

Depression

What is depression?

The word 'depression' is used in many different ways. Everyone can feel sad and blue when bad things happen. However, everyday 'blues' or sadness is not depression. People with the 'blues' may have a short-term depressed mood, but they can manage to cope and soon recover without treatment.

The type of depression that lasts for at least two weeks is called 'clinical depression'. This can affect the young person's behaviour and has physical, emotional and cognitive effects. It also interferes with the ability to study, work and to have satisfying relationships.

When severe, it can increase the risk of self-harm, substance misuse and suicide.

Signs and symptoms of depression.

Depression affects emotions, thinking, behaviour and physical wellbeing. It impacts on individuals in different ways. Some examples are listed below.

Effects on emotion: sadness, anxiety, guilt, anger, mood swings, lack of emotional responsiveness, helplessness, hopelessness.

Effects on thinking: frequent self-criticism, self-blame, worry, pessimism, impaired memory and concentration, indecisiveness and confusion, tendency to believe others see you in a negative light, thoughts of death and suicide.

Effects on behaviour: crying spells, withdrawal from others, neglect of responsibilities, loss of interest in personal appearance, loss of motivation. Engaging in risk-taking behaviours such as: self-harm, misuse of alcohol and other substances, risk-taking sexual behaviour.

Physical effects: chronic fatigue, lack of energy, sleeping too much or too little, overeating or loss of appetite, constipation, weight loss or gain, irregular menstrual cycle, unexplained aches and pains.

Warning signs of depression

At home a depressed young person may:

- Complain of tiredness even if they are sleeping more than usual
- Have difficulty doing household chores, either forgetting to do them or not doing them thoroughly
- Withdraw from family, spending a lot of time in their bedroom
- Avoid discussing important future events such as decisions about further education
- Experience insomnia or hypersomnia
- Behave 'badly', or in an angry or antisocial way – particularly boys

At school a young person may:

- Show a decline in grades at school

- Be absent or arrive late more often
- Engage less in classroom discussions or appear to struggle to understand or communicate
- Struggle to work effectively in the morning but do better in later afternoon classes
- Be more irritable and snappy with peers
- Avoid contact with peers and spend more time alone at lunch and breaks
- Engage in risk-taking behaviour, display safety issues, alcohol and drug misuse

Helpful Resources: Depression organisations

Mind www.mind.org.uk

Telephone: 0300 123 3393 (Weekdays 9:00 - 17:00)

Text: 86463

Email: info@mind.org

National mental health charity, which offers an excellent range of materials on all aspects of depression and manic depression. It also lists details of local Mind Associations.

YoungMinds www.youngminds.org.uk

Telephone: 0808 802 5544 (Weekdays 9:30 - 16:00) Parent Email: parents@youngminds.org.uk for general enquiries: ynenquiries@youngminds.org.uk

YoungMinds is the UK's leading charity committed to improving emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people and empowering their parents and carers.

ChildLine www.childline.org.uk

Telephone: 0800 1111

Childline is a counselling service for parents, children and young people. It also offers multilingual services to South Asian communities living in the UK. Languages include Bengali/Sylheti, Gujarati, Hindi, Punjabi, Urdu and English. Help and advice is free and confidential.

The Mix

www.themix.org.uk Telephone: 0808 808 4994

The Mix is the UK's leading support service for young people. We are here to help you take on any challenge you're facing from mental health to money, from homelessness to finding a job, from break-ups to drugs. Talk to us via online, social or our free, confidential helpline.

Students Against Depression www.studentsagainstdepression.org

Students Against Depression offers information and resources validated by health professionals alongside tips and advice from students who have experienced it all themselves.

Youthhealthtalk! www.healthtalk.org

A website with video interviews of young people's real life experiences of health and lifestyle. There is a section on young people talking about their experiences of depression and eating disorders.

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Useful publications

Michael Rosen's SAD Book

Words by Michael Rosen, pictures by Quentin Blake, Walker Books (ISBN-10 0744598982)

A touching book about what it's like to feel deeply sad.

My name is Zac (bereavement) www.mind.org.uk/media/46876/my_name_is_zac_2010.pdf Mind publications

Comic style booklet on loss.

CG28 Depression in children and young people: Identification and management in primary, community and secondary care 2005 NICE clinical guidelines www.nice.org.uk/guidance/CG28