

Depression

What is depression?

While we all feel sad sometimes, depression is a common mood disorder characterised by prolonged sadness, loss of interest in activities that used to give pleasure, feelings of guilt or low self-worth, disturbed sleep or appetite, feelings of tiredness, and poor concentration.

Symptoms

A person with major depression may experience symptoms such as:

- Persistent depressed mood (all day, every day)
- Loss of interest or pleasure in things usually enjoyed
- Unexplained fatigue, even when not doing tiring work
- Appetite and weight changes (may increase or decrease)
- Thoughts / movements may be faster or slower
- Suicidal thoughts or actions
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness; loss of self-confidence and esteem
- Sleep pattern changes (increased or decreased sleep)
- Concentration problems

Sadly, there is also an increased risk of physical illness, drug and alcohol abuse and suicide.

Prevalence

About 800,000 Australians suffer from depression in one year.

Up to 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will suffer from depression at some time in their adult life.

Treatment

A large number of treatments exist for depression. The best treatment can include a combined approach which can include:

- Psychological therapies, including counselling, Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, Psychotherapy
- Antidepressant medications, mood stabilisers
- Alternative therapies such as meditation or yoga
- Lifestyle changes, such as avoiding alcohol, and increasing exercise.

Our research

The Florey's research work is centred on:

- A better understanding of the way stress during brain development can influence brain systems implicated in depression (and other disorders).
- Research that has shown that large increases in the levels of a protein can cause inflammation in the brain of people with depression.
- The role of sex hormones (estrogen and testosterone) in depression (and other disorders).
- Examining the way drug therapies work to improve their effectiveness and reduce their side effects.

Support Services

Please note that diagnosis and treatment of a clinical condition can only be undertaken by a qualified mental health professional. Listed below are some support services only. Always seek the advice of a qualified health professional with any questions regarding your health or a medical condition.

Lifeline
13 11 14
www.lifeline.org.au

Nurse On Call (Victoria) 1300 60 60 24

Health Advice Line (except Victoria)
1800 022 222

Mental Illness Fellowship of Australia Inc
Self-help, support and advocacy
1800 985 944
www.mifa.org.au

Beyond Blue
1300 224 636
www.beyondblue.org.au

Sane Australia
1800 18 7263
www.sane.org

Victorian Government Mental Health Services
<http://health.vic.gov.au/mentalhealth/>

*External sources: Statistics were obtained from Burden of disease Measures of Australia's Progress, 2010, The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare: Australia's health 2008, World Health Organisation
<http://www.who.int/en/>*