

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview - Depression in adults	1
How to tell if you have depression	1
When to see a doctor	2
What causes depression?	2
Treating depression	3
Living with depression	3
Social care and support guide	4
Video: Clinical depression – Lawrence's story	4
More in Depression in adults	4

[Home](#) > [Health A to Z](#) > [Mental health](#) > [Mental health conditions](#) >
[Depression in adults](#)

Overview - Depression in adults

Depression is more than simply feeling unhappy or fed up for a few days.

Most people go through periods of feeling down, but when you're depressed you feel persistently sad for weeks or months, rather than just a few days.

Some people think depression is trivial and not a genuine health condition. They're wrong – it is a real illness with real symptoms. Depression is not a sign of weakness or something you can "snap out of" by "pulling yourself together".

The good news is that with the right treatment and support, most people with depression can make a full recovery.

These pages are about depression in adults. Read about [depression in children and young people](#).

How to tell if you have depression

Depression affects people in different ways and can cause a wide variety of symptoms.

They range from lasting feelings of unhappiness and hopelessness, to losing interest in the things you used to enjoy and feeling very tearful. Many people with depression also have [symptoms of anxiety](#).

There can be physical symptoms too, such as feeling constantly tired, sleeping badly, having no appetite or sex drive, and various aches and pains.

The [symptoms of depression](#) range from mild to severe. At its mildest, you may simply feel persistently low in spirit, while severe depression can make you feel suicidal, that life is no longer worth living.

Most people experience feelings of [stress, anxiety or low mood](#) during difficult times. A low mood may improve after a short period of time, rather than being a sign of depression.

When to see a doctor

It's important to seek help from a GP if you think you may be depressed.

Many people wait a long time before seeking help for depression, but it's best not to delay. The sooner you see a doctor, the sooner you can be on the way to recovery.

What causes depression?

Sometimes there's a trigger for depression. Life-changing events, such as bereavement, losing your job or giving birth, can bring it on.

People with a family history of depression are more likely to experience it themselves. But you can also become depressed for no obvious reason.

Treating depression

Treatment for depression can involve a combination of lifestyle changes, talking therapies and medicine. Your recommended treatment will be based on how severe your depression is.

If you have mild depression, your doctor may suggest waiting to see whether it improves on its own, while monitoring your progress. This is known as "watchful waiting". They may also suggest lifestyle measures such as [exercise](#) and guided self-help.

Talking therapies, such as [cognitive behavioural therapy \(CBT\)](#), may also be used for mild depression.

For moderate to severe depression, a combination of talking therapy and [antidepressants](#) is often recommended. If you have severe depression, you may be referred to a specialist mental health team for intensive specialist talking treatments and prescribed medicine.

Living with depression

Many people with depression benefit by making lifestyle changes, such as getting more [exercise](#), [cutting down on alcohol](#), [giving up smoking](#) and [eating healthily](#).

Reading a self-help book or joining a support group are also worthwhile. They can help you gain a better understanding about what causes you to feel depressed. Sharing your experiences with others in a similar situation can also be very supportive.

Social care and support guide

If you:

- need help with day-to-day living because of illness or disability
- care for someone regularly because they're ill or disabled, or because of their age – including family members

Our [social care and support guide](#) explains your options and where you can get support.

Video: Clinical depression – Lawrence's story

In this video, Lawrence talks about his experience of clinical depression.

Transcript



Media last reviewed: 1 June 2024

Media review due: 1 June 2027

Overview - Depression in adults

[Symptoms - Depression in adults](#)

[Causes - Depression in adults](#)

[Diagnosis - Depression in adults](#)

[Treatment - Depression in adults](#)

[Living with - Depression in adults](#)

[Support groups - Depression in adults](#)

Page last reviewed: 5 July 2023

Next review due: 5 July 2026

[Home](#)

[Health A to Z](#)

[NHS services](#)

[Live Well](#)

[Mental health](#)

[Care and support](#)

[Pregnancy](#)

[COVID-19](#)

[NHS App](#)

[Find my NHS
number](#)

[View your GP
health record](#)

[View your test
results](#)

[About the NHS](#)

[Healthcare abroad](#)

[Other NHS websites](#)

[Profile editor login](#)

[About us](#)

[Give us feedback](#)

[Accessibility
statement](#)

[Our policies](#)

[Cookies](#)

© Crown copyright