

Coping with depression and low mood

Living with a brain tumour



Around 1 in 5 people in the UK suffer from depression at some point in their lives.

It's important to remember that depression is not a sign of weakness and is nothing to be ashamed of.

Like many physical conditions, depression is an illness which can usually be managed or treated, if dealt with appropriately.



CARE CAN'T WAIT

If you'd like to talk to someone about how you're feeling, or would like to find out where you can get further support (including details of support groups), you can contact The Brain Tumour Charity's Information and Support Team:

Phone: **0808 800 0004**

(free from landlines and most mobiles)

Email: support@thebraintumourcharity.org

Live chat: thebraintumourcharity.org/live-chat

Website: thebraintumourcharity.org/getsupport

Closed Facebook groups:

thebraintumourcharity.org/facebook-support

Contents

Introduction.....	2
How can I cope with low mood or mild depression?.....	4
How can I cope with more serious depression?.....	6
Mild to moderate depression	7
Moderate to severe depression.....	10
Helpful resources.....	12

How can I cope with low mood or mild depression?

If you're feeling low or have mild depression, there are some self-help techniques that you may find useful.

These include:

- **Maintaining social contact**

Interacting with other people can distract your mind from negative thought patterns.

The more time you spend interacting with others, the less time you spend dwelling on things which make you sad and things which are perhaps out of your control.

Even if you feel that you're not up for it, try and take every opportunity to interact with others because maintaining social contact could help improve your condition over time.

- **Joining a support network**

Joining a physical or virtual (e.g. Facebook) support group allows you to meet people who may be going through something similar.

Knowing that you're not alone and sharing experiences with others who are, or have been, in similar situations are things that many find quite comforting.

If you're affected by a brain tumour, you can join The Brain Tumour Charity's Facebook support group by visiting: bit.ly/supportonfacebook

To find a support group in your local area visit: thebraintumourcharity.org/get-support/support-groups/

- **Planning in self-care activities and activities that are enjoyable at the beginning of the day**

It can be easy to prioritise things that you feel you 'should' or 'need' to do, meaning that you do these first, then run out of energy to do the nicer things.

- **Keeping your energy at comfortable levels**

When we are tired or sleep deprived, we can often feel more emotional. Living with a brain tumour, or caring for someone with a brain tumour, can make daily life quite tiring.

Try to be aware of how your body feels and plan times to rest, so your energy reserves aren't drained to the point of exhaustion.



For more information, see our [Being a carer](https://thebraintumourcharity.org/being-a-carer/) and our [Fatigue and brain tumours](https://thebraintumourcharity.org/fatigue/) webpages and fact sheets:
thebraintumourcharity.org/being-a-carer/
thebraintumourcharity.org/fatigue/

- **Taking up some form of moderate activity**

Studies have shown that even a moderate amount of activity can lead to improved mood. Even if you begin with a 20-minute walk every day, it could contribute to an improvement in your mood.

thebraintumourcharity.org/benefits-of-exercise/

How can I cope with more serious depression?

The first step in dealing with depression is to recognise and accept the fact that you may be suffering from it.

Depression can make you doubt your own judgement, make you more introverted (inward looking) and less confident. This can make you reluctant to seek help and express how you are feeling.

It's important to understand that it's natural to feel this way and that it's OK to tell your loved ones and your GP exactly what you're going through.



Your GP can suggest the appropriate treatment options for you, based on the severity of your depression. This could be a combination of the following therapies.

Mild to moderate depression

Talking therapies

If you're affected by mild to moderate depression which doesn't show any signs of improving, your GP may refer you for a talking therapy.

There are different types of talking therapy for depression, including:

- **Psychotherapy**

This usually involves a series of regular 1:1 sessions with a trained psychotherapist, where you can talk about your feelings and get help to understand them and deal with them.

There are different types of psychotherapy. It can involve techniques such as drama or music to help.

- **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)**

This involves regular sessions with a trained CBT therapist to help you manage your depression by changing the way you think about your current problems.

You're helped to break down your problems and thoughts into smaller, separate parts and work out how to change those that aren't helpful.

- **Counselling**

This involves sessions with a trained counsellor who will listen to you without judging or criticising.

They'll also help you find ways to understand your feelings, to see things from a different viewpoint and find your own solutions to dealing with your feelings.

- **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**

ACT is a type of psychotherapy based on mindfulness.

In contrast to other therapies which aim to reduce or get rid of negative thoughts, ACT accepts these thoughts, then diffuses them using a variety of techniques, such as mindfulness, to reduce their impact and influence over you.

The Brain Tumour Charity is funding a study into whether ACT can be adapted to help young adults who are childhood brain tumour survivors.

thebraintumourcharity.org/media-centre/news/research-news/using-act-to-improve-life-quality-brain-tumour/



For more information about these and other types of talking therapies, visit the NHS website:

nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/types-of-therapy.aspx



It's important to note that there may be a long waiting list for these services in the NHS.

You can choose to pay for private treatment, but it's important to make sure your therapist is registered with a recognised professional organisation and to be aware of the costs.

You can find accredited registers or therapists through the Professional Standards Authority:

professionalstandards.org.uk/what-we-do/accredited-registers/find-a-register

or **professionalstandards.org.uk/check-practitioners**

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a tool used to channel your thoughts and be more aware of the present moment. It can be difficult to begin with, but does get easier with practice.

While mindfulness may not be for everyone, it has been shown to reduce levels of anxiety and mild depression in some patients with brain tumours.

The NHS provides tips on their website on how to practice mindfulness.

nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mindfulness/

Moderate to severe depression

Psychiatry

If you suffer from moderate to severe depression, your GP may refer you to a psychiatrist. A psychiatrist is a medically qualified doctor who specialises in psychiatry.

As with talking therapies, a psychiatrist can offer emotional support and discuss topics which trouble you.

However, as a medically qualified professional, a psychiatrist can prescribe medication, such as antidepressants, and refer you for other types of treatment.

Antidepressants

Antidepressants are tablets which can be prescribed for moderate or severe depression.

There are many different types of antidepressant and, if your doctor or psychiatrist feels you would benefit from taking them, they'll take into account any other treatment you may be receiving for your brain tumour before deciding which one to prescribe.

Like any other medication, antidepressants can cause side-effects. The most common side-effects are usually mild and tend to ease as your body gets used to the medicine.

However, sometimes the side-effects of antidepressants can last for a long time or be severe.

They've also been shown to be linked with suicidal thoughts, particularly in children, young adults and anyone with a history of suicidal behaviour.

If you're having suicidal thoughts, contact your GP urgently or call 999. They're used to helping people who are feeling this way, so don't worry about contacting them.

If it's out-of-hours, your GP will have an out-of-hours service. Or there are many other organisations that can help you, such as the Samaritans. Call 116 123.

For contact details of other organisations:
[nhs.uk/conditions/suicide/](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/suicide/)

Speak to your GP about possible side-effects and how to manage these.

NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence) recommends that antidepressants should be used in combination with a high-intensity psychological therapy, such as CBT.

For more information on antidepressants visit the NHS website at:

[nhs.uk/conditions/Antidepressant-drugs/Pages/Introduction.aspx](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Antidepressant-drugs/Pages/Introduction.aspx)

Helpful resources

If you or someone close to you is suffering from depression, you may find the following list of resources helpful:

Blog: Taking care of your mental health
thebraintumourcharity.org/media-centre/news/blog-post/top-tips-care-your-mental-health/

Samaritans

A 24-hour helpline with trained people who can listen to you when you need someone to talk to. (Free to call from landline and mobile.)

Call 116 123 (UK and ROI) **24 hrs**

Email: jo@samaritans.org

Website: samaritans.org

Saneline

SANE's mental health helpline is a national service offering emotional support and information every evening.

Call 0300 304 7000 (4.30pm - 10.30pm)

Website: sane.org.uk

MIND

MIND is a mental health organisation that provides support and information.

Call 0300 123 3393 (9.00am - 6.00pm, Mon - Fri)

Text: 86463

Email: info@mind.org.uk

Website: mind.org.uk/information-support/

Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM)

For men.

Call 0800 58 58 58 (5.00pm to midnight, every day)

Visit the webchat page:

thecalmzone.net/help/webchat/

Childline

A free, confidential helpline for children where they can talk about anything.

Call 0800 1111 (any time, any day)

Website: childline.org.uk

The Silver Line

Confidential, free helpline for people over 55 years.

Call 0800 4 70 80 90 (any time, any day)

Website: thesilverline.org.uk/

Inspire

A network of support services throughout Ireland supporting mental wellbeing:

Call 028 9032 8474

Website: inspirewellbeing.org/

Carers UK

Provides information and support for carers.

Call 0808 808 7777 (10.00am - 4.00pm, Mon & Tues)

Email: advice@carersuk.org

Website: carersuk.org

About this information resource

All of our information is produced using robust processes, which follow best practice and quality guidelines of health information production, to ensure accuracy and reliability.

Written and edited by our experienced Information and Support Team, the accuracy of medical or other specialist information in this resource has been verified by leading professionals specialising in relevant areas of expertise.

Our information resources have been produced with up-to-date, reliable sources of evidence, as well as the assistance of members of our community, to make sure it makes sense to everyone and includes the information they want to see.

We hope that this information will complement the medical or social care advice you've already been given. Please do continue to talk to your healthcare team if you're worried about any medical issues.

If you'd like a list of references for any of our information resources, or would like more information about how we produce them, please contact us.

We welcome your comments on this information resource, so we can improve. Please give us your feedback via our Information and Support Team on 0808 800 0004 or support@thebraintumourcharity.org

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About The Brain Tumour Charity

Going further for a cure

As the UK's leading brain tumour charity, we're here to accelerate a positive change in how people affected by brain tumours are diagnosed, supported and cured.

At The Brain Tumour Charity, we believe that no-one should have to live with a brain tumour or lose a loved one to a brain tumour. Advances in both treatments and quality of life care need to be made - and they need to be made quickly.

We know that if we put our heads together, we're more than up to the challenge. So we're building a movement of people from every walk of life - all coming together to accelerate a cure.

Find out more and get involved:
thebraintumourcharity.org



Notes

**WE'RE
HERE FOR YOU
AT EVERY STEP**

thebraintumourcharity.org

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