Depression: GP information sheet

Depression is more than a passing low mood. It can affect how a person feels, thinks, sleeps and connects with others, sometimes for weeks or longer. It is common, and many people find their way through with support.

About this sheet. We have written this sheet as psychologists, in the hope that GPs may find some of it useful. It offers general information only and is not a clinical tool.

How it may show up in everyday life

Some people, or the people close to them, may notice things like these. They can look quite different from one person to the next.

Mood

- Feeling low, flat or empty
- Enjoyment might fade from things once loved
- Feelings could seem heavier in the mornings or evenings

Energy and sleep

- Tiredness might linger
- Sleep could change, more or less
- Appetite may shift

At work or study

- Concentration might feel harder
- Small tasks may feel big
- Motivation could come and go

In relationships

- People might pull back from friends
- Loved ones may notice changes
- Connection could feel effortful

Thinking

- Self criticism might feel louder
- Decisions could feel difficult
- The future may feel harder to picture

Different for everyone

- Some people may describe irritability more than sadness
- Some may notice physical aches
- Experiences can change over time

What the person might be bringing

People may have waited a while before mentioning how they feel. They might feel tired, guilty or worried about being a burden. Some may describe physical concerns first.

A warm, curious conversation may help it feel safer to talk. Feeling heard can be a meaningful first step.

What GPs already do well

Opening gently

GPs are often the first person someone feels able to talk to. A gentle opening can help people share things they may not have said out loud before.

Listening to the story

GPs often know the person, and sometimes their family, over many years. That wider view of someone's life can be very valuable.

A steady point of contact

As people explore their options, the GP can remain a familiar, steady presence, working alongside other professionals.

Seeing the whole person

GPs often hold the bigger picture of someone's health and wellbeing, which can help people feel understood.

What psychology may offer

Understanding

- Time to make sense of experiences
- Exploring thoughts and feelings at a comfortable pace
- Recognising strengths as well as challenges
- A safe space to talk

Practical and family support

- Ideas for building small, meaningful activities
- Support with sleep and routines
- Support for partners and families
- Working alongside the GP and other professionals

Everyday things some people find helpful

These are simply possibilities. What helps one person may not suit another.

- Small, manageable daily goals
- Regular sleep and wake times
- Time outdoors and gentle movement
- Staying in touch with trusted people
- Doing one small enjoyable thing
- Being kind to themselves on harder days

Trusted Australian resources

Beyond Blue beyondblue.org.au

Black Dog Institute blackdoginstitute.org.au

Medicare Mental Health medicarementalhealth.gov.au

Referring to Strategic Psychology

Our psychologists work with children, adolescents and adults. If a client would like to see one of our team, they can call us on 02 6262 6157 or visit strategicpsychology.com.au. Medicare rebates may be available with a GP referral.

This sheet offers general information for GPs to consider. It does not replace clinical judgement.