

Depression

Depression is a mental health disorder that affects a person's physical and mental wellbeing. It may be characterised by extended periods of sadness, a loss of interest in activities once found enjoyable or a lack of motivation.

Most people will go through stages of sadness, grief or low mood in their life. But when these feelings last for longer than two weeks and begin to affect a person's ability to function, it could be an indication of depression.



What causes depression?

Life events.

Depression can be triggered by recent or long-term events that cause stressors. Long-term events may include long-term isolation, unemployment, living in an abusive household or long-term stress. Depression can also be triggered by the loss of a loved one or a recent job loss.

Personal circumstances.

Depression can run in the family, meaning some people have an increased genetic risk. For some people, an increase in drug and alcohol use can lead to depressive symptoms. Certain personality types are also more susceptible.

Types of depression

It's important to be aware of the different types of depressive disorders.

Major depression. People experiencing major depression experience low mood and other symptoms most days.

Bipolar disorder. Also known as manic depression, bipolar disorder causes mood shifts where a person may go from mania to depression.

Seasonal depression. Depression that is related to certain seasons, generally more prevalent in the winter.

Psychotic depression. Depression can occur alongside a psychosis, where a person may experience delusions or hallucinations.

Prenatal and postnatal. Depression can occur during pregnancy (prenatal) or following birth (postnatal).

The signs and symptoms

Physical:

- Run down, fatigued
- Sleep difficulties
- Weight loss or gain
- Headache or tension
- Stomach pain

Behavioural:

- Lack in concentration
- Increased substance use
- Avoiding social events
- Withdrawing
- Neglecting hobbies

Thoughts/feelings:

- Low confidence
- Feeling like a failure
- Worthlessness
- Hopelessness
- Low mood

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING DEPRESSION

1

Professional support.

Seek out a doctor, psychologist or mental health professional with who you feel comfortable discussing your mental health and wellbeing.

2

Monitor thoughts.

Watch out for any negative thoughts or internal dialogue and challenge this thinking. Recording thoughts and feelings in a journal can be useful here.

3

Connect with others.

Talking to a supportive friend or family member can help. Withdrawing or neglecting social connections will only perpetuate the cycle.

4

Increase activity.

Plan time for some of the activities you enjoy or find relaxing. Get outside for some time each day and maintain regular exercise- even a short walk can help.

5

Medication.

You may need to take anti-depressant medication to assist in alleviating some of your symptoms. Discuss with your doctor what medication may work best for you.