

SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

What this fact sheet covers:

- Distinguishing depression from an occasional 'down' mood
- Symptoms of depression
- When to seek help for depression
- Key points to remember
- Where to get more information

Distinguishing depression from an occasional 'down' mood

Depression is a common experience with one in seven Australians experiencing depression in their lifetime. We all experience periods when we feel low and a bit depressed.

Experiences such as having a bad day at work or hearing some bad news can impact on our mood. Sometimes we can even feel sad for no reason at all.

In most cases, people 'bounce back' however, people with clinical depression lack the ability to pick themselves up from feeling down. If symptoms of depression are severe, last for **two weeks** or more, and affect your functioning at home or at work, you may need to see a health professional.

Symptoms of depression include:

- Feeling bad about yourself
- Changes in sleep patterns
- Changes in appetite or weight
- Feeling overwhelmed by pessimism, anger, guilt, irritability and anxiety
- Varying emotions throughout the day for example, feeling worse in the morning and better as the day progresses
- Not able to enjoy life
- Not so interested in sex
- Reduced pain tolerance: decreased tolerance for minor aches and pains
- Poor concentration and memory
- Low motivation to do things that used to matter to you
- Feeling exhausted

When to seek help for depression

If symptoms of depression are severe, last for **two weeks** or more, and affect your functioning at home or at work, you may need to see a health professional. Having one or two symptoms by themselves is unlikely to indicate depression. However, there could be physical causes which may warrant medical assessment.

If you are feeling suicidal contact Lifeline's 24 hour crisis support service on 13 11 14 or seek immediate help from a GP, psychiatrist or a psychologist.



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Key points to remember

- Occasionally feeling depressed or down is a common experience
- If feelings of depression are severe, last for two weeks or more, and functioning at home or at work is impaired, professional assessment should be sought
- If feeling suicidal, seek immediate help from a mental health practitioner such as a GP, a psychiatrist or a psychologist

Where to get more information

- **Dealing with Depression: a common sense guide to mood disorders** by Gordon Parker (2004), Allen & Unwin
- **Depression Self-test:** www.blackdoginstitute.org.au (Fact Sheets)
- **Emergency Help:** www.blackdoginstitute.org.au (Getting Help > Emergency Help)
- **Helpful Links:** www.blackdoginstitute.org.au (Getting Help)
- **Journeys with the Black Dog: Inspirational stories of bringing depression to heel**, Tessa Wigney, Kerrie Eyers & Gordon Parker (2007), Allen & Unwin
- **1800 011 511 Mental Health Line** is a NSW Government phone service operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week and will provide a telephone triage assessment and referral service staffed by mental health clinicians. The Mental Health Line is not an emergency service. People in a life-threatening situation must still call 000 to receive immediate help
- Watch our **Online Depression Education Program:** www.blackdoginstitute.org.au (Depression)
- **Recommended Reading List:** www.blackdoginstitute.org.au (Getting Help > Reading List)

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