

# Depression

## What is depression?

Depression is a common illness. One-in-five adults will experience this debilitating condition at some stage in their life. Consequently, every family will have at least one member who has had the illness or is at immediate risk. Depression is recognised as the most disabling medical condition in our modern society. It is closely linked with other psychological conditions, particularly anxiety, as well as misuse of alcohol and other substances. Depression also leads to other medical illnesses, particularly heart disease. It leads to premature death not only by suicide but also by increased rates of accidental injury.

Depression is a word we often use to describe our feelings or moods. Most of us will feel 'down', 'blue', 'fed up', or 'sad' from time to time – such feelings are a normal part of the emotional ups and downs of everyday life. In fact, feelings like these are useful because they may help you realise that you need to do something constructive to deal with the feelings, or to change the situation.

Depression is quite different to these types of feelings. It lasts longer than sadness or a case of the 'blues', and is accompanied by feelings of helplessness and hopelessness of an intensity that has a strong negative effect on your day-to-day life. Depression is not only about feelings or emotions, it also affects the way you think and behave.

It is important to understand the difference between depression and the feelings of sadness that we all may experience when we have been through a painful or difficult time (like the death of a loved one). The feelings associated with grief can also be intense and long lasting, but they can help the person adjust and develop new meaning in their life after the loss. Depression on the other hand does not do this. Depression does not provide us with personal growth and development - it can actually rob us of those very things. Family, friends and colleagues may seem frustrated and critical, suggesting that you just “snap out of it”. This probably won't be helpful, but your family and friends, just like you, need to know that depression can be treated successfully, and that they can help you in your recovery. Depression is not a mood that you can just 'snap out of'. Depression can, however, be treated, and treated successfully. Don't be afraid to talk of your feelings, letting people know how you feel can be the first step on the road to recovery from depression. **Remember – 'depression is an illness, not a choice'.**

## What are the signs?

Depression can present with a range of signs or symptoms, some of which may be:

- Loss of interest in pleasurable and fun activities,
- A lack of joy in your life,
- Feeling sad or irritable most of the time,
- Changes in sleeping patterns – trouble falling asleep or waking up too early,
- Worrying and negative thinking,
- Feeling unworthy or helpless, as if you are a burden to others, and
- Feeling tired all the time; everything seems like a major effort.

It is probably the relentless feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, guilt and anxiety that accompany depression that make it so difficult to cope with. Some of these signs can be frightening, particularly if you think about death or suicide. It is important to make sure you talk about these feelings, find a different solution or answer to your pain.

## What to do?

If you or someone you know can identify with these signs or feelings, please seek help straight away. See your local Medical Centre, Chaplain, Social Worker, Psychologist, or the Duty Officer/Officer of the Day. Talk to these people and be open and frank about how you feel.



Depression can be treated, help is available, and you do not have to go through this alone. There are a variety of ways to deal with depression, speak to a professional and find out what type of treatment can be tailored for your own situation.


## About "beyondblue"


**beyondblue** is a national initiative looking at all aspects of depression, anxiety and substance-use related disorders; and, is supported by Australia's federal and state/territory governments. It provides a uniform approach to preventing depression, raising community awareness and reducing stigma, giving voice to people's lived experiences supporting further research; and, working with GPs to improve the identification and treatment of depression.

The **beyondblue** <<http://www.beyondblue.org.au>> website provides a comprehensive range of information about depression, including the signs and symptoms, effective treatments, frequently asked questions, personal experiences; and information on a range of **beyondblue** support programs.

**beyondblue** is helping to open our eyes to depression throughout Australia.

Recommended depression websites

 [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

 [www.ybblue.com.au](http://www.ybblue.com.au)

 [www.crufad.unsw.edu.au](http://www.crufad.unsw.edu.au)

 [www.infrapsych.com](http://www.infrapsych.com)

For more information about depression, or **beyondblue** and its activities, visit or e-mail <[bb@beyondblue.org.au](mailto:bb@beyondblue.org.au)>

**Do you have Depression checklist** reproduced with kind permission from beyondblue: the national depression initiative PO Box 6100, Hawthorn.

## Do you have depression?

For more than two weeks have you: (please tick if YES )

- 1 Felt sad, down or miserable most of the time?
- 2 Lost interest or pleasure in most of your usual activities?

If you answered YES to either of these questions, complete the symptom checklist below. If you did not answer YES to either of these questions, it is unlikely that you have a depressive illness.

### Checklist for Depression Symptom

- 3 Lost or gained a lot of weight? or Had a decrease or increase in appetite?
- 4 Sleep disturbance?
- 5 Felt slowed down, restless or excessively busy?
- 6 Felt tired or had no energy?
- 7 Felt worthless? or Felt excessively guilty? or Felt guilt about things you should not have been feeling guilty about?
- 8 Had poor concentration? or Had difficulties thinking? or Were very indecisive?
- 9 Had recurrent thoughts of death?

Add up the number of ticks for your total score:

What does your score mean? (assuming you answered yes to question 1 and/or question 2.)

**4 or less: Unlikely to have a depressive illness**

**5 or more: Likely to have a depressive illness**

For further assessment, please contact your ADF health provider.

