

# Depression



## Normal feelings vs. depression

It's normal to have mood swings or feel down from time to time. Young people feel sad after something upsetting has happened, like a relationship

breakup or trouble with friends or family. Sometimes there is no obvious reason for feeling sad, but the feelings of sadness can pass with time.

Feeling depressed is more than just feeling sad and it's important to know when it can become a problem.



## What is depression?

Depression is when feelings of sadness, emptiness and irritability last longer than two weeks, affect most parts of a person's daily life, and stop them from doing things that they used to enjoy.

There is no simple answer for why depression happens. For some, a mix of events or issues can end up affecting how they feel, think and act. For others, there is no clear reason.

The good news is that most young people experiencing depression can get better with the right help.



## What are the signs of depression?

Common signs of depression include feeling unhappy and irritable for more than two weeks and a loss of interest in usual activities.

Other symptoms may include:



Loss of interest in food or eating too much, leading to weight loss or gain



Having trouble sleeping (getting to sleep, staying asleep or waking up in the morning)



Difficulty concentrating and making decisions



Feeling worthless or guilty a lot of the time



Feeling tired most of the time or lacking energy and motivation



Feeling like everything has become 'too hard'



Having thoughts of death or suicide

Many young people experience some of these symptoms at different times in their lives. What makes depression different is that the symptoms are serious, they affect a person's daily life, and they don't tend to go away easily.

Sometimes people with depression experience other mental health problems too, such as anxiety. Some may also experiment with alcohol and other drugs.



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## Getting help for depression

If the depression has been going on for some time without improvement, it's important to get help from a professional, like a local doctor or mental health professional.

There are mental health professionals at **headspace** centres and **eheadspace** (online and phone support) who can help.



An important part of professional support can be talking (psychological) therapy, so you can learn more about how your depression works and how to change how you feel.

Antidepressant medications can also be added if they are needed.

## What can I do to improve my feelings?

Apart from seeking professional help there are a number of things you can do to maintain good mental health. Some may include:

- Eat well, keep active and try to do things that you used to enjoy.
- Write down your thoughts to help you to notice which thoughts make you feel better or worse.
- Talk to someone that you trust about your thoughts and feelings, such as your family or friends, a teacher or coach, or your mob or Elders.
- Practise relaxation (try breathing exercises or listening to music).



## IMPORTANT!



If you have thoughts of suicide or harming yourself, it's really important to talk to someone you trust, such as a family member, friend or teacher. There are health professionals at **headspace** centres and **eheadspace** (online and phone support) who can help.

## Depression – suicide and self harm



Some young people who experience depression harm themselves or experience thoughts of suicide.

If you think you might act on any thoughts to harm yourself, you can access crisis support 24/7 from Kids Helpline on 1800 55 1800 or Lifeline on 13 13 13.

If you need immediate support, call 000.



**headspace**  
National Youth Mental Health Foundation

For more information, to find your nearest headspace centre or for online and telephone support, visit [headspace.org.au](http://headspace.org.au)