

DEPRESSION IN YOUNG PEOPLE

Everyone feels sad or miserable sometimes. But when these feelings are with you most of the time, you stop enjoying life and you lose interest in things you used to like doing, you may be experiencing depression. The good news is that getting the right type of help, and getting it early, can make it much easier for you to deal with depression and get back on track.

WHAT IS DEPRESSION AND WHO CAN GET IT?

Depression is more than just feeling upset or sad. It's a serious illness that leaves you feeling down most of the time and finding it hard to cope from day to day.

Depression is a common illness. Around 160,000 young people aged 16 to 24 live with depression each year.¹ Although girls are more likely than boys to experience depression, boys often find it harder to talk about their feelings and get help.

WHAT CAUSES DEPRESSION?

It's not easy to say exactly what causes depression – it's different for each person. Sometimes a difficult time in a person's life can set off depression and sometimes it's caused by combinations of things that build up over time. Sometimes, there is no obvious cause at all.

A difficult experience, such as the loss of someone close to you, may lead to depression. Or it might make you more likely to have depression if other things go wrong when you're older. Other negative things – like being abused or bullied, feeling bad about yourself or the world, feeling alone or discriminated against, or having bad experiences with your family (especially when young) – can all increase your chance of getting depression.

As well, if one, or both, of your parents have depression, your chance of also having depression is higher. But even if your chances are higher, it doesn't mean that you'll necessarily experience depression. How you cope with things and the support you have can make a big difference. So can getting help early if you are experiencing some symptoms of depression.

No matter what causes depression, it's a real illness. If you have depression, you need treatment and a plan to help you recover.

IS IT DEPRESSION?

Depression isn't just about feeling low – it usually leads to lasting changes in how you feel, act and think. You may be experiencing depression if for **MORE THAN TWO WEEKS** you:

- have felt sad, down or miserable, or irritable most of the time
- have lost interest or enjoyment in nearly all of your usual activities.

You might also be:

- not doing so well at school, work or university and/or
- experiencing changes in your relationships with family and friends.

If the above applies to you, and you also have **FOUR OR MORE** of the following symptoms, you may have depression:

- you feel irritable or angry
- you feel restless or agitated
- you have lost a lot of energy and feel tired all the time
- you find it difficult to concentrate or make up your mind
- you can't be bothered with anything
- you feel worthless or guilty
- you feel that life is not worth living.

Visit: www.youthbeyondblue.com

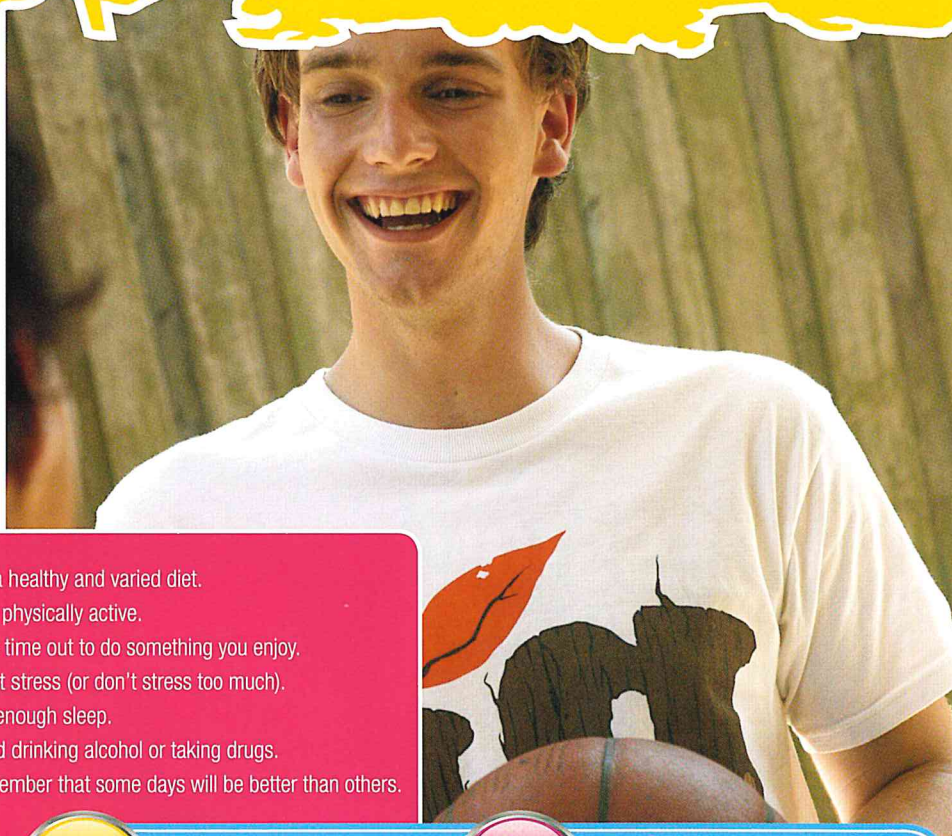
Info line: **1300 22 4636** Email: info@beyondblue.org.au

beyondblue: the national depression initiative



TAKING ACTION

Depression is just like any other illness – you need ways to get through it and stop it happening again later on. Some people think that it's weak to admit that they're going through a tough time. But if you have depression, you can't just 'snap out of it' or 'pull yourself together'. Keeping it to yourself only makes things worse. Start by talking to someone you trust – maybe a parent, teacher, school counsellor, family member or friend.



KEY POINTS TO REMEMBER

The following tips can help to stop you from getting depressed and help you stay healthy if you are depressed.

- Talk about your feelings and emotions.
- Spend time and stay connected with people you like and trust.
- If you think you are depressed, take action early.
- Eat a healthy and varied diet.
- Stay physically active.
- Take time out to do something you enjoy.
- Don't stress (or don't stress too much).
- Get enough sleep.
- Avoid drinking alcohol or taking drugs.
- Remember that some days will be better than others.

Seeing a General Practitioner (GP) is a good start when you're after help and information. A doctor can help you work out if what you are feeling is depression and help you to plan how to get through it. This may involve organising talking (psychological) therapy, to help you to change the negative thinking that comes with depression or deal with any hassles you may be having with family and friends. The doctor may also talk to you about other ways to tackle depression, such as managing stress and tips on how to improve your sleep patterns.

For some people, the doctor may think that antidepressant medication is also necessary, but only if the depression is severe or it isn't improving with other treatments. If you do start taking an antidepressant, your doctor will monitor you closely for a while.

Whatever your treatment, there are many things you can do to help yourself recover. Even if you don't feel like it, it's important to stay active and plan what you're going to do each day. These can be little things, like going to the movies, talking to a friend or completing part of an assignment. Try to include things that you enjoy in your daily plan. At first, you may not enjoy them as much as you did before, but if you keep active, with time you'll probably like them again. It's also important to stay physically active, eat healthily and get plenty of sleep. Try not to drink or take drugs – 'blocking out' how you're feeling usually only makes the problem worse.

It's important to keeping going with your treatment, even after you start feeling better – overcoming depression can take time, especially if you have been experiencing symptoms for a long time.



MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT

You can speak to trained counsellors by phoning these 24-hour telephone counselling services:

Lifeline 13 11 14 (cost of a local call)

Kids Help Line 1800 55 1800 (freecall)

Information and support is also available from the following websites:

beyondblue www.youthbeyondblue.com
or www.beyondblue.org.au

Information on depression, anxiety and how to help a friend

headspace www.headspace.org.au
Information, support and help near you

People who are depressed may be at risk of suicide, and if so they need urgent help. Consult a doctor, the emergency department of your local hospital or a mental health professional (like a psychologist or psychiatrist).

SOURCES This fact sheet is based on information from:

- Australian Bureau of Statistics (2008). 2007 National Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing: Summary of Results (4326.0). Canberra: ABS
- beyondblue (2010) Clinical practice guidelines: Depression in adolescents and young adults. Melbourne: beyondblue: the national depression initiative.
- Fleming GF (2007) The mental health of adolescents. Assessment and management. *Aust Family Physician* 36(8): 588–93.
- Great Ormond Street Hospital, London www.childrenfirst.nhs.uk
- headspace (National Youth Mental Health Foundation) www.headspace.org.au
- ReachOut.com www.reachout.com

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Information and support for young people going through tough times

National LGBT Health Alliance

www.lgbthealth.org.au Information and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and other sexuality, sex and gender diverse people (LGBT)

The websites below can help you to find health services in your area. They list services that are either free of charge or low cost:

Kids Help Line www.kidshelp.com.au

Lifeline Service Finder
www.lifeline.org.au/service_finder

If you or a friend want to communicate with someone via email or online, Kids Help Line offers confidential, non-judgemental, emotional support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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