

## Counseling

Your doctor may also decide to complement your therapy with counseling. This may be carried out by your doctor, practice nurse, a trained counselor, a psychologist or psychotherapist.

## Six months

When dealing with depression, it is important to remember that you will get better. Now that you have seen your doctor, put a name to your problem and discovered it can be treated, you are on that road back to recovery.

## First important weeks

When taking an antidepressant medication, you will find that the first two to three weeks will be difficult. It takes time for your medication to start working, but once it does the difference is noticeable. Any side effects but these will disappear within the first week.

## Keeping up treatment

After your first month of treatment, you should be feeling much better. You will find it easier to cope with your day-to-day routine and, hopefully, you will be able to see beyond your depression.

It is important that you continue to see your doctor and take your medication even after you begin to feel well again, as there is a chance that your depression may return if you stop your medication too quickly.

## The future

You may not believe it right now, but if you follow your doctor's advice which includes taking your medication every day, in six months' time your depression will seem like a bad dream.

### Remember:

- Depression is common
- It is not a sign of weakness
- It is nothing to be ashamed about
- It can be treated.

See your doctor, practice nurse or pharmacist if you have any questions about how you are feeling or about your medication. They are there to help you.

# Dealing with Depression



## is depression?

Depression is a common condition. It is estimated that, at any time, one in 20 people are going through a depressive episode. Low mood, loss of interest or pleasure are common, often with other feelings or physical symptoms.

Depression can affect anyone no matter what sex, race, age, income or colour.

People can become depressed for a number of reasons – which are normally beyond your control. What is also important to remember is that depression is not a sign of weakness; it is a common problem that disrupts people's lives.

## Events

Depression is often triggered by major events such as the death of a relative or close friend, or stressful situations such as divorce or redundancy. Loss of a job or financial difficulties can lead to depression, as can loneliness, especially in the elderly.

Depression can be associated with childbirth in a child, (known as post-natal depression).

Depression might not even seem to be a problem in the way they are feeling. Whatever triggers a particular event makes a person's depression more or less important.

## Biological causes

Over the past 20 years, scientists have been looking at how certain chemicals in the brain can affect the way we are feeling. Changes in the balance of these chemicals can affect a person's mood.

Serotonin is one of these chemicals; depressed people appear to have low levels of serotonin.

Unfortunately, scientists still don't know what causes serotonin levels to change. The good news, however, is that they have found ways of correcting the imbalance.

## How depression is treated

The treatment that your doctor has chosen for you will depend on several factors – severity of your illness, what type of symptoms you have, how long you have been ill, what other medication you have been on and your lifestyle.

## Drug therapy

Your doctor may have prescribed some medication for you to take – probably an antidepressant which is a product designed specifically to treat depression.

It is important to remember that antidepressants are not addictive.

There are many different sorts of antidepressants available. Your doctor would have prescribed the most suitable one for treating your depression and fitting in with your lifestyle.

As with all medications, you may find that your antidepressant has some side effects but these may last only for a short period of time.

If you have difficulty coping with your normal activities because of your medication, go back and see your doctor or pharmacist. If you feel you need to stop taking your medication, it would be best to discuss this with your doctor.

Side effects associated with older antidepressants include dry mouth, blurred vision, constipation and weight gain.

The most common side effects associated with the newer antidepressants are nausea, headache, dizziness and feeling sleepy.

## Length of treatment

Hopefully you will begin to feel better about two or three weeks after starting your medication. It is important that you keep on taking your tablets even after you feel better.

The World Health Organisation recommends that treatment continues for four to six months. This is to reduce the chance of the depression returning.

