

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

blurt

Depression is a mental illness which affects as many as 1 in 6 people at any time in their life.

Everyone has spells of feeling sad or low but depression is much more than that. Periods of depression can persist for weeks or months.

Depression can affect everything – it can change the way you think and feel, it can affect the way you eat and sleep, and you may feel sad for no reason at all. Some people will forget things or have difficulty concentrating, while others will feel chronically exhausted.

It can eat up and spit out the most confident and bubbly of people, changing them beyond recognition. It can make you withdrawn and terrified of life, or it can make you lash out against those you love the most.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Because the symptoms of depression develop gradually and affect different people in different ways, it may be that a close friend or family notices there is something wrong before you do.

If you have been experiencing some of the following symptoms continuously for more than two weeks, please speak to your GP:

Low mood ✨ sadness ✨ guilt ✨ no motivation ✨ no hope
anxiety ✨ feeling helpless ✨ loss in interest in things you usually enjoy ✨ change in appetite (over eating or no interest in food) ✨ no energy ✨ change in sleeping habits (over sleeping or not getting any sleep) ✨ irritability ✨ low self-esteem ✨ low tolerance ✨ crying for no apparent reason ✨ indecisive ✨ avoiding contact with friends and family ✨ lack of interest in sex ✨ finding difficulties at work suicidal thoughts ✨ thoughts of harming yourself.

GETTING HELP . . .

Asking for help is probably the hardest step but struggling on with the symptoms mentioned earlier can exacerbate the symptoms.

The first step in getting help is to see your GP. There are other illnesses such as an under or active thyroid which have similar symptoms to depression so you need to make sure you know for sure that it is depression you are dealing with. Your GP will then be able to discuss medication with you and talk to you about other options available to you such as counselling and Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT).

We understand that the stigma of depression often prevents people reaching out to friends and family for fear of rejection and feelings of shame. It is important to remember that depression is an illness and a strong support system is important to help you get better.

Tell your friends and family about how you are feeling. Talking about depression often helps you to learn how to recognise and express your emotions. If those closest to you want more information about depression because they've not had an experience of it before, show them our 'Supporting someone through depression' info sheet.

Consider your lifestyle; are there effective changes you can make?

Some examples are:

Eat a diet rich in fruit and vegetables, get regular exercise, learn how to relax manage stress, challenge negative thought patterns, take time out to do things you enjoy.

The following info sheets are also available in the series:

-  Anxiety
-  Stress
-  Depression & Exercise
-  Depression & Sleep
-  Depression & Nutrition
-  Depression & Money
-  Depression & Work
-  Depression for Employers
-  Supporting someone with depression
-  PND (Postnatal Depression)
-  PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder)