Depression

You’re not alone

Anyone can suffer a period of depression - it is a very common experience and most people recover with support and help.
Depression is a real illness – it is a chemical one, as serious as it is, depression is curable. It can have symptoms that affect day-to-day life and can last from three adults have depression at some time in life or weeks, however a period of serious depression.

**What causes**

The exact cause is not known but anyone can become depressed. There may be a particular problem or worry, but symptoms may develop quite suddenly. Depression could also be triggered by a life event such as:

- **Circumstances**
  (loneliness or relationships)
- **Stress**
  (juggling job and family demands)
- **Money issues**
  (debt or bankruptcy)
- **Physical illness**
  (you or a family member)
- **A Distressing event**
  (redundancy or bereavement)
- **Childbirth or the Menopause**

Women - are twice as likely to suffer from depression as men, as men are more likely to express their feelings through aggression and a noticeable increase in drinking.

Men - are more at risk of committing suicide, as they are often reluctant to seek help for depression.
Depression?

Children - depression is unusual but not unknown in children. Just because a child seems miserable or sad, does not necessarily mean they have depression. However if symptoms become persistent or disruptive, or interfere with schoolwork and family life then medical advice should be sought.

Teenagers - 1 in 10 suffer from depression as they are often worried or stressed about issues such as relationships, pressures from school or exams, self-appearance or esteem, peer pressure or parent pressure. Most teenagers can be moody and uncommunicative at times but this in itself is not an indication of depression. If there are signs that a teenager may have more serious depression then medical advice should be sought.

Older adults - the elderly are less likely to complain of low mood but anxiety is a common feature of depression together with forgetfulness and confusion. If these worries become severe then medical advice should be sought.
How to recognise depression

Anyone can suffer a period of depression. Most people recover with support and help. Many people fail to recognise the significance of their symptoms, for example, if they lose weight. The earlier they seek help or someone you know, the sooner help can be given.

Symptoms

- A loss of interest and enjoyment in life.
- A lack of drive and motivation, that makes even simple tasks and decisions difficult or impossible.
- Low mood for most of the day, nearly every day - things always seem 'black'.
- Utter fatigue.
- Agitation, restlessness and poor concentration.
- Loss or gain in appetite, with loss or gain in weight.
- Sleeplessness or excessive sleeping, including waking very early.
- Loss of outward affection, going off sex.
- Feeling useless, inadequate, helpless and hopeless.
Prevent Depression

It is a very common experience and most people show signs of depressive illness without realising it. Some think that they have a physical illness, when warning signs are recognised in either yourself or a close person, help is sought.

Symptoms

- Loss of self-confidence, avoiding meeting people.
- Irritability and aggressiveness with family and friends.
- Feeling worse at a particular time of the day, usually mornings.
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, palpitations, chest pains and general aches.
- Thoughts of suicide such as “life is not worth living” – are much better admitted than suppressed, as they are a certain sign help is needed.
Bipolar Disorder
(formerly manic depression)

About 1% of the adult population suffer from Bipolar Disorder which is a severe mood disorder that involves extreme highs and lows often with periods of normal mood in between. Everyone experiences changes in mood, but the symptoms of Bipolar Disorder are severe and require specialist treatment which can be accessed via your G.P.

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD)

During the winter months only, some people develop recurrent depression. For people in the UK with SAD, symptoms of depression usually develop each year between September and November and until March or April. Treatment of SAD is similar to other types of depression however 'light therapy' is also particularly effective.
How to help yourself

Most people with depression will get better without treatment. Try not to ‘bottle up’ your symptoms from partners, relatives and friends. If you are open about your feelings it will then allow them to understand and be able to help and support you.

- Don’t keep it to yourself – talk to family and friends.
- Keep busy, be more active – try brisk walking, swimming, cycling or join a local exercise class.
- Maintain a healthy balanced diet – you may not feel like eating but try to eat regularly; fresh fruit and vegetables are particularly helpful.
- Resist the temptation to drown your sorrows – alcohol actually makes depression worse by depressing your mood.
- If you can’t sleep, try not to worry about it – settle down with some relaxing music or television while you rest.
- Try not to make any major life changes – unless the change will definitely ease your depression.
Help is at hand

For help and support contact:

- **NHS DIRECT**
  www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk  Tel: 0845 4647

- **THE SAMARITANS**
  www.samaritans.org.uk  Tel: 08457 909090

- **MIND INFO LINE**
  www.mind.org.uk  Tel: 0845 766 0163

- **DEPRESSION ALLIANCE**
  www.depressionalliance.org  Tel: 0845 123 2320

- **RELATE (The relationship people)**
  www.relate.org.uk  Tel: 0300 100 1234

- **SAD ASSOCIATION**
  www.sada.org.uk

- **RETHINK**
  www.rethink.org  Tel: 0845 456 0455

If you think you are suffering from depression contact your GP, Practice Nurse or Health Visitor for initial support.