

# There are people trained to help you through

**An episode of depression can last for a long time, months or even years, if left untreated. Help is available from a number of health professionals and services, and there are various treatment options available to you (see Fact Sheet 16). It's important to find the right health professional, and the right treatment or combination of treatments, for you.**

If you aren't satisfied with the help you are getting from your current health professional(s), you don't have to keep seeing that person. You have the right to choose a health professional you are happy with.

Depression varies from person to person. While some people will only have one episode of severe depression, about half of those who have one episode will experience depression again. Depression is often accompanied by other emotional and physical health problems, and many people with depression have problems with alcohol and drugs, which can make the depression worse. Treatment may need to be sought for the alcohol and drug problems as well as the depression.

## + what treatments are available?

There are often a number of components in treating depression, depending on how serious it is. To know what might be best for you, your health professional will ask a number of questions about the nature of your depression and talk to you about your treatment options. See Fact Sheet 16. Treatment can include:

- Support and advice about self-help techniques.
- Antidepressant drugs for moderate and severe depression.
- Psychological treatments (talking therapies) for moderate and severe depression.

## If you want to talk to someone who can help:

Call the Depression Helpline on **0800 111 757**

Text The Lowdown team for free on **5626**

Or talk to your doctor

- Psychological treatments and/or ongoing drug treatments between acute episodes to prevent relapse.
- Support and advice about how to prevent relapse.
- Treatment of associated problems such as substance abuse or anxiety.

Often people need immediate drug treatment to get better and then ongoing drug and psychological treatment to continue to improve and then to stay well. There are also many self-help strategies a person can use which can be effective in preventing relapse and staying well. See Fact Sheet 9 - Managing depression and preventing relapse.

## + who can help?

### DOCTOR

A visit to your doctor or general practitioner (GP) is often the first step in getting help for physical or mental health problems. You may want to take a friend or family member with you for support. It can be helpful to write a list of your symptoms to take with you and what things you have tried that might have helped/not helped for discussion with the doctor. It's also important to let your doctor know if you are already taking other medicines or herbal remedies. This is particularly important if you are taking the herbal remedy St John's Wort, which can interact with other medicines.

Your doctor can assess how serious your depression is and help you work out the best treatment option(s) and he can prescribe medication if necessary. Some doctors will make sure they allow extra time if they know you want to talk about mental health issues, so tell the receptionist when you book the appointment that you want extra time. Your doctor may refer you to a specialist, such as a counsellor, >

➤ psychologist or psychiatrist. There may also be a mental health worker or nurse employed by your GP practice, who is trained to deliver talking therapy or counselling.

Your doctor can also give you a Green Prescription, which will give you advice on lifestyle options and enable you to access community programmes for physical activity. This can be helpful alongside other treatment, or if your depression is mild, it can be sufficient to help you through the depression.

Your doctor will usually start with one treatment at a time, and then make regular appointments to see you and check your response to the treatment(s), until your symptoms have improved.

The cost of visiting a GP in New Zealand depends on your age, where you live, and your income, but for those who have to pay, it is usually between \$40 and \$60 for a 15 minute appointment.

## COUNSELLOR

There are different types of counselling, but in general, counsellors can help you with relationship and work-based problems, and support you to solve them. They will often be trained in a number of different therapeutic approaches. Some counselling is available free or subsidised, and your doctor can sometimes refer you to a counsellor for a particular reason.

Many schools have school guidance counsellors who can provide support to students, and there are also secondary school-based health clinics and/or youth one-stop shops in some areas. People who have been sexually assaulted or abused can access counselling through ACC.

Many workplaces provide a limited number of free counselling sessions for staff who are having personal or work-related difficulties under Employee Assistance Programmes (EAP). Relationship counselling can be accessed through the courts for couples who are considering separating.

Your local Citizen's Advice Bureau can often provide information about availability and access arrangements for community based services.

Counsellors seeing private clients will charge between \$60 and \$100 for an hour long session.

## PSYCHOLOGIST

Psychologists are health professionals who specialise in human behaviour and how to manage emotional problems. They would first assess the nature of your depression and look for what may have contributed to its development. You may be asked to keep a diary of your thoughts, feelings and behaviour which can help to pinpoint particular problems and point to solutions. Psychologists provide talking therapies aimed at managing emotional problems. One of the best known and effective talking therapy for depression is called cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) which most psychologists are able to offer, but they may use different therapies, depending on your needs.

Psychologists are not medical doctors and cannot prescribe medication in New Zealand.

The cost of visiting a psychologist privately in NZ is from \$120 for an hour long session. Free or subsidised sessions with psychologists are available in some circumstances. For example, GP practices may be able to offer free or subsidised talking therapy for people with depression and anxiety.

## PSYCHIATRIST

Psychiatrists are medical doctors who have completed many years of extra training in mental health, and specialise in this area. They can make psychiatric and medical assessments, conduct medical tests and prescribe medication for mental health problems. Some have also received additional training in talking therapies and can use this alongside medication. The cost of visiting a psychiatrist privately in NZ is from \$160 an hour.

## SPECIALIST COMMUNITY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

There are community mental health services throughout NZ, which provide free specialist services for people with severe depression and related mental health problems. You can find these services in the White Pages of your phone book, or contact your local District Health Board for information about accessing these services. The Depression Helpline on 0800 111 757 can provide personal help in finding the right local services for you.

## CRISIS ASSESSMENT TEAMS

Crisis assessment teams provide emergency psychiatric care in the community to people experiencing a mental health crisis. The person can often be assessed and treated in a community setting; however if the person is potentially a danger to themselves or others, they may be admitted to hospital. In an emergency you can contact your nearest Crisis Assessment Team by calling your local hospital, or you can call the Depression Helpline on 0800 111 757.

## PUBLIC HOSPITALS

Some public hospitals have their own mental health units, which are part of the hospital or close by. If a person is experiencing severe depression and is at risk of harming themselves or others, it may be necessary for them to spend time in hospital.

## +getting help

**If you are not sure about how to get help for depression or anxiety, or what services are available in your community:**

- Call the Depression Helpline on 0800 111 757
- Text The Lowdown team for free on 5626

They can listen to your story, and come up with ideas about what might help. They can also put you in touch with health professionals close to where you live, if that's what you want.

**Or for more information you can visit:**

**[www.depression.org.nz](http://www.depression.org.nz) or [www.thelowdown.co.nz](http://www.thelowdown.co.nz)**

The Ministry of Health would like to acknowledge information sourced from: NZ Mental Health Survey 2006, NZ Guidelines Group, Royal Australian and NZ College of Psychiatrists, MaGPIe Research Group, Beyond Blue (Australia).

For more information and fact sheets visit  
**[www.depression.org.nz](http://www.depression.org.nz)**

[newzealand.govt.nz](http://newzealand.govt.nz)