



Depression

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This factsheet provides information on depression and services that can offer support to people who are experiencing depression.

What is depression?

People often say "I'm feeling depressed" when they feel sad or hopeless about life. It is normal to feel this way sometimes, particularly when we experience difficult things, and these feelings should pass with time. However, if feelings of sadness and hopelessness are interfering with your life and don't disappear after a couple of weeks, or they keep coming back, this may be a sign that you are medically depressed.

Clinical depression is classified in terms of its effect on your daily life – it may be mild, moderate or severe. One example is dysthymia, which is continuous mild depression that lasts for two years or more. In its most severe form, depression can become life-threatening as it can induce suicidal feelings and make someone lose their will to live or take care of themselves. People do not necessarily experience the same level of depression indefinitely – their symptoms may also change with time.

As well as clinical depression, there are other specific diagnoses that you may receive. These include postnatal depression, bipolar disorder (previously called "manic depression") and seasonal affective disorder. Depression is also commonly "comorbid" with anxiety, which means people experience both depression and anxiety together. Please see our other factsheets for more information on these other conditions.

It is important to remember that depression is not a sign of weakness and that you are not alone in experiencing it. Mixed anxiety and depression is the most common mental disorder in Britain, while one in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem in any given year. Women are more likely to be diagnosed with depression than men, but this may be due to social stigma against men acknowledging and expressing their emotions. This stigma is also a factor in men being more likely to complete suicide.

How is depression diagnosed?

If you think you may be depressed, your first port of call should be your GP. They will go through a questionnaire called the PHQ-9 with you. This consists of nine questions about aspects of your wellbeing **over the last two weeks**. Your GP will ask you to mark out of three how regularly you have been experiencing the following symptoms (where 0 = not at all, 1 = several days, 2 = more than half the days and 3 = nearly every day):

1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things
2. Feeling down, depressed or hopeless
3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much
4. Feeling tired or having little energy
5. Poor appetite or overeating
6. Feeling bad about yourself – or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down
7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television
8. Moving or speaking so slowly that other people could have noticed, or the opposite – being so fidgety or restless that you have been moving around a lot more than usual
9. Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way

They will use the total score to assess the severity of your depression. Question nine is particularly important – if you answer either 1, 2 or 3 for this question, your GP will ask you about these feelings and how severely they have been affecting you. Your GP should also consider your medical history, any physical causes of depression and whether you've been recently bereaved.

Different people experience and express mental health issues differently, so may exhibit symptoms besides those listed above. These could include tearfulness, anxiety, guilt, irritability, anger, low motivation, struggling to make decisions, difficulties in their work or home life or withdrawing socially. Depression can also manifest in physical symptoms like constipation, unexplained aches and pains, lack of energy, low sex drive (loss of libido) or changes to your menstrual cycle.

What causes depression?

There are many reasons why someone may become depressed. Here are some of the factors that may play a role in a person developing depression:

- ✿ A genetic predisposition to get depression
- ✿ Physical health problems, such as underactive thyroid or lack of sleep
- ✿ Experiencing trauma or abuse, particularly in childhood
- ✿ Social disadvantage, e.g. poverty, being discriminated against, isolation
- ✿ Painful life events, such as bereavement, relationship breakdown, losing your job or severe illness
- ✿ Substance abuse

Note that none of these factors guarantee that someone will become depressed, nor are they the only possible contributing factors. There may even be no clear reason for someone becoming depressed – this does not make their difficulties less valid.

What kinds of support are available?

If you feel that you may be depressed, your first port of call should be your GP. They can assess your condition and offer appropriate treatments. For more information and advice on your first GP appointment, please see the following webpage: <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/gp-visit-guide>

Your GP may offer you medication for your depression. Mind in Harrow is not able to offer specific advice on medication and you should always ask your GP, psychiatrist or nurse prescriber if you have questions or concerns. National Mind has produced the following webpage containing general information about medication: <http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/drugs-and-treatments/medication/>

Your GP may also offer you talking therapies, such as CBT (cognitive behavioural therapy) or counselling. If your condition is more severe they may refer you to another NHS service, such as a community mental health team. You can read more about local NHS services on our “[Accessing NHS Mental Health Services](#)” factsheet or find out about the Harrow Talking Therapies Service below.

If you are in crisis and need urgent help with your mental health, please read our “[Help in a mental health crisis](#)” factsheet for advice. If you think you may act on suicidal feelings or you have seriously harmed yourself, you can go to any hospital A&E department (including Northwick Park Hospital) and ask for help or call 999 and ask for an ambulance.

Mind in Harrow's services

The Support & Wellbeing Information Service Harrow (SWiSH) can provide information and advice to anyone in Harrow aged 18 years or over – those looking for support for themselves, as well as carers and staff in local organisations. It offers information or advice about a wide range of local services, including those that can help people with depression. SWiSH is available via the contact details above from Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 5pm. SWiSH can also offer one-to-one sessions to provide information and guidance if you prefer to speak to someone in a confidential setting. To arrange an appointment please call or email stating the reasons why you would prefer an appointment.

Local NHS mental health services

The Single Point of Access (SPA)

www.cnwl.nhs.uk/service/single-point-of-access

Tel: 0800 0234 650 | Email: cnw-tr.spa@nhs.net

The Single Point of Access (SPA) is the first point of contact for people in Harrow, Brent, Hillingdon, Kensington & Chelsea and Westminster who want to access the NHS's adult mental health services. It can be contacted for routine enquiries or emergency support 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days per year. The SPA team consists of qualified clinicians who are knowledgeable about different services and options. They can provide advice and guidance as well as book appointments for new clients to see the community mental health teams in Harrow.

If you are Deaf or have a hearing impairment, you can use TypeTalk to access SPA on 18001 0800 0234 650. If you would like to talk to the service in another language, SPA can organise a telephone interpreting service when you call. If you need an interpreter for other NHS services please discuss this with the professional you are seeing.

Harrow Talking Therapies

cnwl-iapt.uk

12-14 Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex, HA1 2SL

Tel: 020 8515 5015 / 020 8515 5016 | Email: harrow.iapt@nhs.net

Harrow Talking Therapies is a free, confidential service that provides psychological treatment for depression and anxiety disorders. They offer two levels of treatment: Step 2, treatments lasting for up to 6 sessions covering issues that have arisen relatively recently, and Step 3, treatments lasting 8-12 sessions aimed at longer term difficulties.

People seeking help with difficulties other than depression or anxiety, or who require more specialist or intensive treatment, can be directed to appropriate services.

You can refer yourself to this service (if over the age of 18 and registered with a GP in Harrow) or ask your GP or other health professional to refer you. Either get in contact via the details above or visit the website and complete the online self-referral form. The service is available Monday to Friday from 9am-5pm. Late appointments are available on Mondays from 5pm-8pm. Appointments at 8am are available on request.

For full details of CNWL NHS mental health services, please see our “[Accessing NHS Mental Health Services](#)” factsheet.

Local charities that support people with depression

Please see our other factsheets and directory for details of other specialised services (e.g. those addressing bereavement, those that are aligned with particular faiths, those that support people with specific types of depression or other mental health issues, etc.)

Harrow Carers

www.harrowcarers.org

376-378 Pinner Road, Harrow, HA2 6DZ

Tel: 020 8858 5224 | Email: admin@harrowcarers.org

Harrow Carers provides support to those who are caring for people with mental health difficulties as well as supporting all carers with their mental health needs. Their services include one-to-one support, information sessions, courses, drop-in sessions, support groups, counselling and respite.

Harrow Rethink Support Groups

www.rethink.org/services-groups/groups/harrow-rethink-support-group

c/o 58 Canons Drive, Edgware, HA8 7RD

Tel: 07761 417879 (Jennifer) | 07976 759 968 (Mary) | 07760 127693 (Ann)

Email: harrowsupportgroup@rethink.org

Harrow Rethink offers advice, help, mutual support and access to all kinds of information to help everyone affected by mental illness. They seek to influence local mental health policies on local committees and attend meetings to help improve mental health services. They produce a monthly newsletter distributed electronically and by post and offer a number of support groups:

- ✿ A monthly support meeting: includes speakers on relevant mental health topics and practical issues
- ✿ Don't Fret: a beginners/intermediate guitar group

- ✿ More Than Just A Choir: a community choir that aims to improve the quality of life and wellbeing of mental health service users
- ✿ Munch & Mingle: lunch and chat
- ✿ The Other Group {TOG}: a social & activity group

Yakeen Counselling Project

www.dawncharitabletrust.com/yakeen

1 St Kilda's Road, Harrow, HA1 1QD

Tel: 020 8427 6796 | Email: Yakeen_dawn@yahoo.co.uk

Counselling for Asian men and women aged 18 and over, free to those living in Harrow. Counselling for women is available from 10am to 4pm Monday to Friday and 5pm-7pm Wednesday to Thursday. Counselling for men is available on Tuesdays from 5pm to 7pm. Yakeen also offer a support group, workshops and group counselling.

Helplines providing emotional support

Calling a helpline give you an opportunity to talk through your problems and get confidential emotional support. You do not have to be suicidal or have a diagnosed mental health condition to call. You can also call if you are worried about someone else.

CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)

www.thecalmzone.net

National helpline: 0800 58 58 58 | London helpline: 0808 802 58 58

CALM exists to prevent male suicide in the UK. They run helpline services for men who are down or have hit a wall for any reason, who need to talk or find information and support. They also offer a webchat service via their website. This and both of its helplines are open 5pm-midnight every day of the year.

National Samaritans

www.samaritans.org.uk

National Freephone Number: 116 123 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)

You can also email jo@samaritans.org if you do not need to talk urgently – they aim to respond to emails within 24 hours.

Harrow Samaritans

www.samaritans.org/branches/harrow-samaritans

Tel: 020 8427 7777 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)

You can also visit Harrow Samaritans in person between 10am and 9pm Sunday to Friday, 10am to 6pm Saturday, at 44 Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2SQ (almost opposite Harrow Civic Centre). There are disabled toilets and wheelchair access for visitors.

SANE Helpline

[www.sane.org.uk/what we do/support](http://www.sane.org.uk/what_we_do/support)

Tel: 0300 304 7000

SANE runs a national, out-of-hours mental health helpline offering specialist emotional support and information to anyone affected by mental illness, including family, friends and carers. The helpline is open every day of the year from 4.30pm to 10.30pm.

SupportLine

www.supportline.org.uk

PO Box 2850, Romford, Essex RM7 1JA

Tel: 01708 755200 (hours vary, ring for details) | Email: info@supportline.org.uk

SupportLine provides a confidential telephone helpline offering emotional support to any individual on any issue. It also provides help via email and post. The helpline aims to support people before they reach the point of crisis. It is particularly aimed at those who are socially isolated, vulnerable, at risk groups and victims of any form of abuse.

Other national services

Depression Support Group Association

www.depressionalternatives.co.uk

37b New Cavendish Street, London, W1G 8JR

Tel: 020 7328 8391 (answerphone only)

The Depression Support Group Association (DSGA) provides groups, programmes and individual therapies to help people who experience depression and related issues.

Depression UK

www.depressionuk.org

PO Box 10566, Nottingham, NG13 8LU

Tel: 0870 7744 320 (only for information about D-UK) | Email: info@depressionuk.org

Depression UK is a self-help organisation that helps people cope with their depression.

Mind InfoLine

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines

Mind Infoline, Unit 9, Cefn Coed Parc, Nantgarw, Cardiff, CF15 7QQ

Tel: 0300 123 3393 | Text: 86463 | Email: info@mind.org.uk

The Infoline provides information on a range of topics including types of mental health problem, where to get help, medication and alternative treatments, advocacy and details of help and support in your own area. Their lines are open 9am to 6pm, Monday to Friday (except for bank holidays).

Online sources of information and support

Elefriends, Mind's online support community: www.elefriends.org.uk

Friends in Need, an online community for people affected by depression:
www.friendsinneed.co.uk

The Mental Health Foundation: www.mentalhealth.org.uk

Mind's information on depression: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/depression/

Moodjuice depression self-help guide: <http://www.moodjuice.scot.nhs.uk/depression.asp>

YoungMinds, for information on depression in young people and children:
www.youngminds.org.uk

**Please call Mind in Harrow on 020 8426 0929
for a large print version of this factsheet or a summary translation.**



Mind in Harrow's Mental Health Information Service is a part of SWiSH, a consortium of five local charities, offering the local Care Act Information & Advice Service for Harrow residents, funded by the Council. www.harrowca.org.uk

This factsheet was produced by Mind in Harrow

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