



About Depression

Depression affects us all

In Scotland, an estimated 16% of people over age 16 have been diagnosed with Depression.¹ The number of people who are actually affected by Depression could be much more — it is likely that half of those with the condition do not go to their GP, so they do not get diagnosed.² Depression does not only affect the person who is ill, it also affects their family and friends, the people they work with and other people in their life. Most people in Scotland will be affected by Depression in some way.

What is Depression?

Depression is an illness. It is not a sign of weakness and can not just be 'snapped out of'. Throughout this factsheet and in other Depression Alliance Scotland (DAS) publications you will see 'Depression' written with a capital 'D'. This is to distinguish the illness from the commonly used word 'depression'. Everyone feels low from time to time and may say they feel depressed but that's not necessarily Depression.

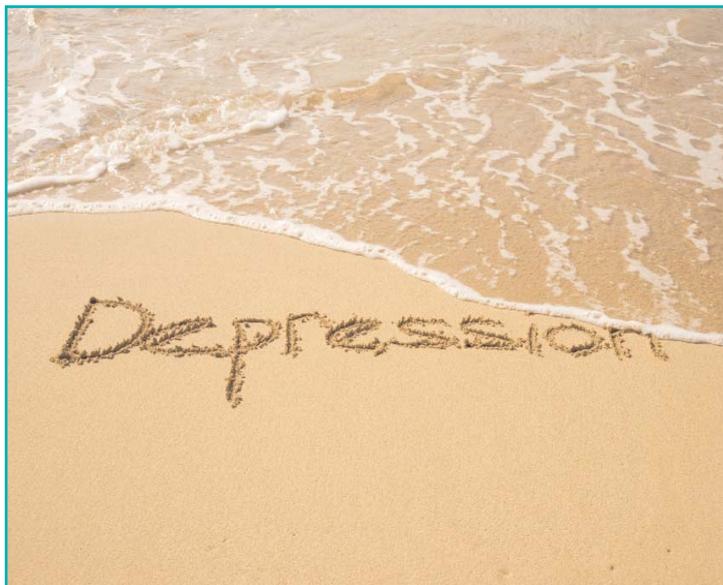
There is a list of symptoms of Depression in the box on the right. Symptoms will be different for every person but two factors which are taken in to consideration when diagnosing Depression are that:

- These feelings and symptoms are persistent, meaning that they just never seem to go away even when there isn't any particular reason for feeling that way.
- They interfere with your life, leaving you unable to enjoy normal pleasures. In severe cases, Depression can make everyday tasks like getting dressed or doing the shopping feel like an impossible mountain to climb.

Types of Depression

You may hear Depression described as clinical, unipolar or major Depression. Other types of Depression include:

- Perinatal Depression which occurs around the birth of a baby;
- Bipolar Disorder where the person experiences 'highs' as well as 'lows';
- Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) which occurs because of the lack of light in the winter and affects 7% of people in Scotland.³



Some Signs of Depression

Symptoms may include:-

- Feeling unhappy, miserable and lonely a lot of the time
- Feeling negative or hopeless about your life and the future
- Feeling guilty, bad or inadequate
- Feeling agitated, anxious, irritable or moody
- No longer enjoying the things that you used to like doing
- Loss of sex drive
- Weight loss or weight gain
- Difficulty getting to sleep and / or waking early
- Poor concentration and loss of energy or motivation
- Not looking after your personal appearance
- Frequent minor health problems, such as headaches, back pain or stomach-aches
- Not liking yourself, feeling ugly
- Suicidal thoughts
- Self-harming behaviour

If you notice several of these symptoms have been present for more than two weeks and are affecting your life, contact one of the organisations listed on this factsheet or talk to your GP.

Getting support

Most people can, and do, recover from Depression. The best way to treat Depression is with a variety of approaches. This is because a type of treatment which helps one person with Depression won't necessarily help another person. Everyone is different. This is as true of antidepressants as it is of therapies and other treatments. Depression can make you feel pessimistic about the future and you may not see the point of trying another type of treatment if the first one doesn't work for you, but don't give up, you may respond to a different approach. Depression is a treatable illness and there are many roads to get to the place of recovery.

Your GP

For most people, the first step is to approach your GP for help. Your GP might prescribe an antidepressant initially. However, other therapies are becoming more common, so in some areas you may be offered an alternative such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT), exercise or self-help books on prescription. CBT is a type of talking therapy which research has found helps a lot of people recover from Depression. It looks at how your thoughts and behaviour affect how you feel and what you can do to change that.

If you have particularly severe Depression, your GP may refer you to see a psychiatrist, who may prescribe different medication or refer you for talking therapy such as counselling, CBT or other psychotherapy.

What helps improve Depression?

Don't just rely on your GP. Become an expert in your own illness. Do your own research on the internet, go to the library and borrow books on Depression and get information leaflets on Depression and its treatment from organisations

such as DAS. Our two websites are a good place to start: www.dascot.org and www.lookokfeelcrap.org. Or contact us, using the details at the bottom of this factsheet, and we'll send you an information pack.

Get talking! Telling someone how you feel can help. You could talk to one of your friends, relatives or someone else that you trust; you may prefer to call a helpline, there are some listed below, or talk online. If you would like to talk to a professional, consider CBT, counselling or psychotherapy. There are also free CBT courses available online: Living Life to the Full — www.livinglifetothefull.com; and MoodGYM — www.moodgym.anu.edu.au.

Self-help support groups are a good place to find people you can talk to and who will understand how you feel because they have probably had similar feelings. Many people find attending a group helps them feel less alone. To find out about groups in your area, contact us.

Many people with Depression find exercising helps them feel better and there is evidence to back this up. If you feel lethargic, tired and like the last thing you want to do is exercise; tackle it by doing something really small like walking round the block and build it up. Some people have also told us that alternative therapies such as acupuncture and massage are helpful as is changing what they eat and drink.

Recovery

When you are Depressed, it may seem impossible that you will ever feel better. These thoughts and feelings are very common; however the majority of people who have Depression do recover. And many say they gain self-belief from having survived an extremely difficult challenge!

For Help and Support

- **Depression Alliance Scotland** 0845 123 23 20, info@dascot.org, www.dascot.org
- **Look OK...Feel Crap?** ask@lookokfeelcrap.org www.lookokfeelcrap.org

Helplines

- **SANEline and SANEmail** 0845 767 8000, sanemail@sane.org.uk, www.sane.org.uk
- **Samaritans** 08457 909090 (24 hours), jo@samaritans.org.uk, www.samaritans.org.uk
- **Breathing Space** 0800 83 85 87 (6pm - 2am 365 days a year), www.breathingspace.co.uk

Further Information

- **Living Life to the Full** Free web based life skills course. www.livinglifetothefull.com
- **SAMH** Scottish Association for Mental Health 0141 568 7000 www.samh.org.uk
- **BACP** British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy 01455 883300 www.bacp.co.uk
- **BABCP** British Association. for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies 0161 797 4484 www.babcp.com

1. *Well What Do You Think?* (2006) Scottish Government Social Research (Published 2007) p56
2. *Talk About It on World Mental Health Day - The Mental Health Foundation* 2005 <http://www.mhf.org.uk/media/news-releases/news-releases-2005/30-september-2005/> (accessed 09/01/09)
3. Figures obtained from Lumie www.lumie.com on the back of research conducted by ICM on behalf of the company