

DEPRESSION

Although we all feel down or sad from time to time, depression is much more serious than that with individuals feeling miserable most of the day, nearly every day. Depression is a real and treatable illness that affects many people. Depression can affect both physical and mental health, be severe or mild, and can affect everyone differently.

Common symptoms of depression

Physical symptoms

- **Appetite changes:** A reduced appetite and weight loss is common, however some people experience the opposite and crave certain foods resulting in weight gain.
- **Exhaustion and fatigue:** No matter how much you sleep, you may still feel tired or worn out. Getting out of bed in the morning may feel too hard or even impossible.
- **Digestive problems:** Feeling queasy or nauseated or experiencing diarrhoea or constipation.
- **Sleep disturbances:** Including trouble getting to sleep, waking up too early or continually throughout the night. However, some individuals may sleep more than you usually would.

Psychological symptoms

- **Low/depressed mood:** Feeling sad, empty or hopeless nearly every day for most of the day. Unable to 'bounce back' as you usually would from stressful or upsetting situations.
- **Diminished interest or pleasure:** Losing interest and pleasure in activities that you once enjoyed such as meeting up with friends for dinner or participating in your favourite sport.
- **Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt:** Being overly self-critical and self-blaming. Often placing guilt on yourself that isn't warranted.
- **Inability to focus or concentrate:** Easily distracted during your daily activities or tasks.
- **Suicidal thoughts:** Having dark and gloomy thoughts, including thoughts of death or suicide.

Managing Depression

There exists a wide range of activities and strategies you can use to help manage your depression and prevent it from becoming more severe. These include:

- **Connecting with your support network:** Turn to trusted friends and family members and share with them what you are going through. Try to keep up social activities.
- **Challenging negative thoughts:** Try your best to reframe any unhelpful, negative thoughts you have into more positive alternatives.
- **Focusing on your wellbeing:** Aim to keep your eating, sleeping and exercising habits in check. Practice a relaxation technique that works for you.

One of the best strategies for managing depression is to seek help. You can do this by speaking with your GP, making an appointment with your EAP provider or seeking support from a counsellor or psychologist. Depression is treatable and each person responds to different treatment methods and ongoing management strategies. Work with your healthcare team to find out the treatment methods that work best for you. This could include a combination of anti-depressant medication, cognitive behavioural therapy, mindfulness and interpersonal therapy.

*For more information on our services, contact us on **02 8243 1500** or at **admin@cfch.com.au***