

# Treatment of Depression



## Key points to remember:

- Treatment for depression includes medical and psychological treatments.
- Different types of depression respond best to different treatments.

There are a number of different treatments for depression depending on varying factors including the type of depression you have, the severity of your depression, your symptoms, what is currently happening in your life, your personality and your preferences. The decision regarding the best treatment option for you, should be discussed with your general practitioner and/or a mental health professional.

In general there are two different types of treatment:

- Medical treatments
- Psychological treatments

## 1. Medical treatments

The most common medical treatment for depression is medication. There are three groups of drugs most likely to be used for depression:

- anti-depressants
- anti-psychotics
- mood stabilisers

### Anti-Depressants

There are many different types of antidepressants which have been shown to be effective, however they vary in their effectiveness for different people.

The three most common types of antidepressants include: Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs),

Serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs), Tricyclics (TCAs) and Irreversible Monoamine Oxidase Inhibitors (MAOIs).

Deciding which anti-depressant may be best for each person can be complex. After a thorough assessment, the health professional should be able to identify the type of depression you have, its likely causes and identify the best type of medication. Anti-depressants usually take between two to four weeks before you will start to feel better. It may also take some time for the doctor to find the most suitable medication and dosage.

Importantly not all depression requires medication and often depression will respond to psychological interventions alone.

### **Anti-psychotics and mood stabilisers**

People with more severe forms of depressive episodes (including bipolar disorder and psychosis) may need to be treated with one or a combination of mood stabilisers, anti-psychotic drugs and anti-depressants.

### **Electric convulsive Therapy (ECT)**

Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) is a procedure used to treat certain severe mental-health conditions.

Despite a controversial history, modern day ECT is a relatively safe procedure with only short-term side

effects. Research indicated it is effective in relieving symptoms of

severe mental health disorders.

However as it is an intrusive procedure, ECT should only be used when absolutely necessary.

## **2. Psychological Treatments**

There are many types of effective psychological treatments for depression. The main psychological treatments include:

- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
- Interpersonal Therapy (IPT)
- Mindfulness Meditation

Psychological treatments can assist you to change your thinking patterns and improve your coping skills so that you are better able to manage life's stresses. Psychological therapy can be an effective stand-alone treatment or be used in conjunction with medication.

### **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy**

CBT is a structured psychological treatment that shows people how their thoughts (cognitions) affects the way they feel. People with depression often view themselves and the world around them negatively. CBT works to assist people to identify and change their thoughts and subsequent behaviour by teaching you to think rationally, helping you to shift negative or unhelpful thought patterns and reactions and change them to

thoughts that are more realistic and helpful.

CBT is one of the most effective treatments for depression. Research suggests it is useful for people of all ages.

### **Interpersonal Therapy**

IPT is a structured psychological therapy that focuses on improving people's interpersonal skill so that they are better able to manage problems in their personal relationships. One of the goals of IPT is to assist people to identify and understand how relationship problems can have a significant effect on the development of depression.

### **Mindfulness Meditation**

Mindfulness meditation teaches people to be aware of and focus on the present moment – noticing whatever it is they are experiencing with no judgement and without trying to change it.

Mindfulness often begins by focusing on physical sensations (e.g. breathing, five senses) and then gradually increases to thoughts and feelings.

In addition to medical and psychological treatments, there are also a wide-range of alternative therapies and self-help measures which may be useful in managing your depression.

### **Where to get more information**

***Australian Psychology and Wellness Centre*** Ph 02 66993820

[www.apawc.com.au](http://www.apawc.com.au)

### **Medication information:**

[www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au)

**Blackdog Institute** also has many resources and factsheets on alternative therapies.

The information in this document is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. This document may be downloaded without charge and distributed on condition that no changes are made.



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