What is depression?

What depression is, how it shows up, what keeps it going and what helps.

Everyone feels low sometimes. Depression is when low mood, or a loss of interest in things, lasts for weeks and gets into every part of life. It is one of the most common health problems there is, and it is treatable.

Feelings
Sad, empty, flat or numb. Irritable. Guilty. Hopeless. Little pleasure in things you used to enjoy.

Body
Tired all the time. Sleeping too little or too much. Appetite changes. Slowed down or restless. Aches.

Thinking
Harsh about yourself. Gloomy about the future. Poor concentration and memory. Hard to decide anything.

Behaviour
Doing less. Withdrawing from people. Letting things slide. Staying in bed. Drinking more.

Why it happens

There is rarely one cause. It is usually a mix: difficult events and losses, long-term stress, isolation, physical illness, family history, and patterns of thinking and coping learned early on. Depression is not a sign of weakness or laziness, and you cannot just snap out of it.

How it keeps going

Depression drains energy and motivation, so you do less. Doing less means fewer good moments and more time to dwell. Mood drops further. This cycle is where therapy starts.

What helps

- **Talking therapies.** CBT and other therapies have good evidence.
- **Getting active again**, in small planned steps, before you feel like it.
- **Antidepressant medication**, for some people. Your GP can advise.
- **The basics:** regular sleep, food, movement, daylight and contact with people.

Talk to someone today
if you are having thoughts of harming yourself or that life is not worth living. Tell your GP, your therapist or someone you trust.

If you need help right now (Ireland)

In an emergency	Call **112** or **999**, or go to your nearest emergency department.
Samaritans	Freephone **116 123**, any time, day or night. Email jo@samaritans.ie
Text About It	Free text **HELLO** to **50808**, any time, for an anonymous text conversation.
Pieta	Freephone **1800 247 247**, any time, or text **HELP** to **51444**. For thoughts of suicide or self-harm.
Your GP	Contact your GP or the out-of-hours GP service in your area.

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