

Depression

Information for Young People

What is depression?

Most people, children as well as adults, feel low or 'blue' occasionally. Feeling sad is a normal reaction to experiences that are stressful or upsetting. However, when these feelings go on and on, take over your usual self and interfere with your whole life, it can become an illness. This illness is called 'depression'.

Depression usually starts in your teenage years, more commonly as you near adulthood. It is less common in children under 12 years old. It can affect anybody, although it is more common in girls than boys. Some of the signs that you may have depression are:

- Being moody and irritable, easily upset, 'ratty' or tearful
- Becoming withdrawn, avoiding friends, family and regular activities
- Feeling guilty or bad, being self critical and self blaming, hating yourself
- Feeling unhappy, miserable and lonely a lot of the time
- Feeling hopeless and wanting to die
- Finding it difficult to concentrate
- Not looking after your personal appearance
- Changes in sleep pattern: sleeping too little or too much
- Feeling tired
- Not interested in eating, eating little or too much
- Suffering aches and pains, such as headaches or stomach aches
- Feeling you are not good looking

If you have all or most of these signs, and have had them over a long period of time, it may mean that you have depression. You may find it very difficult to talk about how you are feeling.

What can I do if I am feeling low?

You can try a few things to see if it helps you feel better. Simply talking to someone you trust and who you feel understands can lighten the burden. It can also make it easier to work out practical solutions to problems. Here are some things you can try:

- Talk to someone whom you trust and who can help
- Try to do some physical activity and eat healthy food
- Try to keep yourself occupied by doing activities, even if you feel you do not really enjoy them
- Try not to stay alone in your room, especially during the day
- Don't overstress yourself, and allow for fun and leisure time.

When should I get help?

Many young people will get better on their own with support and understanding. If the depression is dragging on and causing serious difficulties, it is important to seek treatment. Sometimes when you are feeling low, you may try to use drugs or alcohol to forget your feelings. You may see no hope and feel like running away from it all. Doing this only makes the situation worse. When this happens it is important that you let others know and get help.

When you have depression, you may feel ashamed and guilty about the way you are. You may worry about upsetting others, especially family, or being told you are making it up or blamed it is your fault by telling them how you feel. It can also be very hard to put your feelings into words. However, many young people in a similar situation feel a sense of relief at being understood once they have talked about it. Letting others know about how you feel is important for getting the right help and support.

Contact Us!

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The Royal College of Psychiatrists. (2013). Mental Health and Growing Up: Factsheets for Parents, Teachers and Young People (4th ed.). Cambridge: Royal College of Psychiatrists.



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