**Depression**

***Introduction***

**What is depression?**

While we all feel sad, moody or low from time to time, some people experience these feelings intensely, for long periods of and sometimes without any apparent reason. Depression is more than just a low mood – it's a serious condition that affects your physical and mental health.

**Causes of depression**

**Depression usually results from a combination of recent events and other longer-term or personal factors, rather than one immediate issue or event.**

* **Family history** – Depression can run in families and some people will be at an increased genetic risk.
* **Personality** – Some people may be more at risk of depression because of their personality, particularly if they have a tendency to worry a lot, have low self-esteem.
* **Drug and alcohol use** – Drug and alcohol use can both lead to and result from depression. Many people with depression also have drug and alcohol problems.

**Symptoms of Depression**

**Behaviour**

* not going out anymore
* not getting things done at work/school
* withdrawing from close family and friends
* relying on alcohol and sedatives

**Feelings**

* Overwhelmed
* Guilty
* Irritable
* Frustrated
* lacking in confidence
* disappointed
* miserable

**Thoughts**

* 'I’m a failure.'
* 'It’s my fault.'
* 'I’m worthless.'
* 'Life’s not worth living.'
* 'People would be better off without me.'

**Physical**

* tired all the time
* sick and run down
* headaches and muscle pains
* sleep problems
* loss or change of appetite
* significant weight loss or gain

**Types of depression**

**Major depression**

Major depression is sometimes called major depressive disorder, clinical depression, unipolar depression or simply 'depression'. It involves low mood.

#### **Melancholia**

This is the term used to describe a severe form of depression where many of the physical symptoms of depression are present. One of the major changes is that the person starts to move more slowly

#### **Psychotic depression**

Sometimes people with a depressive disorder can lose touch with reality and experience psychosis. This can involve hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that aren't there).

#### **Antenatal and postnatal depression**

Women are at an increased risk of depression during pregnancy and in the year following childbirth. In the days immediately following birth, many women experience the ['baby blues'](https://healthyfamilies.beyondblue.org.au/pregnancy-and-new-parents/maternal-mental-health-and-wellbeing/depression) which is a common condition related to hormonal changes and affects up to 80 per cent of women.

**Bipolar disorder**

Bipolar disorder used to be known as 'manic depression' because the person experiences periods of depression and periods of mania, with periods of normal mood in between. Bipolar disorder seems to be most closely linked to family history.

**Cyclothymic disorder**

Cyclothymic disorder is often described as a milder form of bipolar disorder. The person experiences chronic fluctuating moods over at least two years, involving periods of hypomania (a mild to moderate level of mania).

**Dysthymic disorder**

The symptoms of dysthymia are similar to those of major depression but are less severe.

**Seasonal affective disorder (SAD)**

SAD is a mood disorder that has a seasonal pattern. The cause of the disorder is unclear, but it's thought to be related to the variation in light exposure in different seasons

**Treatments for depression**

**Psychological treatments for depression**

Psychological treatments (also known as talking therapies) can help you change your thinking patterns and improve your coping skills so you're better equipped to deal with life's stresses and conflicts

**Medical treatments for depression**

The main medical treatment for depression is antidepressant medication, it can be very useful in the treatment of moderate to severe depression and some anxiety disorders.

**Other sources of support**

Different treatments work for different people, and it’s best to speak to your GP or mental health professional about your options and preferences. Most people find that a combination of things work best.

It's important to remember that recovery can take time. Be patient and go easy on yourself.

**Facts about Depression**

* Affects over 300 million people worldwide, regardless of culture, age, gender, religion, race or economic status.
* Is one of the most debilitating conditions on the world, with severe depression rated in the same disability category as terminal stage cancer.
* Bipolar disorder often starts in a person’s late teen or early adult years. But children and older adults can have bipolar disorder too. The illness usually lasts a lifetime.