



Teenhelp

menu

Well-Being - Depression & suicide

Q. I stay in bed a lot and feel that there isn't a lot to get up for. My mum says I'm depressed and wants me to see the doctor. What could he do anyway?

A. It sounds like your mum is concerned about you, and if you are feeling like there isn't a lot to get up for in your life at the moment, it might be a good idea to see a doctor to find out why. Many people get fed up and upset after getting a shock or bad news, but it is not depression. A person who is depressed has such a low mood that they find no joy in life and often don't seem to want to do anything. Teenagers as well as adults can get depressed.

Depression might have some or all of the following symptoms:

- Feeling very tired but can't sleep or sleeping for long periods.
- Feeling worried and anxious all the time.
- Stopping doing or enjoying things they liked before.
- Having a drop in school grades.
- Avoiding friends, family, school or social activities
- Having no appetite or can't stop eating.
- Seeing only a bleak future, wanting to give up and feeling life isn't worth living.
- Not washing or caring about appearance.
- Feeling sick, such as headaches or stomach aches.

It's ok to ask for help if you need it. Your GP will have met other teenagers who have felt like this before and will ask you about these symptoms and will try to see what triggered them. You will need to be honest about your feelings

and about what you do all day. Some young people can feel so overwhelmed by life that they withdraw and feel like they don't want to take part in anything. Sometimes just talking about how you feel to someone you trust can really help, and may make you start to feel better. Having depression can be difficult, but you can get help straight away.

A GP might help by:

- Talking with you and/or suggesting that you talk with a counsellor in order to help you with your feelings.



- Making suggestions about ways you can take care of yourself. This might include a healthy life-style plan, such as exercise, balanced diet, rest, spending time with friends and doing things you enjoy.
- Prescribing anti-depressants (tablets), which will help the symptoms. This usually happens in addition to the first two options.

Q. I am 16 and hang around with a few of my friends at the weekend. One of them seems very down lately. I overheard him saying that he wants to die. Should I take this seriously and what can I do? The others thought he was joking.

A. It sounds like your friend might be going through a difficult time. What he said has to be taken seriously as many young people take their lives every year. If they had received help on time, their deaths might have been prevented. Most people who feel suicidal don't really want to die, they just want to end their pain.

Get support for yourself too as it can be distressing to see your friend suffer like this

Suicidal thoughts can affect anyone. Even those people who seem happy and carefree can have thoughts of suicide at some time in their lives. This might happen, for example, after an upset or disappointment, such as the ending of a relationship or family break-up, or following a trauma, such as a bereavement. Some drugs, including alcohol, can increase risk of suicidal thoughts. Some people who have mental health problems may sometimes think about suicide.

The following are some of the signs that may indicate that someone is having thoughts of suicide:

- Sudden changes in mood and behaviour.
- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Becoming isolated or withdrawn.
- Engaging in deliberate self-harm and/or behaviour which puts them at risk of harm.
- Talking about suicide.
- Giving away some of their favourite possessions or making 'final' arrangements.

It is great that you are watching out for your friend because this kind of support is vital to him right now. Talk to him and offer support. Say something like: 'I'm worried about you and I want to help.' Encourage him to get help from an adult he trusts, such as:

- His parents or another member of his family.
- A trusted adult such as a teacher, school guidance counsellor, youth worker, your parents or the parents of another friend.
- The family doctor.

There are a range of supports and services and supports that can help. The local GP or family doctor will be an important source of information and help. Others include:

- Headstrong 'Jigsaw' projects for young people (there are two services currently up and running in Galway and Ballymun, Dublin www.headstrong.ie)
- Pieta House service for young people (located in Limerick and Lucan, Dublin link)

For more details on where your friend can get help and support, check out the Finding Help section.

Get support for yourself too as it can be distressing to see your friend suffering like this.

If you are concerned about suicide now

If someone you know is in a crisis now and you are worried about them, get help or encourage them to get help, for example by saying, 'I will stay with you until you can get help.' Contact a

trusted adult immediately.

Services that can help in a crisis include:

- Contact the Samaritans, Tel 1850 609090
- Contact your local doctor, listed under 'General Practitioners' in the Golden Pages or visit www.icgp.ie
- Go to, or contact, the Accident and Emergency Department of your nearest general hospital.

(Based on guidelines from the National Office for Suicide Prevention website www.nosp.ie)