



## HEALTH INFORMATION

# Top Tips for Beating the Blues

Depression is one of the most common psychiatric illness. It is also one of the most treatable. Depression is a disorder that may affect our feelings and outlook on life. Persistent feelings of sadness, a loss of interest in life, hopelessness, and pessimism are common warning signs of depression. The symptoms can vary among people. All of us can feel blue from time to time. However, a persistent or unexplained bout of the “blues” is not normal and should be evaluated.

## What can be done when you are feeling low or blue?

Help for depression can come in a variety of ways and therefore there are a variety of treatments that can be used alone or together

- Self-help measures
- Local Support Groups
- Professional treatment including psychotherapy
- Medication such as anti-depressants
- Support

**Important Note:** If you have thoughts of suicide or hurting yourself or others, seek immediate professional help.

The following suggestions are not intended to replace medical care, but may enhance your quality of life:

**Support:** Look for a support group. Ask your family and friends for support and avoid isolation.

**Avoid or reduce stress:** There are many types of stress management techniques. Yoga, meditation, and stress management classes are a few examples.

Some employers and adult education services offer stress management classes.

**Exercise:** Try to be physically active a little bit every day. Even if you do not like to exercise, find a way to move your body. Walking, gardening, and dancing can be enjoyable ways to be active.

**Sleep:** Get 7 to 9 hours of sleep every night. Talk to your doctor if you have regular insomnia or other sleep problems.

**Avoid alcohol and other substances:** Alcohol, tobacco, excess caffeine and drugs can cause or worsen depression and anxiety. Tobacco and caffeine are stimulants and can cause increased anxiety.

**Eat a healthy diet:** Try to eat a low fat, high fibre diet. Eat a variety of foods that include fruit, vegetables, and whole grains.

**Balance rest and activity:** Schedule a daily rest period. Pace yourself, take breaks, plan ahead, and delegate responsibilities.

**Practice positive thinking:** Listen to your internal thoughts. Try to replace negative thoughts with messages of hope and affirmation. Practice positive thinking even if you do not believe it. Over time, positive thinking can become a habit, and can help improve many aspects of your health.

**Find ways to laugh and amuse yourself:** Try to pick at least one pleasurable activity and find the time to do it often. Laughter may not be “the best medicine,” but it helps.

**Final Words of Encouragement:** Feeling better takes time! Do not expect yourself to be free from depression overnight. However, with professional and self-help support, it is reasonable to expect yourself to improve gradually. Do not settle for a small improvement - depression can be treated. Aim for feeling great. With patience and professional help, this is a reasonable goal.

