

Mental Health factsheet

What is Depression?

Depression isn't just sadness. Everyone gets sad or feels 'the blues' from time to time.

Even the word 'depression' can mean different things depending on the situation. When you are exceptionally busy or under a lot of pressure it is normal to feel 'stressed out'. It's also perfectly normal to feel down if you've had some kind of setback, negative or even traumatic, experience.

Depression affects everyone differently and the symptoms range from mild to severe – ranging from feeling low all the time to feeling suicidal.

Clinical depression – feeling low persistently for at least two weeks - has an effect on how we behave, how we feel (physically and mentally) and even how we think.

It can be hard to identify depression because life always has 'ups and downs' and everyone has times when they don't feel at their best.

Someone with depression may feel sad, anxious, worried, guilty, self-critical or even angry or helpless. Often, they will feel confused and find it difficult to make decisions. It could be hard to concentrate on things and, at its worst, they may even have suicidal thoughts.

It is common to lack energy, to feel demotivated and to feel very tired most (or all) of the time. It is also common to lose interest in things like appearance and responsibilities.

Sufferers may cry more often, feel more achy, withdraw from social situations and they may even adopt behaviours such as self-harming, taking risks, abusing alcohol or drugs and either over or under-eating.

Sometimes you can notice depression by the way that people talk. For example, they might say things like "I'm a failure", "It's all my fault", "It's hopeless", "I'm worthless", "No-one can help", "It's never going to get better" or even "Life isn't worth living".

If you notice these signs and symptoms in yourself then you should go and talk to a medical professional. Depression is a real illness (it's not just 'in your head') and it can be treated. Just like any other illness, the sooner it is treated, the sooner you will get better!



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