

What are the signs and symptoms?

Men who are depressed are more likely to talk about the physical symptoms of their depression than the emotional and psychological ones. This may be one reason why doctors sometimes don't diagnose it. You may have:

- Headaches and other aches and pains.
- Lack of interest in sex.
- Appetite and/or weight changes.
- Digestive disorders.
- Chronic pain.
- Sleeping difficulties – difficulty in getting to sleep, waking too early in the morning, waking through the night or oversleeping.

If you are depressed, you will probably have several of these signs and symptoms:

- Feelings of dejection and loss or emotional numbness that don't go away and may be worse at a particular time of day, often first thing in the morning.
- Losing interest and pleasure in your usual activities.
- Feeling guilty about things that have nothing to do with you.
- Feeling tired; having no energy.
- Having problems thinking clearly, concentrating or making decisions; being forgetful.
- Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts.

Some other possible symptoms that most of us do not associate with depression are:

- Impatience, irritability and restlessness.
- Anger and hostility toward family, friends, and others.
- Alcohol and/or drug abuse.

Some risk factors for depression in men

- Family history of mood disorders.
- Abuse of drugs or alcohol.
- Personal past history of mood disorders.
- Chronic health problems such as cancer, heart disease or HIV.
- Separation or divorce.
- Major life changes.
- For gay teenagers and young adults the stresses associated with coming out.
- Decreased sexual potency.
- Work stress.
- Retirement.
- Unemployment.

Resources

The Mental Health Foundation has a comprehensive range of information on mental health and wellbeing including pamphlets, books and DVDs for purchase or loan, and our Relax for Health CD is available at a cost of \$15.

The CD is designed to help you relax deeply and leave you feeling refreshed and more energetic. It uses two relaxation methods that have been shown by research to be beneficial to physical and mental health.

Contact us

Resource & Information Service

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www.mentalhealth.org.nz



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Men & Depression



 **Mental Health Foundation**
OF NEW ZEALAND
mauri tū, mauri ora

www.mentalhealth.org.nz

Our vision: a society where all people flourish.

“I was still functioning – just not as well as I used to. I just felt a bit flat and irritable. I suppose I really didn’t think it was bad enough to do anything about it.”

Why is depression different for men?

Depression affects all ages, races, and economic groups and both men and women. It is thought that men experience depression just as often as women, but they are less likely to ask for help and reasons for this include:

- Compared with women, men are more likely to be concerned with being competitive, powerful and successful.
- Most men don’t like to admit that they feel fragile or vulnerable, and so are less likely to talk about their feelings with their family/whānau, friends, or their doctor or health professional.
- Men may feel that it is somehow weak to have to depend on someone else, even for a short time, and think that they should deal with their problems themselves.
- The traditional view that men should be tough and self-reliant is also held by some women. Men may fear that admitting to their depression will result in being rejected by their partner.

What treatment is available?

Depression is not something you can ‘snap out of’. It is important to seek help. Depression can be treated and you are entitled to the help you need. Treatment is usually a combination of two or more of these:

- Talking treatments such as counselling or therapy.
- Drug therapy with antidepressants.
- Complementary and alternative therapies such as yoga, meditation, herbal remedies.
- Sometimes diet changes can help.

Helping yourself

- Try to tell someone how you feel.
- Avoid situations that may contribute to depression.
- Exercise can really help.
- Join a support group.
- Eat a balanced diet with lots of fruit and vegetables.
- Avoid alcohol and illicit drugs – they may provide short-term relief but will make you feel worse in the long run.
- Do something you enjoy.
- Check your lifestyle – are you driving yourself too hard?
- Take a break – try to get away from your normal routine for a few days or even a few hours.
- Use music, yoga, or meditation to help you relax or try the Mental Health Foundation’s Relax for Health CD.
- Learn more about depression – there are many books available or visit our website www.mentalhealth.org.nz

“Once you can recognise depression, with the right support you can find a way through it.”



Getting help

The best place to start is your doctor or health professional.

Get a check-up to see if there are physical problems or medicines that are causing your depression.

Your health care provider can help you get the treatment you need.

Talk to someone who can support you to find help for your depression.

- Friends or family/whānau.
- Religious or spiritual support services.
- Your local Citizen’s Advice Bureau will be able to tell you about support services in your area.
- Marae based community support services.
- Culturally based community support services.

If you really feel that you can’t talk about it with anyone you know, there are telephone help lines which give you the opportunity to discuss things anonymously.

Lifeline (operates 24 hours a day)

0800 LIFELINE, 0800 543 354 (outside Auckland)
(09) 522 2999 (Auckland)

Youthline (operates 24 hours a day)

0800 376 633 (National)
(09) 376 6645 (Auckland)
234 (free text – between 8am and midnight)

“I was down for ages after we broke up. After a while I knew I was over it and ready to move on, but no matter what I did, the sadness wouldn’t go away.”