



Information Sheet: Depression

What is depression?

Depression is a common mental health issue. At some point in their lives, roughly one in five women and one in ten men in the UK experience depression serious enough to need treatment. The word depression is used to describe a range of moods from low spirits to more severe problems that interfere with everyday life. The challenge is to decide whether you are responding 'normally' to difficult times (reactive depression) or have become clinically depressed. If your mood is causing significant and prolonged difficulties in one or more parts of your life – e.g. home, work or family, – you should consider seeking some kind of help.

Symptoms:

Typical symptoms of depression include: preoccupation with negative thoughts, a bleak view of the future, feelings of isolation, restlessness, irritability, anxiety, sleeping badly (often with disturbing dreams), abnormal eating, feelings of guilt and worthlessness, aches and pains without apparent cause, poor motivation, thinking about death or suicide. Possible triggers might be: the death of a friend or relative, losing a job, break-up of a relationship, debt, chronic illness, events in your family or a build-up of difficult life experiences.

How you can help yourself:

- Social contact – keep in touch with family and friends: it can help to talk to someone about your feelings.
- Get plenty of physical activity and exercise – great for relieving the symptoms of mild depression. Consult your doctor before radically altering your level of physical activity.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet – oily fish such as mackerel or sardines (or fish oil

supplements if you don't like fish) are known to be beneficial.

- Try complementary therapies – e.g. St John's Wort, acupuncture, meditation, yoga or tai chi. Discuss using St John Wort with your doctor beforehand as it can affect other medications
- Take control of your life – set small and realistic goals, which can help promote a sense of achievement.
- Consult your doctor regularly – he or she can provide a supportive relationship through a difficult time and needs to monitor what you are doing to help yourself.
- Your doctor might suggest you consider anti-depressant drugs – they target the biological component of depression by increasing the activity of those brain chemicals that affect the way we feel.

Remember people do recover from depression and lead happy and fulfilling lives, especially when they ask for and accept the help they need.

What CCL offers:

It can help to talk in confidence about your depression. Counselling is a proven and treatment, recommended by NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence). Your GP - or another NHS worker - can refer you to our free counseling service. You can also self-refer to our Co-payment Counselling Scheme by contacting us directly.

Other sources of information:

www.mind.org.uk - type 'depression' in the search box.

'Overcoming Depression: A guide to recovery with a complete self-help programme' by Paul Gilbert.

If you feel suicidal, contact Samaritans on 08457 90 90 90.