

What is Depression?

“Nearly 80,000 children and young people suffer from depression in the UK. Depression is one of the most common types of mental illness” (www.youngmins.org.uk).

There will be periods in your life when you feel down and this is common for everyone. When you're depressed you feel persistently sad for weeks or months, rather than just a few days. Depression often develops alongside anxiety and can happen as a reaction to experiences such as bullying, family breakdown, bereavement and abuse. It can also run in families. It impacts on the way you feel, think and behave.

Being depressed can come with an array of emotions including sadness, stress, hopelessness, loneliness, irritability, anger, emptiness or numbness. People with depression often have negative thoughts about themselves, other people, the future or life in general. It can be hard to carry out usual routines and tasks including eating, sleeping and self-care (showering/ brushing your teeth).

You can't just “snap out” of depression, or “cheer up”. It is more than just having a bad day or week, or feeling fed up. It's a medical condition that can affect many aspects of your life.

Symptoms can include:

- Not wanting to do things that you previously enjoyed
- Avoiding friends or social situations
- Sleeping more or less than normal
- Eating more or less than normal
- Being self-critical
- Feeling irritable, upset, miserable or lonely
- Feeling hopeless
- Maybe wanting to self-harm
- Feeling tired and not having any energy
- Poor concentration and attention
- Crying a lot

The good news is that depression is treatable and people can recover!

What can I try to make me feel better?

- Make a playlist of your favourite music to listen to
- Try painting or drawing
- Write down how you feel in a diary
- Try a sport – it's been shown that exercise can help to fight depression
- Eat healthily as a healthy diet is essential for good mental health
- Volunteer
- Go for a walk
- Try meditation or yoga
- Do what makes you feel more relaxed

TOP TIPS

It is important to tell someone how you are feeling so you don't feel alone. You could talk to a parent, a carer, a teacher, or a health professional (school nurse or your GP). This is particularly important if you are having thoughts or urges to harm yourself or end your life.

Follow a basic daily routine, making sure to do the activities you need to do. Additionally, do some other activities that you used to enjoy but have perhaps stopped doing because you are feeling Depressed. Plan activities for the morning, afternoon and evening and try to stick to these even if you do not feel like it. Avoiding or withdrawing from activity is known to lower mood so make sure that you see friends, go to school/ college, and do the things you enjoy (or used to).

Look after yourself; eat well, sleep, get some fresh air daily, do exercise and avoid self-medication (for example using alcohol, drugs or caffeine).

Where can I get Support and advice?

Talk to someone you like and trust. You could also talk to your GP. If your GP thinks you're suffering from depression, they may prescribe therapy, anti-depressants or a combination of both.

Therapy, such as speaking to a counsellor or therapist can be a good long term solution. They'll listen to your problems and be very sympathetic.

Anti-depressants work by artificially lifting your mood and while they can help with the feelings in the short term, they won't help solve the root cause of your depression.

If you can't talk to someone you know, you can use helplines, text services, apps and/or websites. Take a look at the ones accompanying leaflet.