

What is depression?

Depression is more than simply feeling unhappy or fed up for a few days. We all go through spells of feeling down, but when you're depressed, you feel persistently sad or "low" for weeks or months rather than just a few days.

Depression is a real illness with real symptoms. It is not a sign of weakness or something you can 'snap out of' by 'pulling yourself together'. Sometimes there is a trigger for depression. Life changing events such as bereavement, or losing your job, or having a baby can bring it on. Also, sometimes people with a family history of depression can be more likely to experience depression themselves.

The good news is that with the right treatment and support, most people can make a full recovery from depression.

Symptoms of Depression

The symptoms of depression can vary widely between people. As a general rule, if you are depressed, you feel sad, hopeless and lose interest in things you used to enjoy. The symptoms can persist for weeks or months, and are bad enough to interfere with work, social life and family life.

Psychological symptoms include:

- Continuous low mood or sadness
- Feeling hopeless and helpless
- Having low self esteem
- Feeling tearful
- Feeling guilt ridden
- Feeling irritable and intolerant of others
- Having no motivation or interest in things
- Finding it difficult to make decisions
- Not getting any enjoyment out of life
- Feeling anxious or worried
- Having suicidal thoughts or thoughts of harming yourself

Physical symptoms include:

- Moving or speaking more slowly than usual
- Change in appetite or weight
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Lack of energy
- Lack of interest in sex
- Changes to menstrual cycle
- Disturbed sleep

Social symptoms include:

- Not doing well at work
- Taking part in fewer social activities
- Avoiding contact with friends
- Neglecting hobbies and interests
- Having difficulty in your home and family life

Coping With Depression

Some people may find some of the following suggestions useful:

- Don't bottle things up. Try to talk to the people who are close to you
- Be kind to yourself
- Try to do things you enjoy
- Don't rely on alcohol, drugs or cigarettes to cope
- Have a routine, such as going to bed and getting up at the same time
- Eat healthily and regularly
- Take regular exercise
- Write about how you are feeling in a journal
- Express your emotions through poetry or art
- Don't make any major decisions until you feel better
- Take time off work if necessary
- Read a self-help book or join a support group
- Talk to your GP
- If you are prescribed medication, take it as prescribed
- Don't despair. Most people do recover in time.

Seeking help

It's important to seek help from your GP if you think you may be depressed. Many people wait a long time before seeking help for depression, but it is best not to delay. The sooner you see a doctor, the sooner you can be on the way to recovery. Treatment for depression involves either medication or counselling, or a combination of the two. The kind of treatment that your doctor recommends will be based on the type of depression you have.

Counselling

Counselling can be an effective way to combat depression. We are here to provide a safe environment where you can feel comfortable to discuss anything that is affecting you. If you feel you may benefit from counselling or would like to know more please contact us on **01224 633131**