

## **DEPRESSION – ENGLISCH**

Depression can affect anyone

In Germany alone, approximately 4 million people suffer from depression. Women are diagnosed with depression twice as often as men. Even though depression is a common medical condition, it goes unnoticed in public and is often misunderstood. Depression can – just like diabetes and high blood pressure – affect anyone: people of every age group, occupation, social status, men, women and children. Depression is an illness and not an expression of personal failure.

Depression can often arise suddenly, even during a well-functioning daily routine, but it can also descend upon someone slowly and gradually. Sometimes it is not easy to distinguish the illness from the normal ups and downs of life, or from a crisis. Often, patients and treating physicians initially assume physical illness. However, a reliable diagnosis of depression is almost always possible after thorough assessment of the patient. This is very important, as in most cases, depression can be treated effectively. If the illness remains unrecognised, patients suffer unnecessarily and find themselves in a desperate situation that, in the worst case, can lead to suicide.

### **Important:**

Depression is no “delusion”, but is in fact a common and often life-threatening illness, which nowadays can be treated effectively.

### **Depression has many faces**

Depression can arise from a specific trigger, such as personal pressures, the loss of a loved one or constant/unrelenting stress. Apparently positive life events can also be a trigger for depression, for example, relocation or the birth of a child. Depression can also develop without a cause. Many patients suffer from reoccurring phases of depression, while others suffer from only one depressive episode in their life, which can last several weeks or months. Some people can even fall into depression during the gloomy autumn and winter period (seasonal depression).

Not all patients suffering from depression show the same clinical signs, and a depressed mood is not always the main symptom. Many people show a lack of drive and energy, while others can be somewhat restless. Sleep disturbances and a multitude of physical complaints are frequently occurring conditions among depressive individuals. Patients also report a loss of libido, severe joylessness and emotionlessness, feelings of emptiness, concentration difficulties, and anxiety. The extent of the condition can vary from mild depression, which still allows the individual to continue working, to severe depression, which makes it no longer possible for the individual to lead a normal everyday life.

**Important:**

If you feel or are worried that your current mood might be related to depression, seek medical or therapeutic help.

**Depression can be treated**

Depression can be successfully treated. Due to the availability of drug therapy and psychotherapy, highly effective treatment methods are available. However, for several reasons, not every patient is appropriately treated: some cases of depression remain undetected and some patients avoid seeking professional help because they are afraid or feel ashamed.

Research has shown that depression arises as a result of metabolic dysfunction in the brain, regardless of the external trigger that might have led to the condition. Put simply: due to metabolic dysfunction, depression causes positive nerve signals that are responsible for feelings of joy and happiness to be reduced, and negative nerve signals to be enhanced. Antidepressants act to diminish the imbalance of substances in the brain, thus decreasing depressive symptoms. These drugs do not lead to addiction, nor do they alter the patient's personality. It is advisable to follow regular and continuous drug therapy in order to prevent a relapse.

During psychotherapy, patients are taught different strategies to cope with their problems. Additionally, planning enjoyable and mood-lifting activities and the avoidance of ruminating thoughts are essential. Psychotherapy also helps prevent relapses. Self-help groups, as well as support and understanding from family members, can be very beneficial.

**Important:**

Depression is neither a personal failure nor unavoidable, but rather is an illness which can be treated effectively.