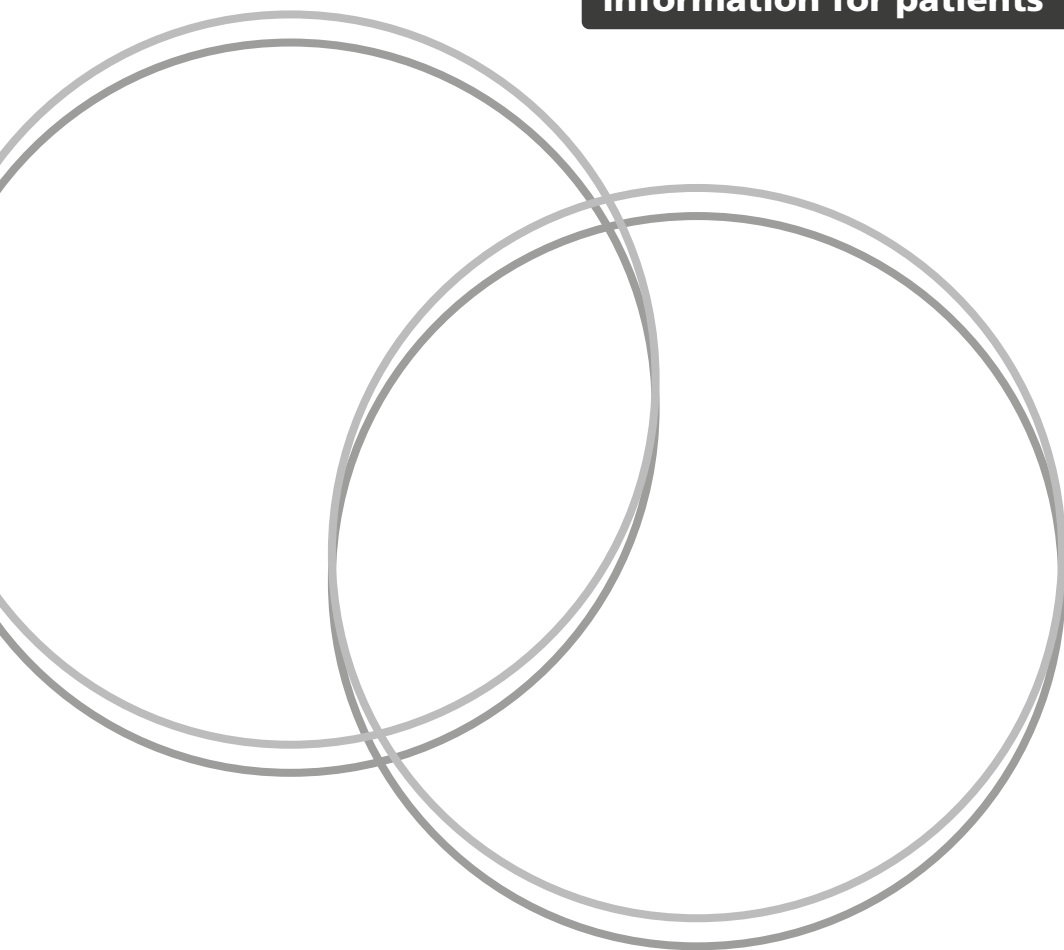




Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Depression Care for People With Cancer

Information for patients



Clinical Oncology

## **What is depression?**

People sometimes use the word 'depression' when they are feeling a bit low or sad. But it is also the name of an illness that causes a lot of symptoms. These symptoms can make you feel down, as well as making you feel worse physically (achy and tired).

## **What are the symptoms of depression?**

### **Some of the symptoms of depression include:**

- feeling down a lot of the time
- having poor sleep, waking up earlier or sleeping more than usual
- loss of appetite and losing of weight or eating more than usual
- more aches and pains
- lacking energy
- feeling that everything is a struggle
- loss of interest and enjoyment in things
- loss of self-confidence
- feeling irritable or agitated
- problems concentrating or making decisions
- feeling you can't carry on with life.

## **What causes depression?**

There are many causes of depression. People may be more likely to get depression because of their genes or previous experiences in their life. Depression is often (but not always) triggered by stress.

The stresses that may trigger depression include life changes, such as divorce and bereavement, or having a serious illness, such as cancer. Sometimes there is no obvious cause.

## **Depression care for people with cancer**

You will see a specially trained Depression Care Manager (a nurse or occupational therapist) every week, usually for 6 to 8 weeks. The sessions will last about an hour and usually take place in hospital. If you can't get to the hospital for an appointment, you may be able to speak to your Depression Care Manager over the telephone. It is important not to miss any sessions, unless absolutely necessary.

Your Depression Care Manager will tell you more about depression and the three main things that you can do about it.

### **These are:**

- taking antidepressant medication
- being active
- learning to cope with your problems in a better way.

## **Taking antidepressant medication**

Taking an antidepressant will increase your chances of recovering quickly and will also make it easier for you to help yourself in other ways.

Antidepressants help most people with depression, including those with medical conditions such as cancer. There are a number of different types of antidepressants and your Depression Care Manager or doctor will talk with you about which one might be best for you.

Antidepressants usually take two to four weeks before they have a noticeable effect and can take up to two months before they have their maximum effect.

It is very important to keep taking them once you start to feel better. It is usually recommended that you take them for at least 12 months. It is important that you don't suddenly stop taking the antidepressants without speaking to your doctor first, as this could make your symptoms return or feel worse.

## **Being active**

When people have depression they often don't feel like doing the things they used to enjoy. For example, you might avoid seeing other people, stop going out of the house as much or reduce your physical activity.

When you are depressed, being more active may seem hard at first, but gradually doing things you used to enjoy or that gave you a sense of achievement will help you feel better.

## **Learning to cope with your problems in a better way**

Everyone has their own way of coping with problems in life. If you have depression you may find it more difficult to cope and this can make you feel worse.

Getting better at coping with your problems again can make you feel more confident and in control of your life. This will help with depression.

One way you can learn to cope better with problems is to have Problem Solving Treatment. Please ask your Depression Care Manager for more information about this.

## **More information**

Your Depression Care Manager will explain any treatment to you in more detail.

### **Your Depression Care Manager is:**

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### **Contact details:**

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



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