

# DEPRESSION

can affect anyone

Help and information  
on how to deal  
with this disease.



National Suicide  
Research Foundation



**UCC**

University College Cork, Ireland  
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

This project has received funding from the European Union's 3rd Health Programme – Annual Work Programme 2020 (HP-PJ-2020) under grant agreement No. 101018325. The material presented and views expressed here are the responsibility of the author(s) only. The EU Commission takes no responsibility for any use made of the information set out.

# What is depression?

Depression can affect anyone.

Depression is an illness like any other. It can affect anyone and is not a sign of personal failure. Every year, about 5.3 million people in Germany suffer from depression that requires treatment - from children to elderly people. To manage this illness as best as possible, it is important for those affected and their relatives to inform themselves about depression and to seek professional help.

A depressive episode can start within a day or creep in slowly over several weeks. Depression in the medical sense must be clearly distinguished from depressive moods, which everyone experiences at some time, these are part of life. Everyone feels low-spirited or lacking in drive because they are overworked, have lost their job, or lost someone close to them. It is considered a depressive illness when at least two of the following core symptoms and additional symptoms are persistently present for more than two weeks.

»In addition to the negative thoughts of being worthless, the feelings of guilt and the constant thoughts, the sleep problems were particularly bad.«



## Core symptoms

- Depressed mood  
Affected people feel low-spirited and sometimes report feeling empty inside.
- Loss of pleasure and interest  
People with depression lose their enjoyment of everything, including hobbies or things they used to enjoy.
- Reduced drive  
Affected people feel exhausted and find it difficult to do anything. Even everyday tasks such as shopping, tidying up or working, can take a lot of effort, quickly lead to fatigue and sometimes cannot be done at all.

## Additional symptoms

- Concentration problems
- Low self-esteem
- Lack of appetite, often with weight loss
- Feelings of guilt
- A negative outlook on the future
- Sleep problems
- Suicidal thoughts

Many affected people also experience anxiety and physical complaints such as stomach, head or back pain. These symptoms can also be indicative of depression.

At iFightDepression Awareness Website you will find a self-test that can give a first indication of whether you may be depressed.  
[ifightdepression.com/en/self-management-resources/self-test](https://ifightdepression.com/en/self-management-resources/self-test)





»I had the feeling that I would never get out of this illness and negative state.«

## What are the causes of depression?

The decisive factor is the presence of a predisposition to depression. This predisposition can be genetically determined. People who have close relatives who are depressed have two to three times higher risk of becoming depressed themselves. This predisposition can also be acquired through trauma and abuse during childhood. In the case of a strong predisposition, people can fall ill without any current external stresses.

However, there are often triggers. These can be overstraining situations, interpersonal conflicts, or experiences of loss, but also seemingly positive changes such as the start of a holiday or the birth of a child. Often, external stresses are overestimated as the cause of depression. Through the black glasses of depression, existing problems that occur in every-day life are perceived much larger and can be hastily misinterpreted as the actual cause of the depression.

## Who treats depression?

The contact persons for persistent and severe depression are the specialists ("psychiatrists") who make the diagnosis and offer pharmacotherapy and/or psychotherapy. There are also psychologists with special training ("psychological psychotherapists") who offer psychotherapy and, like doctors, can bill the health insurance funds. Many patients are also successfully treated by general practitioners, mostly with antidepressants.

You can find contact details of medical professionals here [yourmentalhealth.ie](http://yourmentalhealth.ie) or find a GP or health centre at [www.2hse.ie/services/find-a-gp/](http://www.2hse.ie/services/find-a-gp/).

# How is depression treated?

## Treatment with medications

Antidepressants act on imbalances in the neurotransmitters in the brain and thus lead to an abatement of depression in most patients. When taking antidepressants, it takes about two weeks until the first improvement is noticeable. Antidepressants are neither addictive nor do they change someone's personality. The risk of relapses can be significantly reduced with this medication.

## Psychotherapy

In psychotherapy, depression and its accompanying symptoms are treated through discussions and exercises with a psychotherapist. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) in particular, is considered an effective treatment for mild to moderate depression. Patients learn, for example, to deal differently with stressful situations in everyday life and to change negative thought patterns.

## Brain stimulation methods

In addition to electroconvulsive therapy, which is highly effective for severe and delusional depression, repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation is worth mentioning in this regard.

## Supportive methods

In addition to treatment with medication and/or psychotherapy, complementary methods such as wake therapy or light therapy can be used. Further, regular physical activity has a positive effect on depression and can support the treatment of depression.

## Where can I get help?

### What should I do as a relative of a depressed person?

If someone is withdrawn from others for a long time and seems desperate, relatives, friends or colleagues should encourage the affected person to seek professional help. As a relative you can provide support, for example, by organizing an appointment with a General Practitioner or a specialist and by accompanying the affected person there. People suffering from depression often lack the strength and hope to seek help. Relatives should encourage the affected person to take advantage of the treatment regularly, even if the effect is not immediate.



»The important things on my journey were acceptance of the disease and a lot of patience.«

## For those affected and their relatives

- Knowledge, self-testing and resources on the subject of depression: [ifightdepression.com/en](http://ifightdepression.com/en)
- Free information hotline on depression: 1800 80 48 48  
Aware Support Line, [www.aware.ie](http://www.aware.ie); Free text - HELLO to 50808
- Professionally moderated online forums for young people aged 14 and over: [www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie)
- Help and counselling at [yourmentalhealth.ie](http://yourmentalhealth.ie)
- Regional self-help groups: [www.aware.ie/support/support-groups](http://www.aware.ie/support/support-groups)
- Counselling and exchange for relatives: 1800 80 48 48  
Aware Support Line, [www.aware.ie](http://www.aware.ie)

## For experts

- iFightDepression®
- Internet-based, guided self-management programme. Doctors and psychotherapists can provide this self-management programme free of charge to patients with milder forms of depression.
- Psychosocial coaching
- Cooperation with job centres to better identify mental illness among the long-term unemployed and to provide professional help to those affected.

Call 999 or 112  
in a crisis or an  
emergency!

You can contact emergency services on 999 or 112.

or visit Health Service Executive at:  
<https://www2.hse.ie/wellbeing/mental-health/low-mood-and-depression.html>

## Regional Alliance Against Depression Contact

Cork Kerry Alliance Against Depression  
National Suicide Research Foundation  
WHO Collaborating Centre for Surveillance and Research in  
Suicide Prevention  
4.28 Western Gateway Building  
University College Cork  
Cork, Ireland  
Email: eadb@ucc.ie



This project has received funding from the European Union's 3rd Health Programme – Annual Work Programme 2020 (HP-PJ-2020) under grant agreement No. 101018325. The material presented and views expressed here are the responsibility of the author(s) only. The EU Commission takes no responsibility for any use made of the information set out.