

## Depression

There is a way through it



# What is Depression?

## Feeling depressed

or 'down' is common and can be a normal reaction to the stress of our everyday lives. When a low mood persists for a month or longer, along with a number of other symptoms, a person may be experiencing depression.

## What causes depression?

Depression is thought to arise from a combination of genetic or biological factors, and stressful life events such as illness, major bereavement or break-up of a relationship. Sometimes there is no apparent trigger.

## What are the signs?

Signs or symptoms of depression vary between individuals and over time. Common signs include persistent low mood; sadness or emotional 'numbness'; loss of pleasure in everyday activities; irritability; anxiety; poor concentration; feeling guilty or crying for no apparent reason; changes in eating or sleeping patterns; feelings of hopelessness and thoughts of death. If a number of these symptoms have been present for a month or longer, the person may have depression.

Depression can 'sap the will' and makes many normal tasks seem like an enormous effort

## How common is depression?

Up to one in five women and one in 10 men will become depressed at some point in their lives.

Anyone can become depressed, but it is most common in young people aged between 16 and 24.



## How is it treated?

There is a range of treatments that have been proven to work. Different types of depression require different treatments. With treatment, most people will have a complete recovery and return to their usual activities and relationships.

### Self-help

Looking for information is a good first step. Some self-help strategies have been found to be very effective for mild to moderate depression. These include physical activity, reducing the consumption of alcohol and recreational drugs, and dealing with stress and sleep problems.

### Treatment

Treatment of more serious depression can also include counselling and/or an antidepressant medication. If you are concerned about being depressed, you can call the depression helpline on 0800 111 757, or talk to a trusted family member or friend, your family doctor, or a counsellor.

## How can I help someone else with depression?

- See yourself as part of their support team
- Try not to take things personally or see the person as being 'difficult'
- Try and find helpful information on their behalf
- Reassure the person that depression will lift in time
- Take any thoughts of suicide seriously – it's okay to talk about it.
- Don't leave someone alone if they feel unsafe.
- Contact a health care provider or a crisis phone line.
- Encourage and support them to get help.
- Call the depression helpline (0800 111 757).

### Where can I get more information?

[www.depression.org.nz](http://www.depression.org.nz)

0800 111 757

Seek help early!

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand – for resources, videos, books and further information  
81 New North Road, Eden Terrace, Auckland  
Phone: (09) 300 7010 Fax: (09) 300 7020  
Email: [resource@mentalhealth.org.nz](mailto:resource@mentalhealth.org.nz)  
Website: [www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)

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