

Low Mood

Feeling low, (depressed) is a very common problem. Most people will experience low mood at some point in their lives. This is especially the case for people who have longstanding health problems, as our physical and mental health are very closely linked. Signs that your mood is low include feeling sad a lot of the time, feeling tearful, or being more irritable. You may also feel less energetic and less keen to take part in your usual activities, lose your appetite (or perhaps eat more than usual) and neglect your appearance. Sometimes people can feel like things will never get better and that the future is hopeless.

During your recovery from Covid-19 you may have found that your physical symptoms were not taken seriously when you reported feeling ill several weeks or months after first getting Covid-19. You may be struggling to return to work, or get back to doing all the things you used to do before you were ill. There may also be some impact on your relationships with family or friends. You may also just be struggling to cope with the range of physical symptoms you are currently experiencing and may feel fearful and uncertain about what the future holds. Many of these feelings have also been reported by others experiencing Long Covid. All of the above may be made worse by social isolation as a result of the pandemic. It is therefore not surprising that you may be struggling with your mood.

Top Tips for Coping with Low Mood

- **Keep to a routine** – try to get up at your normal time and stick to a routine as much as possible.
- **Set achievable goals** – make a daily plan of activities you enjoy and give you a sense of achievement. Don't wait until you feel like doing things, instead do something each day whether you feel like it or not.
- **Stay connected** – talking to others can improve our mood, as it can help to put our problems in perspective. Even if you feel you don't have much to say, you can still listen and ask others about what they have been doing.
- **Eat well** – try to make sure you continue to eat regular healthy meals.
- **Don't drink too much alcohol** – When feeling low people sometimes start drinking more alcohol to cope. However, this will not help in the long run and could make your mood even worse.
- **Keep physically active** – Physical exercise is important for both your physical recovery, and your psychological wellbeing. There's evidence that exercise can help lift your mood. If you haven't exercised for a while, start gently by walking, perhaps around your home, building up to around the block. Keep this in line with any advice you've received from health professionals.

- Try spending some time every day reflecting on what has gone well, or something positive that has happened. Some people find that keeping a journal or record of things they are grateful for can really help to boost their mood and wellbeing.

Further Resources for Self Help

Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust website (www.cntw.nhs.uk) has a wide range of detailed self-help guides on coping with low mood. Go to the section on the website called 'Self Help Guides'. The guides are available in different formats including easy read guides, audio guides, and British Sign Language videos.

You may also want to look at the NHS approved apps list nhs.uk/apps-library/category/mental-health, and the Your Covid Recovery website (www.yourcovidrecovery.nhs.uk)

Getting More Support

If your low mood is not improving and it is starting to affect your daily life, it might be helpful to get further support. You can access confidential, psychological support from local NHS services that can provide a range of different treatments, which include talking therapies. You can ask your GP or health professional to refer you, or alternatively you can refer yourself by filling in a self-referral form on their website. Contact details are provided below:

Brighton and Hove: Brighton and Hove wellbeing Service, Tel 0300 002 0060 Monday-Friday 9am-5pm. You can refer yourself by filling in a short online referral form by visiting www.brightonandhovewellbeing.org

West Sussex: Time to Talk, Monday to Friday 8am-5pm. Chichester and Bognor area: 01273 265967; Adur, Arun, Chanttonbury, Worthing: 01903 703540; Mid Sussex: 01444 251084; Crawley and Horsham: 01403 620434. Self-referral through website www.sussexcommunity.nhs.uk, then type 'Time to Talk' into search box

If you have been diagnosed with Long Covid and live in West Sussex you can access the **Time to Talk Health** service which is staffed by a range of professionals with specialist training and experience in supporting people with various health conditions, including long covid. **Their phone number is 01273 666480.** Alternatively you can self-refer by visiting www.sussexcommunity.nhs.uk/ttth

East Sussex: Health in Mind, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Tel: 0300 00 30130, or self-refer by visiting www.healthinmind.org.uk. For people who have been diagnosed with long covid, please contact the **Health in Mind Long Term Conditions** Service using the same contact details as above.

If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts please contact your GP urgently and/or call the Sussex Mental Healthline on 0300 5000 101. They are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. You can also call the Samaritans on 116 123, or text SHOUT to 85258 to the Shout Crisis Text Line.