



## UNDERSTANDING DEPRESSION

Depression is one of the most common forms of mental illness. In New Zealand, one in five women and one in eight men will experience depression at some point in their lives. Recovery is possible.

You may have heard that medication and counselling are among the treatment options available, but there are also many self-help strategies you can employ to help you begin to feel better.

Depression affects men and women of all ages, races and economic groups and is not something you can just 'snap out of'. People who experience depression do get better. You can recover from and learn to manage depression.

### what are the signs of depression?

Defining depression can be difficult because each person can experience it differently. You may experience some of the signs listed below some of the time and not be depressed. The important thing is to think about whether feeling this way is different for you, especially if you're experiencing these feelings for increasing periods of time and don't know what to do.

It's important to recognise these signs so that you, or someone you care about, can do something about it. The earlier people take steps to look after their mental health, if they are struggling, the earlier they will start to feel better.

#### signs of depression can include:

- Feelings of sadness that don't go away
- Persistent low mood or emotional numbness
- Losing interest and pleasure in your usual activities
- Crying for no apparent reason
- Feelings of irritability
- Feeling guilty for no reason
- Excessive anxiety, agitation or worry
- Changes in your sleeping or eating patterns
- Loss of energy, lethargy, extreme tiredness or fatigue
- Lack of motivation
- Suicidal thoughts
- Feeling worthless or hopeless
- Poor concentration and forgetfulness

If you've felt like this for more than two weeks it could be a sign of depression and you should seek help.



## What are the triggers that can cause depression?

There is no single cause of depression. It can come 'out of the blue' or be triggered by life events like the death of a loved one, stress at work, relationship problems, financial stress, poor physical health, traumatic events and discrimination, or it can happen when the body goes through a major change, like after childbirth.

Some people are more vulnerable or predisposed to depression, but sometimes there is no apparent trigger.

## You can get better

Most people who experience depression make a full recovery – the first step is seeking help. Just talking about your feelings with a person you trust can be the first step towards recovery. You may want to contact your doctor about getting help.

## Links to other helpful websites

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[www.thelowdown.org.nz](http://www.thelowdown.org.nz)

[www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)

[1737 Need to Talk?](http://1737.NeedtoTalk.org.nz)