

Patient information factsheet

Coping with depression when you have a heart condition

For some people, a diagnosis of a heart condition can lead to feelings of low mood. While it is normal to experience some difficult feelings as you adjust to life after your diagnosis, many people find that those feelings improve over time. If the feelings don't improve, this can sometimes be a sign of depression.

This factsheet explains how to spot the symptoms of depression and how to get help. We hope it helps to answer some of your questions.

What is depression?

Depression is a low or flat mood that lasts for weeks or months and affects your daily life. It can affect how you feel physically and mentally and how you behave.

What causes depression?

There's no single cause of depression. It can occur for a variety of reasons, and it has many different triggers.

For some people, an upsetting or stressful life event can bring on symptoms of depression. You might be more likely to have feelings of depression if you are living with a long-term health condition that affects the way you live your life.

What are the symptoms of depression?

The symptoms of depression can range from mild to severe and can interfere with your work, social life and family life.

We have included some examples in the table below of how depression can affect you after receiving a heart condition diagnosis.

Physical and emotional symptoms of depression	Thoughts you may have	How you may behave
<p>You may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel low and/or sad • feel numb and/or flat • feel irritable • feel tired • feel lethargic (lack energy) • have aches and pains 	<p>You may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • have negative thoughts • assume the worst or that things will never get better • think that life isn't worth living • go over and over the same situations in your head 	<p>You may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • do less of the things you enjoy • spend less time with others than usual • struggle to keep to your usual routines

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For more information about the symptoms of depression, visit:

www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/depression-in-adults/symptoms

What can I do to help manage my depression?

If your symptoms of depression are mild, you might find the tips below help you to feel a little better.

- Break down tasks. For example, if your goal is to clean the whole house, try one small, doable part of the task, such as putting the laundry away.
- Start by trying to do five minutes of a task. This can feel less overwhelming.
- Connect with friends, family or colleagues regularly if you are able to. It may be helpful to talk to them about how you are feeling.
- You are more likely to follow through with a schedule if you write down the things you want to do the day before.

When should I seek help?

Some people will find that as they adjust to their heart condition and learn to adapt to living in new ways, their mood improves. If your mood hasn't improved over time and you are finding it hard to do the things you want to, you may benefit from some additional support.

Talking therapies

Talking therapies are psychological treatments for mental and emotional problems like anxiety, depression and stress. There are lots of different types of talking therapy, but they all involve working with a trained therapist. This may be one-to-one, in a group, online, over the phone, with your family, or with your partner.

For more information about NHS talking therapies, visit:

www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling/types-of-talking-therapies

How can I access talking therapies?

You can access talking therapies for free on the NHS. You can refer yourself directly to an NHS talking therapy service without a referral from a general practitioner (GP), or a GP or specialist nurse can refer you.

If your GP is located within Southampton City	If your GP is located outside of Southampton City but within Southampton	If your GP is located somewhere else
Steps2Wellbeing Telephone: 0800 612 7000 Website: www.steps2wellbeing.co.uk	NHS Talking Therapies Hampshire Telephone: 023 8038 3920 Website: www.italk.org.uk	You can visit the link below to find your local NHS talking therapies service: www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/mental-health-services/find-nhs-talking-therapies-for-anxiety-and-depression or ask your GP

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Useful links

www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/emotional-support-and-wellbeing/coping-with-depression-when-you-have-a-heart-or-circulatory-condition

www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/depression-in-adults

www.nhs.uk/mental-health/talking-therapies-medicine-treatments/talking-therapies-and-counselling

www.mind.org.uk/information-support/guides-to-support-and-services/seeking-help-for-a-mental-health-problem/where-to-start

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For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

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