Depression

Normal feelings vs. depression

We all feel sad or ‘down’ from time to time – it’s part of being human. For young people, it’s normal to have occasional mood swings, feel irritable sometimes, and to be sensitive to rejection and criticism. This can make it harder to tell whether you’re experiencing “normal” feelings or whether you are becoming depressed.

Symptoms of depression

You may be experiencing depression if, for more than two weeks, you’ve felt sad, depressed or irritable most of the time, or you’ve lost interest or pleasure in your usual activities. Other symptoms may include:

- Loss of interest in food or eating too much, leading to weight loss or gain
- Having trouble sleeping (getting to sleep and/or staying asleep), or oversleeping and staying in bed most of the day
- Feeling tired most of the time, or lacking energy and motivation
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Feeling worthless or guilty a lot of the time
- Feeling everything has become ‘too hard’
- Having thoughts of death or suicide

People with depression might have other mental or physical health problems as well, such as anxiety, or using cigarettes, alcohol or illegal drugs excessively.

What is depression?

Depression is one of the most common health issues for young people in Australia.

Depression (“major depression”) is a mental illness characterised by feelings of sadness that lasts longer than usual, affect most parts of your life and stop you enjoying the things that you used to.
Getting help for depression

Even though it may seem hard, it is important to talk with someone that you trust about how you feel. You could talk with a parent, teacher, school counsellor, family member or friend. A general practitioner (GP) is another good place to start when seeking help and information.

Most people are able to recover from depression with the right help. The sooner you get help, the sooner you can recover.

An important part of professional support is often psychological therapy. Psychological (‘talking’) therapy focuses on helping you to build skills to deal with the stresses in your life and change negative thinking patterns. Antidepressant medications can also be added if they are needed. Depending on the type of treatment most people start to feel better or notice an improvement after about two to six weeks.

Depression – suicide and self harm

Depression is one of the main risks for suicide and self harm.

If someone you know is self harming or talking about suicide try to arrange some support from close, trusted friends or family. Help the person be safe and remove dangerous things like tablets, guns or other weapons and try to encourage them to see a health professional. If in doubt, don’t be afraid to call 000.

References:

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