

Condition:

Depression

### What is depression?

The word depressed is often used casually in daily life to express a period of distress, but for those people who can't get rid of the feeling of constant sadness for a long period of time depression is a serious mental illness. According to mind.org.uk, "if the feelings [of sadness] are interfering with your life and don't go away after a couple of weeks, or if they come back, over and over again, for a few days at a time, it could be a sign that you're depressed in the medical sense of the term."

### Symptoms of depression

Some symptoms are:

- ◆ Being RESTLESS and AGITATED
- ◆ Having DIFFICULTY SLEEPING, or SLEEPING MORE
- ◆ Feeling TIRED and lacking energy
- ◆ NOT EATING PROPERLY: losing or putting on weight
  - ◆ CRYING a lot
  - ◆ Difficulty remembering things
- ◆ PHYSICAL ACHES and pains with no physical cause
- ◆ Feeling LOW SPIRITED all the time and being unusually IRRITABLE or IMPATIENT
- ◆ Finding it HARD TO CONCENTRATE OR MAKE DECISIONS and feeling unnecessarily GUILTY about things
- ◆ LACKING SELF CONFIDENCE and ESTEEM
- ◆ Feeling NUMB, EMPTY, DESPAIRING and HELPLESS
  - ◆ DISTANCING yourself from others
  - ◆ SELF HARMING

These are symptoms of depression and should only be a cause for concern if many of them are experienced frequently.



### Treatments of depression

In order to defeat depression, negative thoughts which fuel its progress must be isolated. They can become automatic and difficult to challenge, but replacing time spent dwelling on negative thoughts with constructive activity such as: physical activities: that stimulate endorphins which make you feel good; positive experiences and treats: which reinforce the idea that you deserve good things; looking after yourself by eating healthily.

A GP will prescribe antidepressants for depression and psychological treatments are also available.

Friends and relatives can also play an important part in the healing of a person during depression: they often withdraw from friends and relatives around them, rather than asking for help or support. However, this is a time when they need the help and support most. Positive company expressed through praise, reassurance, care and sympathy is immensely useful. You can show that you care by listening, by being affectionate, by appreciating the person, or simply by spending time with them. Supporting a friend or relative through depression can be hard work and frustrating, at times. Unless you pay attention to your own needs, it can make you feel depressed, too. Try and share the responsibility with as many people as possible.

### Useful organisations

**Rethink** advice line: 0845 456 0455

Information and support for people affected by severe mental illness at [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

**Depression Alliance** tel. 0845 123 2320

Search for information, support and self-help groups at [www.depressionalliance.org](http://www.depressionalliance.org)

**Samaritans** 24-hour telephone helpline: 08457 90 90

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