

HOW TO MANAGE DEPRESSION AND LOW MOODS

DEPRESSION - FACTSHEET

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

While feeling sad is normal, people with depression experience intense low mood for long periods of time (weeks, months or years), sometimes with no apparent reason. Depression is different to normal sadness or grief, it's a serious condition that impacts on your physical and mental health, the way you engage with your life, and the people around you.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

Depression affects how we feel physically, and how we think, feel and behave. If you have been feeling really down consistently for more than two weeks, lost interest in things you normally enjoy, and experiencing some of the following symptoms then, you may have depression.

- Physical: Sleeping issues (more or less than normal), feeling tired, changes in appetite and weight, muscle or stomach pains and headaches.
- Behaviour: Not going out, withdrawing socially, difficulties with concentrating, motivation and focus.
- Feelings: Overwhelmed, miserable, hopeless, irritable, indecisive, frustrated and lacking confidence.
- Thoughts: Negative thought patterns eg. 'I'm a failure.' or 'Nothing good ever happens to me.'



For more information on depression or low moods, contact the EAP line on 1300 878 379





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WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION AND LOW MOOD?

There is no single cause for depression, but there are some factors that have been found to contribute. Difficult ongoing life circumstances make low mood and depression more likely, and stressful events may 'trigger' an episode. Dealing with physical illness or using drug and alcohol especially long term will make you more vulnerable. Depression has been shown to have a genetic component: having parents or close relatives with depression increases the likelihood you will experience it. Personality plays a part, especially in the thought patterns that contribute to depression such as perfectionism, being overly self-critical, negative thinking styles, and a tendency to worry. Biological factors, including the role of brain chemicals such as serotonin, and cellular brain activity are the subject of research and an important part of treatment approaches for severe depression.

HOW CAN I MANAGE DEPRESSION AND LOW MOOD?

There is no one way that works for everyone, but there are approaches that have been shown to be effective. The main treatment approaches are psychological (addressing feelings, thoughts and behaviours), and pharmacological (medication). These can be used separately or together.

Psychological approaches such as Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), Interpersonal Therapy (IPT) and Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT) have been found to be effective in managing depression by addressing the behaviours and thoughts associated with low mood and depression.

STRATEGIES THAT MAY HELP FOR DEPRESSION AND LOW MOOD

- Physical: Manage sleep (see info sheet on sleep), eat healthy food, get regular exercise
- Behaviour: Connect to other people, schedule activities that you enjoy, practice mindfulness, do things to help others, make a plan or set a manageable goal
- Thoughts: Challenge or balance negative thoughts and assumptions, practice gratitude for positive things in your life, focus attention in the present moment.

SUMMARY

Depression and low mood have an impact on your physical and mental health and your engagement with work, life and the people around you. Depression is different from normal sadness or grief and causes are different for everyone. It is important to recognise the signs early, try to engage with strategies that help your mood, and reach out and seek help.