

Depression - Improve your mood

We may all experience low mood from time to time, as we try to deal with life's ups and downs. But if your low mood continues day after day and you feel down most of the time, you may be suffering from depression. According to the Depression Alliance, 1 in 5 people in the UK suffer from depression, so it's not at all unusual.

Symptoms can include:

- Loss of interest and pleasure in things you usually enjoy
- Feeling tired and lacking in energy
- Difficulty getting to sleep and staying asleep, or sleeping too much
- Losing your appetite, or overeating
- Low libido (sex drive)
- Lack of motivation for everyday tasks (eg cleaning, cooking and paying bills)
- Difficulty concentrating
- More negative thoughts than usual (for example, being hard on yourself or feeling that life is hopeless).

If your low mood is very severe, or if you have a history of recurrent depression, it might be a good idea to talk to your GP about the support available to you. However, there are steps you can take yourself to improve your mood...

Set yourself small, manageable goals to increase your level of activity

Make a list of things that you aren't currently doing because of your low mood; enjoyable activities, routine household tasks, self-care or necessary tasks such as paying bills. Grade them from easy to difficult and choose two or three of the easier activities to try this week. Make sure you include some enjoyable activities! Achieving something, however small it may seem, can improve our mood and sense of wellbeing and spur us on to more activity.

Don't wait till you feel motivated before you start some of the activities on your list. When you start to work towards your goals, you'll feel better and your motivation will increase. For example, you may not feel like going out for a walk, but you'll feel great once you've done it!

Take some exercise

Just a few minutes of exercise a day can help to increase the level of feelgood brain chemicals. Choose a form of exercise you will enjoy - walking, gardening, swimming, dancing. Make a date with yourself to do this - if you have difficulty motivating yourself, see if you can find an exercise buddy who will go with you. Local libraries and leisure centres have information on classes and walking groups, and you may be able to get 'exercise on prescription' via your GP or other healthcare professionals.

Aim for a good night's sleep

See if you can go to bed and get up at the same time each day, and avoid napping. Wind down at the end of the day by switching off the TV and computer, taking a relaxing bath or hot drink, or practising some **relaxation techniques**. If you can't sleep, don't lie in bed worrying. Get up and do something undemanding for a while, then try again. Make sure your bedroom is as quiet and comfortable as possible.

Talk to someone

Talk to a friend, a relative, a healthcare professional. Sharing how you feel can be very helpful. [Oasis-Talk's therapists](#) can help you change your perspective on your problems.

Learn mindfulness

[Mindfulness](#) can help you develop calm, focused awareness of your experience in the present moment, changing your relationship to negative thoughts and feelings. It's particularly recommended if you've had more than three episodes of depression.

Need more help?

- Oasis-Talk runs a [workshop on depression management](#) and a [workshop on mindful living](#)
- Visit the [Depression Alliance website](#) or the [Mental Health Foundation website](#)