

Depression tip sheet

What is depression?

Everyone feels sad, low or lacking in energy at times. For some people these feelings are more intense, last longer and make everyday life harder to manage. Depression is one of the most common mental health experiences in Australia. It often develops from a mix of life events and personal and biological factors, rather than one single cause. Support is available, and many people find things improve with support.

Common signs

Depression can affect how people feel, think and behave. Some people notice:

- Feeling sad, teary or empty
- Less interest in things usually enjoyed
- Feeling worthless, guilty or hopeless
- Low energy or feeling tired
- Sleeping more or less than usual
- Changes in appetite
- Trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Pulling away from family and friends

Things that may help

Some people find these ideas helpful alongside support from a GP or psychologist. Starting small and going gently is okay.

Small, enjoyable activities

Low mood can drain motivation, so waiting until you feel like it may not work. Some people find it helps to plan one small activity each day that they used to enjoy or that gives a sense of achievement.

A gentle routine

Regular times for waking, meals and bed can bring some structure to the day when motivation is low.

Movement

Regular physical activity, even a short walk, is one of the lifestyle changes research suggests may help with low mood.

Sleep

Regular sleep and wake times, and winding down before bed, may help. A GP can talk with you if sleep problems continue.

Alcohol and drugs

Alcohol and other drugs can make low mood worse and affect sleep. Some people find cutting back helps.

Noticing thoughts

Low mood can make thoughts more negative and self critical. Some people find it helpful to ask: is this thought a fact? What would I say to a friend thinking this?

Things that may help (continued)

Staying connected

Even when withdrawing feels easier, keeping in touch with people you trust and talking about how you feel may help.

Breaking tasks down

When things feel overwhelming, splitting tasks into small steps and focusing on one at a time may help.

When to get more support

If things are becoming unmanageable and affecting your social, family, work or study life, you may want to see your GP or a psychologist. You do not need to wait until things feel serious to reach out.

A GP can be a good place to start. They can talk with you about your mood and overall health, and about options, which may include psychological therapy such as cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) or online programs. Reaching out early can help.

Benefits of seeking support

- Talking with a GP or psychologist may help you make sense of what is happening.
- Support might help you feel less alone with what you are going through.
- A psychologist could offer new ways of coping that suit you.
- Talking with someone may help you reconnect with things that matter to you.

Need help right now?

If you or someone else is in danger or thinking about suicide, please reach out now.

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Emergency services, if life is in danger

13 11 14

Lifeline crisis support, 24 hours, 7 days

13 92 76

13YARN, run by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, 24/7

Trusted Australian resources

Beyond Blue beyondblue.org.au

healthdirect healthdirect.gov.au | 1800 022 222

Medicare Mental Health 1800 595 212

This tip sheet offers general information only and does not replace advice from your GP, psychologist or other health professional.