in some people with depression, however, this may also be a product of the environment that families often share,
- poor social circumstances such as being alone, having a low income, being physically ill or unemployed,
- a change in hormones and neurotransmitters, the natural chemicals in your brain,
- experience of homelessness, being a refugee or living in an institution,
- child birth in some women (postnatal depression).

Treating depression

The treatment will depend on the person, how long they have been feeling depressed and what they and the health professional decide together. In young people it should involve the following stages:

- Recognising depression and 'watchful waiting', (seeing if it goes away by itself over two weeks),
- non-directive supportive therapy or group guided therapy, self-help (for example suggesting books on overcoming depression),
- cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) in a supportive group with similar people,
- CBT with a therapist (this usually lasts six to 12 sessions),
- antidepressant medication with brief therapy, or
- antidepressant with intensive therapy.

For more ways to stay well, visit the [coping yourself](#) and [professional help](#) pages, under the [help and advice](#) section of our website.



Helping yourself

There are a lot of things you can do to make yourself feel better. Below are a few ideas to get you started:

- **Don't take on too much at once.** If you have a job or are at college, speak to the human resources department or student services to ask for advice and see if they can support you, for example by working part-time for a while or having extensions on assignments.
- **Be smart.** Set SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and targeted - goals which mean that you are more likely to achieve them.
- **Make a daily plan:** Just before you go to bed at night make yourself a plan for the next day.
- **Exercise:** Just 30 minutes a day can help make you feel more positive and active. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) recommends that exercise is used to treat depression in people of all ages.
- **Meet a friend:** Whether it's the cinema or just going to a friend's house, talk to people. Socialising is a way to make you feel good about yourself and distract you from negative thoughts.
- **Read a book:** Getting into a good book is a great way to take your mind off any negativity. If you are not the reading type then take time out to watch your favourite film or do something that interests you.
- **Make sure you are getting enough sleep.** If you are not you are more likely feel moody and agitated.
- **Eat well:** Three balanced meals a day, breakfast, lunch and dinner are vital for you to stay healthy.
- **Take time to relax.** See our relaxation techniques in coping yourself section at www.youthspace.me.
- **Do not use drugs or alcohol** to solve your problems because most of the time they only make matters worse.

For ideas on helping yourself see the [coping yourself](#) page, under the [help and advice](#) section of our website.

Where to get help

If you are unsure where to go for help, ask your GP.

In the West Midlands

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

at Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust offers support and advice from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays.
Tel: 0800 953 0045, text: 0798 588 3509
Email: pals@bsmhft.nhs.uk
Website: www.bsmhft.nhs.uk

Depression Alliance support group

Holds monthly support meetings in Birmingham.
Tel: 0787 922 2374
Website: www.depressionalliance.org

Birmingham Mind

Based across Birmingham.
Tel: 0121 608 8001
Website: www.birminghammind.org

National contacts

Mind

Tel: 0845 766 0163
Email: info@mind.org.uk
Website: www.mind.org.uk

Papyrus

A charity dedicated to preventing young suicide. Provides advice and support to young people who may be at risk of suicide and those concerned about them.
Tel: 0800 068 4141
Website: www.papyrus-uk.org

If you feel suicidal you can go to your GP or A&E.

For more info go to our [contacts and links](#) section for helpful links at www.youthspace.me.





Youthspace

Telephone: 0800 953 0045
(PALS offers advice and support from 8am to 8pm, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays.)

Text: 0798 588 3509

Email: contact@youthspace.me

Website: www.youthspace.me

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www.bsmhft.nhs.uk

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