



# Depression

## What is it?

Depression is a mental health condition that affects your mood. One in six people will experience depression at some time during their life. Many people who have depression also have anxiety.

Depression can be mild to severe. Half of all people who get treatment will start feeling better within six months. Symptoms of depression include:

- Feeling very sad, flat or numb
- Loss of pleasure from things you usually enjoy doing
- Weight changes from eating more or eating less
- Trouble sleeping

## What will my GP do now?

Your GP will complete a mental health assessment. They will ask you questions about your mood, your thoughts and your health history. They may also ask questions about when you started feeling this way. Some people develop depression due to things happening in their life. Some people start feeling depressed without any reason.

Many people who have depression have thoughts of [self-harm](#) or [suicide](#). Your GP will want to assess your risk of harming yourself. Their main goal is to keep you safe and support you. It is important you answer these questions truthfully, even though they may be hard to think about.

Your GP may suggest a number of treatments, including:

- Talking therapy with a psychologist or counsellor
- Medication (such as an antidepressant)
- Lifestyle changes (diet, exercise, drinking or drug use)

They may give you a referral to a counsellor or a psychiatrist. If your GP feels your safety is a risk, they will refer you to a local mental health service. This is required by law.

## What will my GP do in the future?

Your GP will want to see you at least one more time for a check up. They may also want to see you regularly after your first visit. This is to see how you are feeling with treatment. If you are not feeling better, your GP may refer you to a counsellor or a psychiatrist.

If your GP prescribed medication, they will also check if it is helping. Your GP may start you on a lower dose and increase it during this time to find the right dose to help you.

## Need help now?

If you feel like life is not worth living, call any of these services:

**Lifeline**

13 11 14

**NSW Mental Health Line**

1800 011 51

**Beyond Blue**

1300 22 4636

**Suicide Call Back Service**

1300 659 467

## When should I call an ambulance?



If your life is in danger, call triple zero (000) immediately.

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## What can I do?

There are many things you can do to help yourself during this time, including:

- Eat healthy, exercise and get enough sleep
- Avoid using alcohol or other drugs
- Keep a diary so you can track your thoughts and what treatments are working
- Set reminders for upcoming appointments
- Continue to be truthful with your GP, even if things get worse

## What questions could I ask my doctor?

- How do I know if I am depressed or just sad?*
- Are there medications to help me feel better?*
- What are the side effects of these medications?*
- Who can I talk to when I feel depressed?*
- Where can I get more help?*
- What symptoms should I be concerned about?*



## What supports are available?

There are local mental health clinics across the South Western Sydney Local Health District. These are for people with more severe mental health issues. You can also ask your GP about the You In Mind service.

Other supports include:

**Head to Health:** Call [1800 595 212](tel:1800595212) Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm (except public holidays)

**Headstart:** Visit [headstart.org.au](http://headstart.org.au) to find help for your specific needs

**NewAccess:** Visit [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au) to access a confidential mental health coaching program

To find more supports, view or download the SWSPHN funded primary mental health, suicide prevention and drug and alcohol services directory [here](#).

Your GP can also refer you to a private psychiatrist if treatment is not helping.

## Where can I learn more?

- **Beyond Blue** – What is depression?: [beyondblue.org.au](http://beyondblue.org.au)
- **Black Dog Institute** – Depression factsheets: [blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://blackdoginstitute.org.au)

This information is to be viewed by someone who has received a diagnosis from their doctor. It is not designed to be used to diagnose a condition or as a substitute for ongoing medical care

Health Resource Directory factsheets are endorsed by South Western Sydney PHN's Community Advisory Committee and local GPs

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