

Answers to Commonly Asked Questions on Depression

Find answers to your mental health questions from Ramsay Health Care specialists

The Diagnosis and Treatment of Depression

How are people diagnosed with Depression?

A: *The diagnosis is very dependent on what the symptoms the patient presents with. In other words, the patient gives us the diagnosis by telling us how they feel. We don't have a blood test, or an x-ray, or a scan that will actually give us the diagnosis, and that's one of the things that makes psychiatric practice a little more difficult and to be able to identify clinical Depression is very much a clinical skill, so it's a diagnosis that can be made depending on what the symptoms the patient actually presents to us*

How challenging is the diagnosis and treatment of Depression?

A: *One of the big challenges in treating Depression is that the response to treatment, whether it be psychological treatment, medication or what would normally happen of course, is a combination of both. The response to that approach is often disappointing, and so there is a significant proportion of people, a fairly large minority of people who don't respond very well to that combination of psychological treatment with antidepressant medication and so it's a real challenge at times to get people better, but we usually find with perseverance, and with time, for most people we achieve a good response.*

What is the best course of action to take if someone thinks they have Depression?

A: *If somebody thinks they may have Depression, the best course of action is to see their family doctor. Family doctors these days are very skilled at detecting Depression in asking the right questions and trying to understand what someone is going through. There are also the people very well equipped to treat Depression, particularly in the earlier phases and before it becomes so severe that psychiatric help is required. So the first port of call should be the General Practitioner, from there the General Practitioner may decide to refer them to a Psychologist for psychological work or they may choose to prescribe an antidepressant medication or they may do both.*

Which treatments for Depression are the most effective?

A: *The combination of psychological treatment and antidepressant medication are the most commonly effective treatments. For the more severe forms of Depression, Electroconvulsive Therapy is a very effective form of treatment. There are other interesting and more modern forms of stimulating the brain, for example with magnetic energy, a treatment that's called Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation, is a treatment that has been explored and found to be quite effective for some forms of Depression, so it's a range of treatments, ranging from psychological management, lifestyle management, medication and brain stimulation in the more severe forms.*