

## ***Depression - Am I depressed or do I just have the blues?***

We all have times when we feel down. It's normal to feel sad when a relationship ends, a good friend moves away or someone we care about dies. The stress of a heavy study load, financial difficulties or unemployment also affects our mood. However, the gloomy feelings usually pass and we still experience happy times with friends or family. Sometimes the sad feelings don't go away – we stop enjoying things that used to be fun. We might have difficulty keeping up with study, or find it hard to even get out of bed in the morning. This could mean we have become depressed.

If you've been feeling miserable more often than not over the past two weeks or more, and you've stopped enjoying things that used to be fun, you might be depressed. Check the symptoms below – if you pick three or more it is likely you are experiencing a bout of depression.

- Finding it hard to get motivated and feel interested in things
- Wanting to avoid friends and everyday activities
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Losing interest in eating, or overeating
- Losing weight, without dieting, or gaining weight
- Finding it difficult to get to sleep, waking during the night, or waking too early and not being able to get back to sleep. Alternatively, wanting to sleep all the time.
- Thinking about, or planning suicide
- Having unpleasant, negative thoughts (like feeling guilty or that you are a bad or unworthy person)
- Getting pains in your body or headaches that don't seem to have any physical cause

How did I get depressed? Sometimes stress builds up in our lives and overwhelms our ability to cope. You may have lost someone you love, had a baby, or been too busy for too long. Ongoing stress like coping on a low income, facing rising debt, or feeling lonely and isolated can lead to depression. Sometimes people get depressed for no obvious reason; the heavy feelings just seem to come out of the blue. This sometimes happens when people come from families who seem more vulnerable to becoming depressed after relatively mild stress. No matter how you became depressed, the effects are debilitating and will affect your study if left untreated.

Am I the only one who feels this way? No. Depression is more common than most people think. In fact it is about as common as asthma! One in seven people will experience a bout of depression at some stage in their lives.

Take a quick self-assessment on our Test page to see if you might be suffering from clinical depression.