

Depression Information Document

What is Depression?

Depression is a low mood that lasts for a long time, and affects your everyday life.

Depression is more than simply feeling unhappy or fed up for a few days. Most people go through periods of feeling down, but when you're depressed you feel persistently sad for weeks or months, rather than just a few days.

Depression is not just feeling down for long periods of time, it is a complex variety of different mental and physical symptoms which affect your everyday life. This can include symptoms from tiredness to irritability and lack of sleep.

In its mildest form, depression can mean just being in low spirits. It doesn't stop you leading your normal life but makes everything harder to do and seem less worthwhile. At its most severe, depression can be life-threatening because it can make you feel suicidal.

Types of depression

If you are given a diagnosis of depression, you might be told that you have mild, moderate or severe depression. This describes what sort of impact your symptoms are having on you currently, and what sort of treatment you're likely to be offered. You might move between different mild, moderate and severe depression during one episode of depression or across different episodes.

Symptoms of Depression

How you might feel:

- Down, upset or tearful
- Restless, agitated or irritable
- Guilty, worthless and down on yourself
- Empty and numb
- Isolated and unable to relate to other people
- Finding no pleasure in life or things you usually enjoy
- A sense of unreality
- No self-confidence or self-esteem
- Hopeless and despairing
- Suicidal

How you might behave:

- Avoiding social events and activities you usually enjoy
- Self-harming or suicidal behaviour
- Difficulty speaking, thinking clearly or making decisions
- Losing interest in sex
- Difficulty remembering or concentrating on things
- Using more tobacco, alcohol or other drugs than usual
- Difficulty sleeping, or sleeping too much
- Feeling tired all the time
- No appetite and losing weight, or eating too much and gaining weight
- Physical aches and pains with no obvious physical cause
- Moving very slowly, or being restless and agitated

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Psychosis

People who experience severe depression that goes untreated may also experience psychotic symptoms. This can include:

- Delusions, such as paranoia e.g. believing you have done something terrible
- Hallucinations, for example hearing voices

Psychosis can be very frightening and upsetting as the delusions and hallucinations may feel very real. It is important to seek medical help if you are experiencing it.

Self-Harm and Suicide

Some experiencing depression may use self-harm as a way of coping with difficult feelings. Although this may give you temporary relief, in the long term it can be very dangerous and make you feel a lot worse.

When you're feeling extremely low and hopeless, it is not uncommon to find yourself considering suicide. Whether you're only thinking about the idea or planning ways to end your life, these thoughts can be very frightening and difficult to control. They are also incredibly difficult and overwhelming to talk about.

If you feel you are a risk to yourself you can call 999 for an ambulance or go straight to your nearest Accident & Emergency. Do not feel that you are a burden or do not deserve help, mental health emergencies are just as serious as any other emergency.

Isolation

It can sometimes be hard to explain your thoughts and feelings to others. You might find it difficult to talk about your depression and instead you might cut yourself off from other people. The more overwhelming your symptoms, the more isolated and lonely you might become.

Without treatment and support, depression can have an impact on your relationships, work, finances and overall health, so it's important to get help as early as possible.

Anxiety

Those experiencing depression also often experience anxiety too. Anxiety can include:

- Feeling restless
- Being agitated
- Overwhelming feelings of fear
- Feeling like something terrible will happen
- Struggling to sleep and eat

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Causes of Depression

- Childhood experiences e.g. abuse, neglect, grief traumatic events or an unstable family situation
- Life events e.g. major life changes, being physically or sexually assaulted or losing your job
- Other mental health problems e.g. anxiety, PTSD or eating disorders
- Physical health problems e.g. chronic or life-threatening physical health problems
- Genetic inheritance – having a close family member with depression may increase your risk of having it
- Medical, recreational drugs and alcohol
- Some types of medication can cause depression as a side effect, check the medication information leaflet or talk to your doctor if started feeling depressed after taking new medication
- Alcohol and recreational drugs can both cause depression, although they may make you feel better at first they are worse for you in the long term
- Sleep, diet and exercise e.g. sleeping badly, eating badly or not enough and exercising

Treatment

- See our document 'What to Do If You Are Experiencing Mental Health Problems' for guidance on how to get medical or psychological help if you speak little English

Counselling

- Counselling is usually recommended for those experiencing moderate to severe depression
- The most common form of counselling for depression is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), which helps you to understand the connection between your thoughts, feelings and behaviours and offers practical steps on how to change your behaviour
- If you have limited English you may be able to have access to a professional interpreter.

Self-Help

- See the section below on what self-help is and how to practice it
- Self-help can be useful for those with mild to severe depression

Medication

- People who experience moderate to severe depression often take antidepressants; this may be for months, years or a lifetime
- Antidepressants carry a strong stigma and are seen as a last resort by some, but they are widely taken and can be highly effective and allow many to live a normal life

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Self Help

Self-help is a way of improving your mood by taking practical steps to improve your wellbeing and can be done without the help of a professional. When done correctly, self-help can make a significant difference to someone experiencing depression.

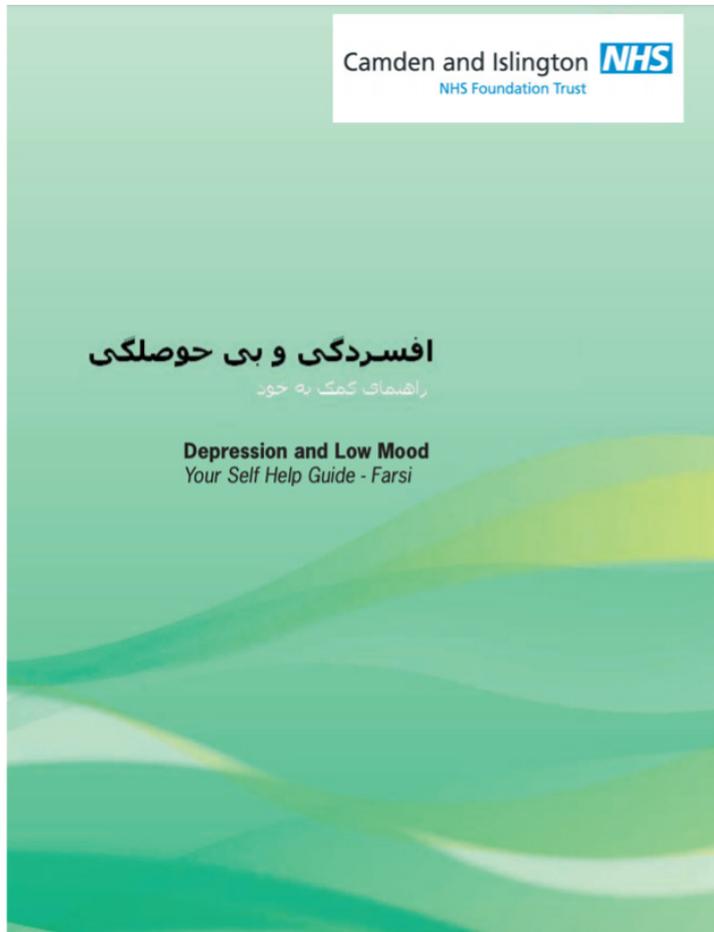
However, it is not necessarily a replacement for professional help, particularly for those with long-term or more severe depression. Moreover, experiencing depression means that taking the step of starting self-help or maintaining it can be extremely challenging and is too difficult for many.

NHS Self-Help Guide

Most NHS counselling for depression begins with guided self-help techniques to improve your mood. However, if you have limited English it can be difficult to understand the counselling or to find an interpreter to help you.

This NHS self-help guide below which has been translated into Farsi is a good start if you want to try self-help. There is also a similar guide in the 'Online Resources in Farsi' section at the end of this document which teaches self-help for anxiety.

<http://hereisthetranslation.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/25-draft-depression-2012-farsi-final.pdf>



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Here are some basic forms of self-help and self-care:

Talk to someone you trust:

It might feel hard to start talking about how you are feeling, but many people find that just sharing their experiences can help them feel better. It may be that just having someone listen to you and show they care can help in itself.

Mindfulness:

Mindfulness can be helpful for some people experiencing depression. It is a practice that allows you to give your full attention to the present moment and can clear your mind. It can also help you understand the way you think and feel

If you have a basic level of English, apps like Headspace and Calm offer free mindfulness sessions. If your level of English isn't good enough, meditation and mindfulness courses can be found on YouTube in other languages, for example by searching with the English key words 'farsi', 'mindfulness' and 'meditation' or by searching in Farsi.

Maintaining Your Physical Health:

- Try to get good sleep. For lots of people who experience depression, sleeping too little or too much can be a daily problem. Getting good sleep can help to improve your mood and increase your energy levels.
- Think about your diet. Eating regularly and keeping your blood sugar stable can make a difference to your mood and energy levels.
- Try to do some physical activity. Many people find exercise a challenge but activities like yoga, swimming or walking can be a big boost to your mood. Exercise is considered to be a natural antidepressant and is one of the most powerful ways to improve your mood and self confidence. If you don't feel confident doing exercise, you could start off with smaller activities - such as gentle chair-based exercises in your own home - and build from there.
- Try to look after your hygiene. When you're experiencing depression, it's easy for hygiene to not feel like a priority. But small things, like taking a shower and getting fully dressed whether or not you're going out of the house, can make a big difference to how you feel.
- Try to avoid recreational drugs and alcohol. While you might want to use recreational drugs or alcohol to cope with difficult feelings about yourself, in the long run they can make you feel worse and can prevent you from dealing with underlying problems.

Stay Active and Maintain Hobbies:

When you are depressed, seeing people and being active may be the last thing you feel like doing and you may avoid doing activities you used to enjoy because you don't think you'll get any pleasure from doing them or because you feel too tired.

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However, not doing the activities you enjoy can lead to a cycle of avoidance and low mood. Doing things you enjoy and that get you out of the house can improve your mood and boost your confidence.

Try joining a group – This could be a community group, sports club or a hobby group

- The ACAA offers community groups like the Women's Tea Corner, ESOL for Integration Classes and the Older People's Social Club (to find out more or sign up for one of these groups call 0208 572 0300)
- The ACAA's 'Be Healthy! Be Fit!' classes also allow you to be active and get fit as part of a group of other migrants (to sign up for this class call Ms Arzo Naubahar on 07450 081 657 or email esolmitcham@afghanistan-central-asian.org.uk)
- You may wish to re-join a group that you left due to your depression, or join a new group

Try new things

- Trying new hobbies, sports or other activities can help change unhelpful thought patterns or behaviours
- Sometimes it is easier to start a new activity than to restart one that you were doing when you started feeling depressed

Try volunteering

- Helping others can be very rewarding and improve your mood, as well as giving you a sense of achievement and self-worth
- Try contacting your local Volunteer Centre or search the Charity 'Do-It' to find opportunities, or contact a charity directly
- Some charities involved with migrants and refugees take on volunteers for mentoring schemes or are interested in volunteers who speak other languages

Set realistic goals

- Try to set yourself achievable goals like getting dressed or cooking meals, or sign up for a group activity, but don't be hard on yourself if you can't.
- Try making a schedule or list of activities for the next day, just very small goals that you know you can achieve. For example:
 - 8am: Get out of bed
 - 8.30am: Have a shower
 - 12pm: Eat lunch
 - 2pm: Go for a walk
 - 6pm: Make dinner
 - 10pm: Go to bed
- If the goals you have set yourself are too difficult, reduce them. If they are very easy, increase them. Some days it will be harder to achieve your goals than others

Keep a mood diary

- Writing down your thoughts and feelings can help you to understand what triggers your depression and which activities, places, or people makes you feel better

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Online Resources in Farsi

Royal College of Psychiatry mental health information
<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/translations>

Information about different mental health problems, including depression and anxiety
<https://embracementalhealth.org.au/translated-content>

Depression: What You Need to Know
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SxJY2kn4sseSsB3xp-O8X6TB1aly6vlt/view>

Depression: How to Cope
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1SxJY2kn4sseSsB3xp-O8X6TB1aly6vlt/view>

Depression: How to Discuss it with your Doctor
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_j-DIzCmssl8jf9xIEZYscmKQWdk2A3g/view

Depression: Post-Partum
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1c5jy4mDtQMUfpKZhkKVRgElHlt71Udd-/view>

Depression: Preventing Relapse
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V_eU5AM8BVjCWjh6gTS3BU4E6y08b42L/view

Suicide: What You Need to Know
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1jnnyzNEc1VSunJqU5M6qVDpcVCoyw7ky/view>

Psychosis: What You Need to Know
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qyW75f30ernm9HGYQG7BIUkTy1kK9WxU/view>

Children's and Adolescents' Mental Health
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iqGJ6xsQiEEEobEaCgID4DHI3h9_SBgC/view

Stigma and Mental Illness
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vkmtwCGwpZtNCssqv2XAZfdeMBnsz6qs/view>

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<http://hereisthetranslation.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/25-draft-depression-2012-farsi-final.pdf>

Stress and Worry Self-Help Guide
http://hereisthetranslation.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/27-draft_stress_and_worry-farsi-2012-final2.pdf

Wellness
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1umQjfBw8YldGUqdmEJAwnVVLamMc7jw5/view>

Mindfulness
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_jyJTEfe2536p_u2rbQaFAhArkkcv3U6/view

Eating and Living Well
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1umQjfBw8YldGUqdmEJAwnVVLamMc7jw5/view>



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Healthy Thinking

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UNhdki_tWVH3Ka6V86-Cw1nsVY3S6HNS/view

Problem Solving

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1B5cBv6KtygtoZelN8IX831nb20X5Tobh/view>

Sleeping Well

https://drive.google.com/file/d/17qJ_jD8KN48u7S45T0MJPr6PAvZAZczv/view

Dealing with Anger

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nyQcG-yDEjh-Fz1OvbpuY4MqZJoQq8mJ/view>