

Depression

What is it?

Anxiety and depression are serious problems for teenagers. Common features of anxiety include tension, worry, frustration, irritability, sadness and withdrawal.

Common features of depression include hopelessness, sadness, irritability and anger, isolation, withdrawal and worthlessness.

Young people do not often express their anxiety or depression in a straightforward way and can show they are affected through passive or negative behaviours.

How to identify?

- Irritability or anger
- Continuous feelings of sadness and hopelessness
- Social withdrawal
- Increased sensitivity to rejection
- Changes in appetite -- either increased or decreased
- Changes in sleep -- sleeplessness or excessive sleep
- Vocal outbursts or crying
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue and low energy
- Physical complaints (such as stomach-aches, headaches) that don't respond to treatment
- Reduced ability to function during events and activities at home or with friends, in school, extracurricular activities, and in other hobbies or interests
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Impaired thinking or concentration
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Effective strategies to help?

Stay in touch

Don't withdraw from life. Socialising can improve your mood. Keeping in touch with friends and family means you have someone to talk to when you feel low.

Be more active

Take up some form of exercise. There's evidence that exercise can help lift your mood. If you haven't exercised for a while, start gently by walking for 20 minutes every day.

Face your fears

Don't avoid the things you find difficult. When people feel low or anxious, they sometimes avoid talking to other people. Some people can lose their confidence about going out, driving or travelling. If this starts to happen, facing up to these situations will help them become easier.

Eat a healthy diet

Some people don't feel like eating when they're depressed and are at risk of becoming underweight. Others find comfort in food and can put on excess weight. Antidepressants can also affect your appetite. If you're concerned about weight loss, weight gain or how antidepressants are affecting your appetite, talk to your GP.

Have a routine

When people feel down, they can get into poor sleep patterns, staying up late and sleeping during the day. Try to get up at your normal time and stick to your routine as much as possible. Not having a routine can affect your eating. Try to carry on cooking and eating regular meals.

Seeking help for depression

If you're still feeling down or depressed after a couple of weeks, talk to your GP or call NHS 111. If you start to feel that your life isn't worth living or about harming yourself, get help straight away. These are signs that you need to talk to someone urgently. Various treatments are available for depression, including talking therapies, antidepressants and self-help. Find out about treatment for depression. You can also contact helplines, such as Samaritans, for 24-hour confidential, non-judgemental emotional support. If you've had depression or anxiety in the past, even if they weren't formally diagnosed, get help immediately. You're more likely to have an episode of depression if you've had one before. You can hear other people's tips on coping with depression on healthtalk.org.

Useful link

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/dealing-with-depression.aspx>

- NHS

<https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/depression>

- Mind

<http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/depression.asp> - Moodjuice Self help guide

<http://www.samaritans.org/> - Samaritans