

Depression can affect anyone





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“I feel exhausted and my whole body aches. In the morning I don't even have the strength to get out of bed. I'd prefer to stay in bed all day.”

Emir, 38

“I find it so difficult to make decisions, even minor ones. I feel the same when I go out shopping. I'm always thinking I might make the wrong choice. I don't understand my own behaviour any longer.”

Maria, 52

Are you familiar with these feelings and observations? Have you ever thought that your feelings, moods or physical ailments might be signs of depression?

It's sometimes difficult to distinguish between depression and normal everyday moodiness. What we nowadays often refer to as stress, nervousness or burn-out is often actually depression.

The illness is a common one like diabetes or high blood pressure, and has nothing to do with age, profession, social circumstances, origins or religious beliefs. However, among the general public the illness is often overlooked and misunderstood.

If the signs of depression persist (more than 4 weeks), take them seriously and consult a specialist (family doctor, psychiatrist, psychotherapist). With careful questioning it is almost always possible to make a proper diagnosis. That is the first step toward successful treatment.

Depression is a common illness that can affect anyone, regardless of their age, profession, social circumstances, origins or religious beliefs.

Nowadays depression can be treated.



Depression comes in many forms.

What is depression and how can it be recognized?

“There was more and more pressure at work. Over the past month, three colleagues have lost their jobs. I’m already 54 and I’m scared that I might also be made redundant. For the past three weeks I’ve been waking up during the night with panic attacks and can’t get back to sleep. I don’t want to burden my wife with my problems.” Mr L., 54, construction worker, married, 3 children

“We have been living in Switzerland for 9 years. My children were born here and go to school here. However, our future is uncertain. Every year we have to apply for a new residence permit. I don’t smile any more, I’m sad all the time and never have any energy.”

Mrs S., 30, housewife and cleaner, married, 2 children

There is usually a set of circumstances that lead to depression; it is frequently a reaction of the mind and body to persistent stress and other everyday difficulties. The illness can creep up gradually, the symptoms become stronger and stronger, and do not disappear. But depression may also appear suddenly and unexpectedly. Doctors and those concerned often initially think the symptoms are those of a physical illness.

Symptoms vary from person to person. The signs of illness can be different for men and for women. Possible initial symptoms are sleep disorders, difficulty concentrating or worrying a lot. Many people suffering from depression can no longer enjoy anything, while others suffer from anxiety. Depression may also reveal itself through increased irritability or aggressive behaviour at work or in the family.

The main symptoms of a depression may be headaches, back pain or stomach cramps. Sometimes those suffering from depression experience anxiety attacks and a feeling of physical unease. They can also lose all interest in sex.

The severity of a depression can vary enormously. In cases of severe depression the person affected is no longer able to cope with day-to-day life. It is important to seek help as soon as possible. Consult a specialist (family doctor, psychiatrist, psychotherapist).

The symptoms of depression can vary a great deal from person to person. Some people may show more physical signs of illness, whereas others may have more psychological symptoms.

What sort of difficult circumstances and risk factors might result in depression?

- > Constant very high levels of stress at work and at home increase the risk of depression.
- > Difficult financial circumstances, low income, and a fear of redundancy can result in constant pressure.
- > For many migrants life in a foreign country is a constant stress. Uncertainty about residency status, and anxiety about the future, but also a lack of recognition, experience of racism and discrimination all take their toll and may lead to depression.
- > The loss of someone close is a critical moment in a person’s life and can lead to depression.
- > Worrying about one’s children and family may lead to long-term stress. The situation is often particularly stressful for migrants because they worry about whether their children will fit in or about family members they have left behind in their country of origin. Single parents may also be under considerable stress.
- > Chronic illnesses of relatives, particularly mental illnesses, can place a burden on one’s own health too.
- > Providing support and care for elderly relatives can drain one’s energy, both physically and emotionally.
- > Traumatic experiences and severe emotional strain, even if they took place a long time ago, can contribute to causing depression.

As with any other illness, there are factors and triggers that increase the risk of depression. If you suspect that you may be suffering from depression, consult your family doctor or another specialist you trust, such as a psychiatrist or psychotherapist.



Depression can affect any generation

"My mother is always sad and no longer wants to play with me. At first I thought she was angry with me because I got a bad school report."

Nuria, 8, single child, pupil

"Sometimes I could shake my son, I feel so angry with him. He just lies on his bed all day."

Mr M., 49, widower, 2 children, single parent

"Nothing I say helps my husband any more. I feel so powerless and helpless."

Mrs Ö., 64, married, retired

Can relatives also get support?

Perhaps you are not the one affected by depression; you might be a relative or a friend. Perhaps you feel anxious because you can't understand the way the depressed person is behaving. You don't know how you should behave or how you can support the depressed person. You experience feelings of anxiety or doubt; you feel guilty or ashamed.

Relatives can also get professional support. Consult your family doctor (or psychiatrist/psychologist), who can advise you where to seek help.

At the same time it is particularly important for the depressed person to receive support from relatives. Treatment provided by a professional must take both factors into account – on the one hand that relatives are also affected and on the other that they are important carers.

You can help by supporting the treatment process when someone in your family or a friend is suffering from depression.

Depression is treatable

"I was ashamed of my depression. In the end I consulted a specialist about my difficulties and health problems. I started psychotherapy and took medication. My family also supported me a lot. For the past two months I have felt a lot better."

Mr P., 42, 2 children

What is the treatment for depression?

The treatment must be prescribed by specialists and involves various forms of treatment. These include medication, psychotherapy and social support. The cost of treatment is usually covered by the mandatory health insurance. All medical, psychological and therapeutic specialists are bound by professional secrecy, ensuring confidentiality.

Medication

We know from research that depression involves metabolic disorders in the brain, which are quite independent from the actual triggers of the illness. These organic changes within the body are treated with antidepressant drugs. Taken regularly, these medicines reduce the symptoms of depression. Antidepressants are not addictive and do not change the patient's personality.

Psychotherapy

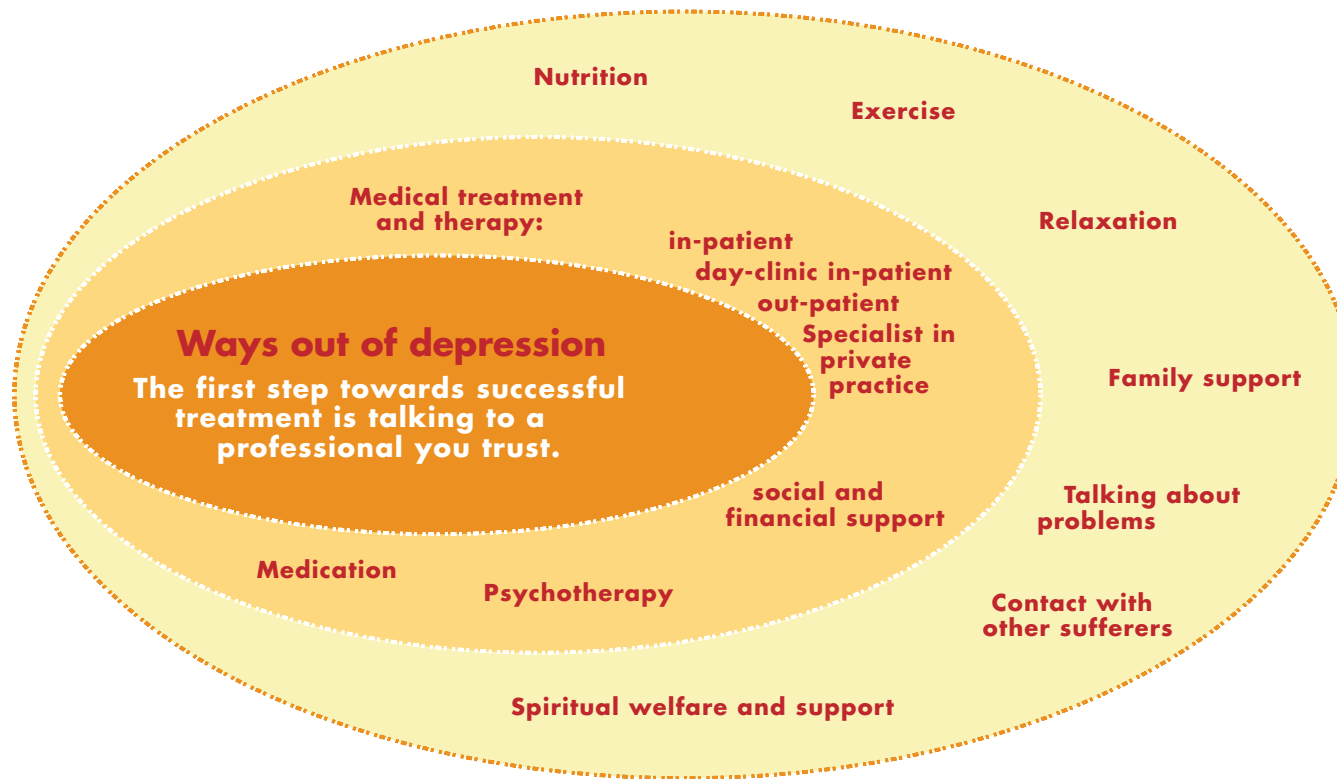
Psychotherapy promotes self-healing powers. In psychotherapy sessions you can talk about burdensome circumstances, problems and stress in your life. Together with the specialist you can work through these issues, find solutions, and practise how to apply them.

Social and financial support

Patients are also given practical help sorting out difficulties in their lives. Depending on the patient's wishes, it might involve medical or psychological consultations with family members, the authorities or even the employer.

As a general rule treatment for depression is successful.

Ways out of depression



Depression is neither your destiny nor a punishment.

Depression is never all in the mind; it is an illness that should be treated by a specialist as soon as possible.

Medical or psychiatric treatment and therapy
It is very important for there to be a relationship of trust between the patient and the specialist if the treatment is to be effective. Sometimes it is easier for the patient if the specialist is of the same gender – or sometimes even of the opposite gender. Consultations in the patient's own language can be a great help. Do not hesitate to talk about these issues.

Family doctor: can diagnose depression, provide treatment and refer patients if necessary to specialist doctors, psychologists or specialized institutions.

Psychiatrist: a doctor with specialist training in psychiatry. As a doctor they can diagnose illness and prescribe medication. They also carry out psychotherapy. Psychiatrists work in private practice but also in outpatient psychiatric services or psychiatric clinics.

Psychotherapist (psychologist with training in psychotherapy): As a psychotherapist they can diagnose and treat depression and refer the patient if necessary to specialized institutions. They work in private practice but also in psychiatric clinics or outpatient psychiatric services.

Psychotherapy: is carried out by a psychiatrist or a psychologist. Psychotherapy can either be carried out in private practice, in a day clinic or as an in-patient.

Psychiatric Spitex services: psychiatric Spitex facilities can be found in cities. The psychiatric nurses can make home visits to people with mental illnesses to help them cope with their everyday lives. They can be your first point of contact if you are not certain whether you're suffering from depression.

Psychiatric day-clinics: provide day-care treatment. This means that you spend the day in the therapy programme at the day-clinic, but you go home in the evening. The day-clinic has specialists from various branches.

Psychiatric clinics: are for urgent admissions and above all for in-patient treatment. To be admitted to a psychiatric clinic, a patient must usually be referred by a doctor. Psychiatric clinics also have specialists from various branches.

Self-assessment for depression

Just 'a bit down'? – or are you actually suffering from depression?

Please answer these questions. Tick Yes if one of the following statements has applied to you for more than two weeks. All questions you answer with Yes count for 1 point, except for question 14 that counts for 5 points.

	Yes	No
1. You are often stressed or despondent without reason.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. You find it difficult to concentrate and often feel overwhelmed even when making minor decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. You have lost all motivation and often feel overcome with tiredness and/or anxiety.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. You no longer have any interest even in the things that you normally would enjoy.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. You have lost all confidence in your own abilities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. You are tormented by feelings of guilt and self-criticism.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. You agonize over the future and fail to see the bright side of anything.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. It's worst of all in the mornings.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. You suffer from persistent insomnia.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. You avoid contact with other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. You experience physical pain that you have no explanation for.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. You have little or no appetite.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
13. You no longer have any desire for sex.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
14. You feel desperate and no longer feel life is worth living.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If your score is 5 points or more, this may be a sign of depression. Consult a specialist, such as your family doctor, (or psychologist/psychotherapist). You can also get help and support from other institutions listed in this leaflet.

Where to find support

Who can I contact?

- > Any doctor you trust: this may be your family doctor or any specialist in psychiatry or psychotherapy.
- > A psychologist specialized in psychotherapy: lists can be obtained from the national professional associations (www.psychologie.ch and www.psychotherapie.ch). Some of the cantonal associations of psychologists run an information hotline that can refer you to a suitable specialist.
- > Social services: The social workers working for your local authority are a good contact for various problems.
- > Spiritual support, religious communities: The clergy are important advisers in difficult life situations and a good contact.
- > Dargebotene Hand/La Main Tendue: anonymous telephone hotline for crisis situations, The hotline is available round the clock as a first port of call in a crisis, regardless of cultural or religious background. Tel. 143, www.143.ch.
- > Beratung 147: free, anonymous telephone help-line and anonymous chat advice service for children and teenagers in crisis situations and difficult life circumstances. Available round the clock. Tel. 147, www.147.ch.
- > Pro Mente Sana: anonymous counselling by telephone
Tel. 0848 800 858
Mon, Tue, Thurs 9–12:00, Thurs 14–17:00
Legal advice: Tel. 0840 0000 61
Psychosocial counselling: Tel. 0840 0000 62
Monday, Tuesday and Thursday: 10–13:00
www.promentesana.ch
- > sessions for migrants, if necessary with the support of interpreters. The interpreters are bound by the obligation of professional secrecy.
- > SRC Outpatient Clinic for victims of torture & war, Werkstrasse 16, 3084 Wabern (near Bern), Tel. 031 960 77 77, www.redcross.ch
- > Outpatient Clinic for victims of torture & war, Psychiatric Polyclinic, Zurich University Hospital, Culmannstrasse 8, 8091 Zurich, Tel. 044 255 52 80, Fax 044 255 44 08, www.psychiatrie.usz.ch
- > Victims of Torture & War Treatment Centre Geneva (CTG Geneva), Department of Community Medicine, Rue Micheli-du-Crest 24, 1211 Geneva 14, Tel. 022 372 53 28, www.hcuge.ch
- > Victims of Torture & War Treatment Centre Lausanne (CTG Lausanne), Appartenances, Rue des Terreaux 10, 1003 Lausanne, Téléphone 021 341 12 50, www.appartenances.ch
- > Directory of psychotherapists who speak foreign languages, Published by: Assoziation Schweizer Psychotherapeutinnen und Psychotherapeuten ASP/Association Suisse des Psychothérapeutes ASP, Tel. 043 268 93 00, www.psychotherapie.ch and Föderation Schweizer Psychologinnen und Psychologen FSP/ Fédération Suisse des Psychologues FSP, Tel. 031 388 88 00, www.psychologie.ch

In an emergency

- > Emergency medical service: In the event you cannot reach your family doctor, contact the emergency medical service.
- > In any life-threatening situation, whether related to accident or illness, always dial the emergency number 144.
- > Out-patient psychiatric services, e.g. external psychiatric service, crisis centre, psychiatric polyclinic: There are facilities for children, teenagers and adults.

Download or order the brochure at www.migesplus.ch

This brochure is available in PDF format in German, French, Italian, English, Albanian, Serbian/Bosnian/Croatian, Portuguese, Spanish, Turkish, Tamil and Arabic.

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