

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; 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.
- Occupational stress.
- Retirement.
- Unemployment.

Further Information

The Mental Health Foundation can provide further information and has a number of books and videos on depression for purchase or loan. Phone, fax, email or visit the Resource Centre or look at the website.

Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand
PO Box 10051, Dominion Road, Auckland 1446
81 New North Road, Eden Terrace, Auckland 1021
Phone: 09 300 7010 Fax: 09 300 7020
Resource Centre phone: 09 300 7030
Email: info@mentalhealth.org.nz
Website: www.mentalhealth.org.nz

If you think you may have depression or would like further information or support:

- talk to your doctor or health professional
- phone your local mental health service – numbers are in the front of the phone book under 'Hospitals and Other Health Service Providers.'

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Out of the Blue



Men and Depression

*Working to improve the mental health of all people
and communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.*

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.

- 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/whanau, 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.

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.

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

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:

- drug therapy with antidepressants
- talking treatments such as counselling or therapy
- 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 which 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 because 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 CD.
- Learn more about depression – there are many books available or visit the Out of the Blue/Kia Marama website – www.outoftheblue.org.nz



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/whanau.
- 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 24 hour telephone help lines which can give you the opportunity to discuss things anonymously.

Mensline (operates from 5.30pm to 11pm each evening)
0800 MENSLINE, 0800 636 754 (outside Auckland)
(09) 522 2500 (Auckland)

Lifeline (operates 24 hours a day)
0800 LIFELINE, 0800 543 354 (outside Auckland)
(09) 522 2999 (Auckland)

Youthline (operates 11am to 11pm every day)
0800 543 354 (outside Auckland)
(09) 376 6633