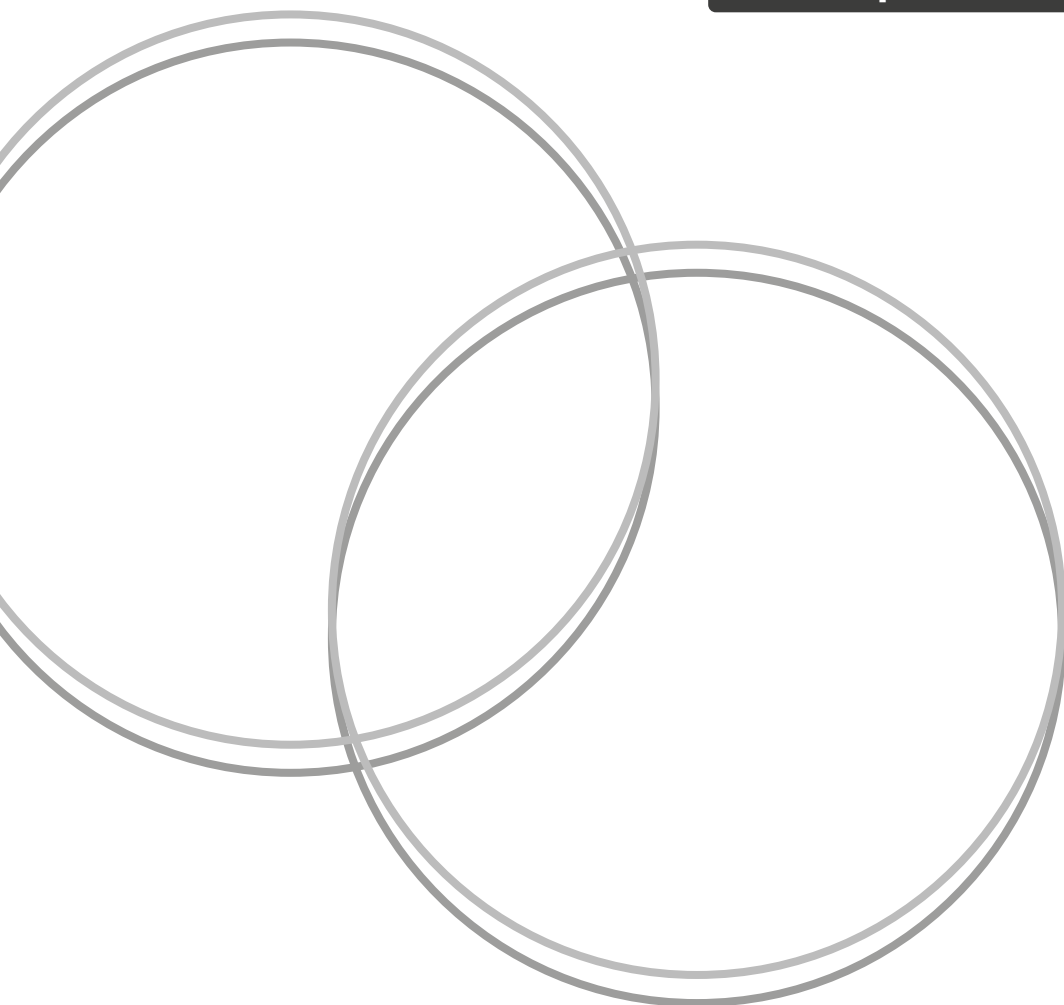


# Depression and Your Sex Life

**Information and  
self-help leaflet**



This leaflet gives you more information about depression and how it might affect your sex life. It is important that you get help with your depression before we start psychosexual therapy. Psychosexual therapy is talking therapy that addresses sexual problems.

This is because the depression might make it harder for you to use the strategies we teach you to help with your sexual difficulties.

The information in this leaflet is from the NHS website and the following sources:

**[www.nhs.uk/conditions/clinical-depression/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/clinical-depression/)**

**[www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/mental-illnesses-and-mental-health-problems/depression](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mental-health/mental-illnesses-and-mental-health-problems/depression)**

Visit these websites for further information and resources, including information for partners.

# What is depression?

Depression is also called low mood. It is fairly common and can develop at any time. Depression is more than simply feeling unhappy or fed up for a few days. It means having lasting feelings of unhappiness and hopelessness, and losing interest in the things you used to enjoy. Severe depression can also mean you feel at times life is no longer worth living.

Depression affects people in different ways. Some people describe it as a 'black cloud' or 'living in treacle' or 'in a grey world'.

## **Symptoms of depression include:**

- Loss of interest in activities
- Feeling cut off from other people
- Being tearful, unhappy
- Feeling that things are hopeless
- Sleeping badly
- Eating badly- too much or too little
- Having aches and pains
- At its worst, a feeling of life not being worth living
- Having no sex drive

## Do I have depression?

The following checklist can help you identify if you have depression.  
An online version is available at:

**[www.nhs.uk/conditions/clinical-depression/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/clinical-depression/)**

<b>Over the <u>last 2 weeks</u>, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?</b>	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things.	0	1	2	3
2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless.	0	1	2	3
3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much.	0	1	2	3
4. Feeling tired or having little energy.	0	1	2	3
5. Poor appetite or overeating.	0	1	2	3
6. Feeling bad about yourself – or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down.	0	1	2	3
7. Trouble concentrating on things, such as reading the newspaper or watching television.	0	1	2	3
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.	0	1	2	3
9. Thoughts that you would be better off dead or of hurting yourself in some way.	0	1	2	3
<b>A11 – PHQ9 Total Score:</b>				

**A score of 10 or more** indicates that you might suffer from depression.

## How can depression affect my sex life?

Having depression might mean you have less interest in sex and less interest in others around you. Depression can make you feel bad about yourself, and you may not want to have sex if you feel like that.

If you are on medication for depression, this can also change how you feel about sex and connection with others - you might feel 'flat'. Some antidepressants can have side effects:

- A change in desire for sex
- Difficulties with erections in men and vaginal dryness in women
- Difficulties to orgasm
- Problems with arousal

This depends on the medication. These symptoms have all been reported as possible side effects of citalopram, paroxetine, fluoxetine and sertraline. Other antidepressants are available which may be less likely to have sexual side effects.

You can discuss this with your GP or other health care provider who prescribed the antidepressants. They might talk to you about strategies to reduce the side effects of the antidepressant, or you might be able to try a different one or a lower dose with fewer side effects.

## What help is available?

Different treatments are available for depression. They include medication and talking therapy. Talking therapy has been shown to be very effective for treating mild to moderate depression. In moderate to severe depression, a combination of medication and talking therapy is the most effective treatment. You get the most out of talking therapy if you actively participate.

## Guided Self- Help

You can access the following resources online or in book form to work through in your own time. This needs commitment. It can be hard to find the motivation to work through these programmes by yourself when you feel depressed, but they have good results if you manage to stick with them:

### Silvercloud

Silvercloud is a free online self-help programme.

For more details, see:

[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxon-talking-therapies/getting-help/online/](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxon-talking-therapies/getting-help/online/)

### The Centre for Clinical Interventions of the Government of Western Australia

This resource has helpful self-help courses, all available online as PDFs to print or download:

[www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Depression](http://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/Resources/Looking-After-Yourself/Depression)

### The Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust

This has useful guides and leaflets on their website:

<https://web.ntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp/>

There are many books which provide self-help courses. One very popular on that has been developed locally is:

Mark Williams and Denny Penman (2011) *Mindfulness: A practical guide to finding peace in a frantic world*.

Piatkus Books.

Website: [franticworld.com/](http://franticworld.com/)

## Talking Therapies

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a type of therapy that focuses on the problems and difficulties you have now, and looks for practical ways you can improve your state of mind on a daily basis. The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) recommends it either standalone or in combination with medication for mild to severe depression. The evidence suggests that it is really helpful in helping people manage their low mood better.

Other talking therapies have also been shown to be effective. These include short-term Psychodynamic Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy (IPT), Counselling for Depression, and Mindfulness. All of these therapies involve you working together with your therapist to learn to better understand and manage your symptoms. These therapies are all available on the NHS.

In Oxfordshire, a free NHS service called **NHS Talking Therapies** offers these therapies.

You can self-refer online at:

[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxon-talking-therapies/](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxon-talking-therapies/)

or over the telephone at: **01865 901 222**

## Further information

The local NHS Talking Therapies website has links to many further resources on their website:

[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxon-talking-therapies/](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/oxon-talking-therapies/)

## How you can contact us:

**Psychosexual Therapy Service**

Tel: **01865 231 231**

Oxfordshire Sexual Health Service

The Churchill Hospital

Old Road

Headington

Oxford OX3 7LE

[www.sexualhealthoxfordshire.nhs.uk](http://www.sexualhealthoxfordshire.nhs.uk)

## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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November 2023  
Review: November 2026  
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)



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