

What is Depression?

Depression is a common illness, which will affect one in five people during their lifetime. It can involve feelings of hopelessness, tiredness, low self-esteem, sleeping problems and physical aches and pains.

A loss of interest in sex is a common problem with depression, so you shouldn't be embarrassed about talking through any problems with your doctor.

You are not alone

Surveys show that two out of three people affected by depression lose their interest in sex. It's important to understand that this lack of interest is as much a symptom of depression as feeling low. Both probably result from imbalances in brain chemistry. Reduced sexual activity may also be accompanied by weight loss, reduced energy, and disturbed sleep.

What sort of sexual problems are common?

A general loss of interest in sex is the most common problem. Other problems include:

- Not being able to get sexually aroused
- Lowered sexual performance
- Not being able to gain pleasure
- Lack of energy
- Not being able to get or maintain an erection
- Premature ejaculation
- Not being able to ejaculate or reach orgasm

I'm embarrassed about talking about this

A good sex life is an important part of health and well-being, so it's important to talk to your doctor about any problems. By bringing the subject up yourself, you can create the opportunity to get the help you need. Try asking a general question like, "I've lost interest in sex - is this normal?" Just try to explain your feelings and any difficulties.

Will treatment help?

Modern antidepressants are very effective in treating depression, and as your depression gradually lifts, your interest in sex should return. However, some of the older types of antidepressants may make sexual problems worse, or cause new sexual problems. This does not mean you should stop taking medication. Talking to your doctor should sort out whether it's the depression or the medication causing the problem.

What if it is a side effect of my treatment?

If you begin experiencing sexual difficulties during treatment, they may be a side effect of your medication. Changing the dose, using an additional medicine, or taking a different antidepressant may help. Your doctor may also be able to suggest some other form of help, such as counselling, psychotherapy, or marital therapy.

If you are concerned, answering the following the questions will help you communicate to your doctor how your sex life has been affected by your treatment.

Since the start of your treatment with antidepressants:

- How has your desire for sex changed?
- Do you become as aroused as you are used to?
- Are you able to enjoy sex at the moment?

Women

- Has your ability to achieve orgasm changed?
- Are you satisfied with the intensity of your orgasm?

Men

- Can you get your normal erection?
- Are you able to maintain your normal erection?
- Do you have any difficulty ejaculating?

What else can affect my sex life?

There are a number of other factors which can also affect your sex life, including:

- Other illnesses and conditions, including diabetes, multiple sclerosis and high blood pressure
- Drugs prescribed for high blood pressure, some lipid-lowering agents, antihistamines, anti-epilepsy drugs, and drugs often prescribed with antidepressants to reduce anxiety, insomnia and severe mental disturbance. To prevent any harmful reactions between drugs, be sure to tell your doctor about any medication you are taking, including medicines bought in pharmacies and other shops
- Street drugs, for example cannabis, opiates, amphetamines, cocaine and ecstasy
- Excessive amounts of alcohol, which is not only a depressant, but also increases sexual problems

Contact Us

I would like to support the work of Depression Alliance.

Please accept my gift of £

I would like Depression Alliance to claim the tax back on this donation, and on any subsequent donation I make.

For every donation you make to us, we can now claim back the tax paid (equivalent to 28p in every pound), provided you pay an equal amount of income tax or capital gains tax. Please tick the box above if you would like to make your money go even further at no extra cost to you.*

I would like to become a member of Depression Alliance and enclose my membership fee of (please tick relevant box):

- £10 (full-fee) £5 (unwaged/OAP/student)
 £20 (company rate) £15 (European rate)
 £20 (International rate)

I would like to find out more about Depression Alliance

I would like to pay

By cheque**/postal order for £

By card, please deduct £ from my:
 MasterCard CAF card
 VISA card

PLEASE COMPLETE IN BLOCK CAPITALS

Name as written on card

Card No

Exp date

Signature Date

Title

Forename

Surname

Address

Postcode

E-mail

Please return this form in an envelope to: Depression Alliance, 35, Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7JB

Data protection: From time to time, we will write with details about our work. Please tick this box if you would prefer not to hear from us. Your details will never be passed onto to any third party without your prior consent.

* You must pay an amount of income tax (and/or capital gains tax) which is at least equal to the value of what we claim back in that tax year (currently 28p for every pound you give in that tax year). If you pay tax at a higher rate, you can claim further tax relief in your Self Assessment return.

** Please make cheques payable to Depression Alliance

- You are not alone - a loss of interest in sex is a common problem with depression
- Depression is an illness, which can be treated
- Contact your doctor and talk through your problems
- Continue to take the medication you have been prescribed

Useful Organisations

Relate
0845 130 40 10
www.relate.org.uk

Saneline
08457 678 000
www.sane.org.uk

UKPPG Medication Helpline
020 7919 2999
(11am - 5pm Monday – Friday,
excluding Bank Holidays)

Depression Alliance

Depression Alliance is the leading UK charity for people affected by depression. We work to relieve this treatable condition by providing information, support and understanding. We also campaign to raise awareness amongst the general public about the realities of depression.

Depression Alliance coordinates a national network of self-help groups so that people with depression can share experiences and coping strategies with others in similar situations.

For more information about self-help groups in your area, as well as our other services for people affected by depression, please complete the form overleaf.



Depression Alliance
35 Westminster Bridge Road
London
SE1 7JB



Depression Alliance Scotland
3 Grosvenor Gardens
Edinburgh
EH12 5JU



Depression Alliance Cymru
11 Plas Melin
Westbourne Ave
Whitchurch
Cardiff
CF14 2BT

You can also contact us via our main number 0845 123 23 20. You will automatically be directed to the relevant regional office, and all calls will be charged at the local rate.

www.depressionalliance.org
information@depressionalliance.org

Registered charity 1096741.
A Company Limited by Guarantee 4253700
(Registered office at the London address)
© Depression Alliance 2003. All rights reserved.



Depression affects
one in five of us
at some point in our life

If you have depression
and have lost interest in sex,
don't worry –
you are not alone.



If you are worried
about a friend or relative
who is depressed,
Depression Alliance
can help.