



# Depression - A Summary

**Niamh**

*Mental Wellbeing*





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## What are the symptoms of depression?

- The common symptom is a low mood for most of the time for at least two weeks.
- One or more of the following may also develop: loss of enjoyment and interest in life, even for things that you normally enjoy; abnormal sadness; weepiness; feelings of guilt or being useless; poor motivation; poor concentration; sleeping problems; tiredness; difficulty with affection; poor appetite; you may be irritable or restless.
- Symptoms often seem worse first thing each day.
- Physical symptoms such as headaches, palpitations, chest pains, and aches may occur.
- Some people are troubled with suicidal thoughts, or recurrent thoughts of death.

## Who gets depression and what causes it?

At some stage in life about 2 in 3 adults have a depression, and about 3 in 20 have a severe depression. Some people have two or more episodes of depression in their lifetime. The exact cause is not known. It can develop for no apparent reason. It may also be triggered, or made worse, by life events such as relationship problems, bereavement, redundancy, illness, etc.

## What is the treatment for depression?

Regular exercise such as a daily brisk walk, jog or swim is thought to help ease symptoms. In addition, treatment with one or more of the following is usually advised.

### Talking through feelings

Talking through feelings may be all that you need for mild depression. A friend or relative may help with this, but your GP may suggest a local self-help group, or refer you to a counsellor.

### **Antidepressant medicines**

Antidepressant medicines are often prescribed. Medication cannot alter your circumstances. However, symptoms such as low mood, poor sleep, poor concentration, etc, are often eased. This may then allow you to function normally and cope better if you have any difficult circumstances.

- An antidepressant takes 2-4 weeks to work fully. So, don't give up on them too soon.
- A normal course lasts up to six months or more after symptoms have eased. So, do not stop them when symptoms go, as the symptoms may quickly return.
- Antidepressants are not tranquillisers and are not usually addictive.
- There are several types and brands of antidepressant. They can differ in their possible side-effects. If the first one does not suit, another can usually be found that will be fine.

- St John's Wort is a popular herbal antidepressant that you can buy from pharmacies without a prescription. It too takes time to work. It sometimes reacts with other medicines, and you should not take it at the same time as certain other antidepressants.

### **Cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT)**

Cognitive-behaviour therapy (CBT) is a specialised 'talking treatment' which is done in weekly sessions over several weeks. The therapist helps you to understand your current thought patterns and helps you to make changes in the way that you think, feel and behave. CBT often works as well as antidepressants. However, it is not available in all areas.

In some severe cases specialist medicines or electrical treatment (ECT) are options.



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