

Depression.

Let's talk about it.



What is depression?

Feeling sad, moody or down is common. But if you feel low or empty for weeks, months or years, you might be depressed. Depression is a serious, but common, mental health issue. One in sixteen people in Australia are affected by depression every year.

Types of depression.

Depression comes in all shapes and sizes, and it can affect everyone differently. Some types of depression share common symptoms, whilst others have key differences. Here's a list of the most common types of depression:

Major Depression

Major depression, also known as major depressive disorder and clinical depression, is often described as a constant sense of hopelessness and despair. Symptoms can range from sleep disturbance, fatigue and disruption to your appetite. These symptoms usually last at least two weeks. There are multiple subtypes of major depression, some of these are outlined below.

- **Melancholia:** Symptoms of melancholia include loss of interest in daily activities and interests, little emotional expression, loss of appetite, poor sleep, and slowness of speech, movement and thought.
- **Psychotic depression:** Psychotic depression is a subtype of major depression, but includes some form of psychosis, a disorder that causes you to lose touch with reality.

- **Antenatal and postnatal depression:**

Symptoms can include feeling overwhelmed, thinking that everything that goes wrong is your fault, finding it hard to get moving or motivated, and changes to your appetite during pregnancy or after giving birth.

Bipolar disorder: If you have bipolar disorder, you might find your mood going from manic highs – with feelings of excitement, impulsivity and high energy – to depressive lows.

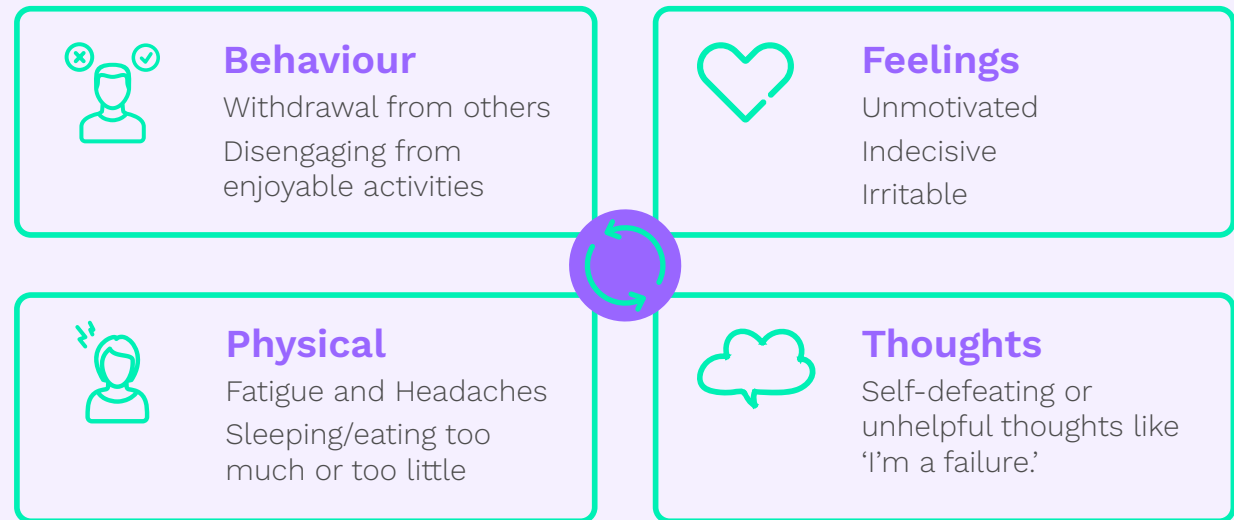
Cyclothymic disorder: Symptoms include chronic fluctuating moods that interfere with your ability to function, and which can last for two years or more. Cyclothymic disorder may increase the risk of bipolar disorder.

Dysthymic disorder: Dysthymic disorder is a chronic form of depression where you may find yourself losing interest in normal activities, experiencing low self-esteem, finding it difficult to be upbeat or feeling hopeless.

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD): Seasonal affective disorder is a form of depression that's linked to the changes in the seasons – often beginning and ending at the time each year. Symptoms can include a lack of energy, overeating, and sleeping too much.

The cycle of depression.

Your signs and symptoms can create a cycle of depression that can make you feel worse, or make it harder to stop feeling depressed. For example, you might feel too low to go for a walk, but going for a walk might help you feel better. Your behaviour, thinking style and response to the world around you and your emotions can often make your symptoms worse.



Common treatment approaches.

Depression is common, and there's a lot of effective treatments that can help. Some treatments may focus on changing your lifestyle and behaviour, while others can focus on changing the way you think to help reduce the impact of depression or help break the cycle of depression.

Talking to a psychologist

There's lots of ways a psychologist can support you if you're experiencing depression, such as

- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to try to change unhelpful thoughts and build your skills to control your depression
- Acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) to help you accept the thoughts and feelings you're experiencing

- Problem solving therapy to control day-to-day struggles
- Behavioural activation to help you feel more motivated
- Interpersonal therapy to address any relationship issues or the expectations of others that might be causing you problems

Medications

In some cases, a medical practitioner may recommend medication in addition to psychological treatment. Remember, you should only be prescribed medication by a registered medical professional. Do not self-medicate. If you self-medicate, you run the risk of incorrect self-diagnosis, potential adverse reactions, worsening of the condition and more.



Causes of depression.

There's no one cause for depression. It usually involves a mixture of external factors, like stressful life events, and internal factors, like your family history and personality type. For example:

- **Abuse:** physical, sexual or emotional abuse are common causes of depression, especially later in life
- **Age:** elderly people may experience depression because of factors such as living alone or lack of social support
- **Conflict:** depending on your personal or individual circumstances and vulnerability, conflict may trigger a depressive disorder
- **Death:** feelings of sadness and grief after losing a loved one may increase your risk of depression
- **Gender:** factors such as pregnancy, post-partum depression and menopause can impact women, while men are most at risk to suicide
- **Genetics:** if your family has a history of depression, there's can be an increased likelihood that you may also suffer from depression
- **Illness:** chronic or terminal illnesses can cause feelings of sadness and despair, triggering depression
- **Life events:** certain life events, such as losing your job, a relationship break up or even moving house may also trigger depression
- **Personal problems:** problems such as being socially isolated or other mental illness can also leave you more at risk of depression
- **Substance use:** a lot of people with alcohol and drug misuse problems also suffer from depression, with drugs and alcohol ultimately making depression symptoms worse

Where to from here?

We all visit our dentist when we have a toothache. The same goes for our physical health and why we schedule appointments with our GP, gynaecologist, physio, chiro, dermatologist, naturopath... the list is endless.

So why treat our mental health and wellbeing any differently?

If you've been stressed or worried for a long time, or longer than normal, then let's talk about it.

Access Psych is here to support you.

Call us on **1800 644 327**

Email **info@accesspsych.com.au**

Website **accesspsych.com.au**

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The information published is not, and should not be relied on as, health or treatment advice. The diagnosis and treatment of any mental illness requires the attention of a physician or other properly qualified mental health professional. If you are seeking diagnosis or treatment of any other mental illness, you should consult a physician or mental health professional. You should not delay in seeking, or disregard, professional health advice because of something you have read in this document.

Resources.



**Black Dog
Institute**

Black Dog Institute

Black Dog Institute is a medical institute in Australia investigating mental health across the lifespan. Their website features the latest research, resources and support services for a range of mental health conditions. For more, visit **blackdoginstitute.org.au**



Beyond Blue

Beyond Blue provide advice and support for anxiety, depression and suicide prevention. They also operate a free helpline. Telephone and online chat services are available 24/7. Phone **1300 224 363** or visit **beyondblue.org.au**



Reachout

Reachout is a mental health service for young people and their parents. The service provides self-help information, peer-support programs and referral tools designed to support young people with mental health concerns. For more, visit **au.reachout.com**

For urgent support.

If there's an immediate risk of harm to yourself or others, please call 000. If you need someone to talk with now, call:

Lifeline: 13 11 14

Beyond Blue: 1300 22 4636 or chat online at **beyondblue.org.au**

Suicide Call Back Service:
1300 659 467

