

Depression In Children And Young People



DepressionAlliance Scotland

What is Depression?

Depression is a common problem. It affects at least 2 in 100 children under 12 and 5 in every 100 teenagers. Depression is even more common in adults. Young people are much more likely to become depressed if they come from broken homes, have lost a parent in early life, have suffered from abuse or neglect or live in inner city areas where there are high rates of poverty, unemployment and crime.

Depression is a serious and common illness but there is a great deal that can be done to help those affected by it. The first step to getting help is to be able to recognise the problem.

What are the signs of depression?

- Being moody and irritable—easily upset, 'ratty' or tearful
- Loss of interest in things you normally enjoy such as friends and hobbies
- Finding it difficult to enjoy the company of friends and family
- Difficulty with concentration, daydreaming
- Being overly critical of yourself and your abilities
- Blaming yourself
- Hating yourself, feeling useless, stupid and unwanted
- Feeling unhappy, miserable and lonely a lot of the time
- Sleep problems, difficulty getting off to sleep or waking very early
- Chronic tiredness and loss of energy
- In extreme case, wanting to end life

If someone consistently shows several

What effects can depression have?

Because depression affects so many aspects of life, your outlook, how you feel, what you are able to do, it can mean you cope with ordinary daily life much less well than usual. Depression can cause serious problems, such as:

- Difficulties getting on with friends and family
- Loss of friends
- Loss of confidence and difficulty making decisions
- Inability to study, work and perform well in exams
- Difficulty with day to day tasks
- Eating problem, turning to food for comfort and eating too much or dieting excessively
- Lying, stealing and truanting

Depression can sometimes be dangerous, increasing the risk of:

- Drug, alcohol or solvent abuse
- Self injury such as drug overdose and wrist cutting
- Suicide

What causes depression?

Depression is commonly caused by a mixture of things, rather than any one thing alone.

- Some people have experiences that lead to depression. These include family breakdown, abuse, neglect and bullying. Serious illness and the death or loss of a loved one can also cause depression

- People are more 'at risk' of becoming depressed if they have no one to share their worries with, a lot of demands on them, and not enough support.
- Depression often 'runs in families' and someone with a close relative who is affected by depression has a higher risk of becoming depressed themselves. Girls and women are more likely than boys and men to become depressed.

What can help?

There are a lot of things that can be done to help people who suffer from depression. If you think that you or someone you know may be depressed, it's well worth asking for help. This means letting a caring adult know about the problem, and, if necessary, getting professional help. Family members can often provide valuable help and support. Teachers, school counsellors and school nurses can also be very helpful. Your family doctor may be able to help. He or she will also know about local services, and will be able to help you get the help that is needed.

Young people who are depressed often find it helpful to talk about their worries to a trained counsellor. Alternatively, depending on the problems and their causes, it may be helpful to seek advice and help from a member of the local child and family mental health team. Usually, these teams consist of specialists such as psychotherapists, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers, all of whom are highly skilled in helping young people and their families.

Getting effective help probably means sharing worries with someone who can help and putting heads together to work out new solutions and discovering new ways of coping. Practical help may also be needed with, for example, relationships, school, finance and housing.

Depression Alliance Scotland (DAS)

Depression Alliance Scotland is the only charity working for people with depression in Scotland. Other publications available from DAS include our **Look OK... Feel Crap?** campaign materials aimed at young adults. For more information about these and our other publications and services, please contact us.

3 Grosvenor Gardens
Edinburgh EH12 5JU
Tel: 0845 123 23 20
Email: info@dascot.org
Web: www.dascot.org

Other Organisations

Young Scot

Tel: 0808 801 0338
Email: info@youngscot.org
Web: www.youngscot.org

Young Minds

www.youngminds.org.uk

Youth in Mind

www.youthinmind.co.uk

Childline

Tel: 0800 1111
Web: www.childline.org.uk

Saneline

Tel: 0845 767 8000
Web: www.sane.org.uk

Depression in Teenagers

www.depressioninteenagers.co.uk

Just Like Me. Website for young people challenging stigma about mental health www.justlikeme.org.uk

Talking 2 Ourselves Website about mental health issues written by young people for young people.
www.talking2ourselves.com

This factsheet was first published in November 2001 by Depression Alliance. This update January 08 by Depression Alliance Scotland.

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