

DEPRESSION

Everyone feels down in the dumps once in a while... But when these feelings are with you most of the time, you stop enjoying life and you lose interest in things you used to like doing, you may be experiencing depression. The good news is that getting the right type of help, and getting it early, can make it much easier for you to deal with depression and get back on track.

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is more than just feeling sad or anxious. It is a common but serious illness that leaves you feeling down most of the time for a long period of time. Untreated depression can interfere with day-to-day activities and makes it hard to cope with everyday life.

DO I HAVE DEPRESSION?

Depression isn't just about feeling low– it usually leads to lasting changes in how you feel, act and think. You may be experiencing depression if for **MORE THAN TWO WEEKS** you go through any of the following (for most of the time):

You...

can't be bothered with anything
have lost your appetite or are eating too much
have lost a lot of energy and feel tired all the time
have lost interest or enjoyment in nearly all of your activities
find it difficult to concentrate or make up your mind
find it difficult to fall asleep, stay asleep or sleep too much
have had thoughts of suicide
have aches, pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems

You feel...

sad
irritable or angry
restless or agitated or anxious
empty or hopeless
worthless or guilty
helpless or out of control
hopeless or that life is not worth living

If the above applies to you, and you also have **FOUR OR MORE of the symptoms**, you may have depression.

WHO CAN GET IT?

Just about anybody can get depression. It certainly can occur during adolescence, a time of great personal change. You may be facing changes in school, your friends, your after-school activities, as well as in relationships with your family members. You may have different feelings about the type of person you want to be, your future plans, and may be making decisions for the first time in your life.

WHAT CAUSES IT?

Depression does not have a single cause. Several factors that can come in combination can lead to depression. It is different for each person. Some people carry genes that increase their risk of depression. But not all people with depression have these genes, and not all people with these genes have depression. Environment, your surroundings and life experiences, also affects your risk for depression. In fact, **any stressful situation may trigger depression** – and high school students encounter a number of stressful situations!

However, do note that depression may also have no obvious causes at all!

PREVENTING THE BLUES

The following tips can help to stop you from getting depressed.

- Eat a healthy and varied diet.
- Get enough sleep.
- Stay physically active.
- Take time out to do something you enjoy.
- Spend time and stay connected with people you like and trust.
- Talk about your feelings and emotions.
- Don't stress (or don't stress too much).
- Avoid drinking alcohol or taking drugs.
- Remember that some days will be better than others.
- **If you think you are depressed, take action early.**

BEATING THE BLUES

SOURCES. This fact sheet is adapted from on the following websites: <http://www.reachout.com>, <http://www.beyondblue.org.au> and National Institute of Mental Health

Many students don't know where to go for mental health treatment or believe that treatment won't help. Others don't get help because they think depression symptoms are just part of the typical stresses of school or being a teen. Some students worry what other people will think if they seek mental health care.

No matter, depression is a real illness that you can't just "snap out of" or "pull yourself together". If you think you have depression, start by talking to someone you trust. Keeping things to yourself will only make matters worse, as you need treatment and a plan to help you recover.

WHO TO TALK TO

| | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Trusted Peers and Friends. | Your Parent(s) | Hotlines |
| A Family member. | A Counsellor. | Any trusted person... |
| Your Teacher or Head of Year. | Your Doctor. | |

Seeing the school counseling team is a good start when you're after help and information. If needs be, the counsellor will be able to help you find appropriate care with other mental health care providers or even a doctor. All these professionals can help determine if you have depression or not.

Here is some information of what you may do with a mental health care provider and or doctor:

(1) **Psychological Therapy.** This provides a safe environment to talk, share and commence with treatment. The goals set will be aimed at helping you to change the negative thinking that comes with depression or deal with any hassles you may be having with family and friends. You may also learn coping skills, such as tips on how to manage stress and or how to improve your sleep patterns.

(2) **Talking medication.** A General Practitioner (doctor or Psychiatrist) is needed for this. For some people, the doctor may think that antidepressant medication is also necessary. This however is usually only subscribed if the depression is very severe or it isn't improving with other treatments. If you do start taking an antidepressant, a doctor will monitor you closely for a while.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Further reading on depression and anxiety: <http://www.youthbeyondblue.com/depression-and-anxiety/>
- Depression Checklist0073: <http://www.youthbeyondblue.com/depression-and-anxiety/depression-checklist/>

HOTLINES

- **The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong**
24 hours operating suicide hotline: 23982222
- **Kely Support Group**
2/F East Wing, 12 Borrett Road, Central, Hong Kong
Tel: 2521 6890, Fax: 2521 6853
Email: contact@kely.org
Website: <http://www.kely.org/en/index.html>
- **Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups (Cantonese Speakers)**
6/F, 54 Bedford Road, Tai Kok Tsui, Kowloon
Youthline: 27778899
Tel: 2395 0161, 2395 0161
Email : sgt@hkfyg.org.hk
Website: <http://www.hkfyg.org.hk/eng/index.html>

KEY REMINDERS

- **Depression is a serious illness that is common and highly treatable.**
- **If you or anyone else are in crisis, talk to someone or seek help as early as possible.**