

# FACTS ABOUT DEPRESSION

## WHAT IS DEPRESSION

Depression is often thought of as feeling sad.

However, there is a major difference between having normal feelings of sadness in reaction to a situation, such as a death in the family, and having depression.

Depression is a common mental illness that can affect an individual's ability to take care of his or her everyday responsibilities.

It is characterised by overwhelming and persistent feelings of sadness, loss of interest in things that were once pleasurable.

Around one in five Australian adults will experience depression at some point in their life with about half of those affected not seeking medical advice. It is the third most common illness in women and the tenth most common in men in Australia, with the World Health Organisation predicting that by 2020, it will be the second biggest health problem worldwide, behind heart disease.

## CAUSES

Many factors contribute to the development of depression including a chemical imbalance in the brain and/or life events such as ongoing difficulties.

Those living with a chronic health condition will have a greater chance than the general population of developing a mental health condition such as depression.

It is more common among females than males and may develop at any age, although the average onset is in the mid-20s. Depressive disorders have a strong genetic component but environmental factors contribute significantly.

## SYMPTOMS

- Sadness
- Despair or hopelessness
- Irritability
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Guilt
- Anxiety
- Negative thoughts
- Difficulty making decisions and concentrating
- Suicidal feelings
- Inability to enjoy everyday things
- Slow reactions
- Irresponsible behaviour
- Neglecting one's appearance
- Sleep disturbances
- Lethargy and fatigue

## TREATMENT

- Psychological intervention and/or counselling
- Psychiatric treatment
- Medication
- Electroconvulsive therapy (in extreme cases)
- Support groups

## HOW TO HELP YOURSELF

Depression is an illness that can be treated, but it requires action. The first step is to realise you are not alone and there is help available.

Getting the support that is needed plays a big role in recovery and doing it alone may be difficult. It is important to cultivate supportive relationships and share your experience with friends and family so they can provide the support you need.

Taking care of yourself is another essential factor for recovery. Adopting a healthy lifestyle including a healthy diet and exercise is not only good for your mental health but for your physical well-being.

## HOW CAN FAMILY AND FRIENDS HELP?

To assist in the recovery process it is vital for family and friends to express understanding and empathy, while reminding the person that they can recover.

Unconditional frequent contact is invaluable.

While some people may primarily need reassurance and emotional support, others may require help with their daily functioning.

It is important to listen non-judgementally and encourage them to talk about their recovery.

## REFERRAL/SUPPORT INFO

**Drug ARM** 1300 656 800  
info@drugarm.com.au  
drugarm.com.au

**Drug ARM Central Intake**  
07 3620 8880

**Lifeline Australia** 13 11 14  
24/7 crisis support

**Or contact your local GP (General Practitioner)**

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## REFERENCES

- 1 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2017). National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. Retrieved from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4326.0>
- 2 World Health Organization. (2001). Mental health: a call for action by world health ministers. Geneva: World Health Organization, Department of Mental Health and Substance Dependence.



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