

Understanding depression



Depression is more than just a low mood – it's a serious illness. People with depression find it hard to function every day. Depression has serious effects on *physical* and *mental* health.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF A PERSON IS DEPRESSED AND NOT JUST SAD?

A person may be depressed, if **for more than two weeks** they have:

- felt sad, down or miserable most of the time

OR

- lost interest or pleasure in most of their usual activities.

AND experienced symptoms in **at least three of the following four categories:**

1. Behaviour

- Stopping going out
- Not getting things done at work
- Withdrawing from close family and friends
- Relying on alcohol and sedatives
- No longer doing things they enjoyed
- Unable to concentrate

2. Thoughts

- "I'm a failure."
- "It's my fault."
- "Nothing good ever happens to me."
- "I'm worthless."
- "Life's not worth living."

3. Feelings

- Overwhelmed
- Guilty
- Irritable
- Frustrated
- No confidence
- Unhappy
- Indecisive
- Disappointed
- Miserable
- Sad

4. Physical

- Tired all the time
- Sick and run down
- Headaches and muscle pains
- Churning gut
- Sleep problems
- Loss or change of appetite
- Significant weight loss or gain

In most cases, depression will go on for weeks or months if left untreated. If it isn't properly treated, depression is highly likely to recur.

WHAT MAKES A PERSON MORE AT RISK OF DEPRESSION?

Some events or situations have been linked with depression:

- family conflict
- isolation or loneliness
- unemployment
- having a serious medical illness
- drug and alcohol use
- brain and chemical changes
- having a family member with depression.

It's important to remember that each person is different and it is often a combination of factors that puts a person at risk of depression.

HOW COMMON IS DEPRESSION?

Very common. Around one million Australian adults and 100,000 young people live with depression each year.

On average, one in five people will experience depression in their lives; one in four females and one in six males.

WHAT ARE THE TREATMENTS FOR DEPRESSION?

Depression is often not recognised or treated.

Different types of depression require different types of treatments. This may include physical exercise for preventing and treating mild depression, through to psychological and drug treatments for more severe levels of depression.