

# Depression

## Common symptoms

### Mood and motivation:

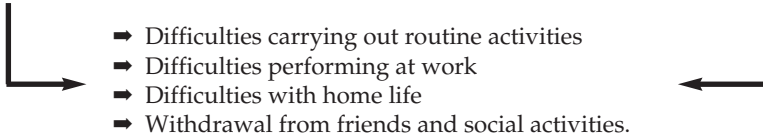
- ➔ Continuous low mood
- ➔ Loss of interest or pleasure
- ➔ Hopelessness
- ➔ Helplessness
- ➔ Worthlessness

### Psychological:

- ➔ Guilt/negative attitude to self
- ➔ Poor concentration/memory
- ➔ Thoughts of death or suicide
- ➔ Tearfulness

### Physical:

- ➔ Slowing down or agitation
- ➔ Tiredness/lack of energy
- ➔ Sleep problems
- ➔ Disturbed appetite (weight loss/increase)

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- ➔ Difficulties carrying out routine activities
  - ➔ Difficulties performing at work
  - ➔ Difficulties with home life
  - ➔ Withdrawal from friends and social activities.

## Depression is common and treatable

- ➔ Depression *does not* mean weakness
- ➔ Depression *does not* mean laziness
- ➔ Depression *does mean* that you have a medical disorder which requires treatment.

## Common triggers

### Psychological:

- Major life events, eg
- ➔ Recent bereavement
- ➔ Relationship problems
- ➔ Unemployment
- ➔ Moving house
- ➔ Stress at work
- ➔ Financial problems.

### Other:

- ➔ Family history of depression
- ➔ Childbirth
- ➔ Menopause
- ➔ Seasonal changes
- ➔ Chronic medical conditions
- ➔ Alcohol and substance use disorders.

### Illness:

- ➔ Infectious diseases
- ➔ Influenza
- ➔ Hepatitis.

### Medication:

- ➔ Antihypertensives
- ➔ H2 blockers
- ➔ Oral contraceptives
- ➔ Corticosteroids.

## What treatments can help?

*Both therapies are most often needed:*

### Supportive therapy for:

- ➔ stress/life problems
- ➔ patterns of negative thinking
- ➔ prevention of further episode.

### Medication:

- ➔ for depressed mood or loss of interest/pleasure for two or more weeks and at least four of the symptoms mentioned earlier
- ➔ for little response to supportive therapy (counselling)
- ➔ for recurrent depression
- ➔ for a family history of depression.

## About medication

### Effective

Usually works faster than other methods.

### Treatment plan

must be strictly adhered to.

### Drugs

- ➔ are not addictive
- ➔ interact in a harmful way with alcohol
- ➔ improvement takes time, generally three weeks for a response
- ➔ do not take in combination with St John's wort.

### Side-effects

must be reported, but generally start improving within 7–10 days.

### Progress

- ➔ same medication should continue unless a different decision is taken by the doctor
- ➔ medication should not be discontinued without doctor's knowledge in case a drug is not effective, another drug may be tried.

### Time period

Medication to be continued at least four to six months after initial improvement.

### Ongoing review

is necessary over the next few months.

## Increase time spent on enjoyable activities

- ➔ Set small achievable, daily goals for doing pleasant activities
- ➔ Plan time for activities and increase the amount of time spent on these each week
- ➔ Plan things to look forward to in future
- ➔ Keep busy even when it is hard to feel motivated
- ➔ Try to be with other people/family members.

## Problem-solving plan

### Discuss

problems with partner/family members, trusted friend or counsellor.

### Distance

yourself to look at problems as though you were an observer.

### Options

Work out possible solutions to solve the problems.

### Pros and cons

Examine advantages and disadvantages of each option.

### Set a time frame

to examine and resolve problems.

### Make an action plan

for working through the problems over a period of time.

### Review

progress made in solving problems.

## Change attitudes and way of thinking

'I will always feel this way; things will never change.'

*Instead:*

'These feelings are temporary. With treatment, things will look better in a few weeks.'

'It's all my fault. I do not seem to be able to do anything right.'

*Instead:*

'These are negative thoughts that are the result of depression. What evidence for this do I really have?'