

Fact Sheet 1.

Sleeping Well

Having a good night's sleep is important for maintaining good health. The body needs the opportunity to recharge from the day's activities. Experiencing difficulty sleeping, however, is a common problem. Lack of sleep can lead to:

- Irritability
- Lack of energy
- Poor concentration.

Good quality sleep isn't necessarily a long sleep – it's having what doctors call 'deep sleep' and 'dream sleep'. Most 'deep sleep' occurs during the first five hours after falling asleep. Even if you sleep for only four or five hours, you can still get about the same amount of 'deep sleep' as someone who sleeps for eight to ten hours.

Illness or pain can disrupt sleep. Depression, particularly, can lead to:

- Difficulty in getting to sleep
- Poor quality sleep
- Less sleep
- Frequently waking during the night
- Waking very early in the morning and being unable to get back to sleep.

Poor quality 'deep sleep' can lead to:

- Tiredness during the day
- Poor concentration
- Irritability
- Aches and pains in the muscles and bones
- An immune system that doesn't work well, leading to more frequent illness
- Longer periods of depression.

Our ability to get good quality sleep can be disrupted by physical illness, infections, pain during the night and psychological stress.

Depression disrupts your sleep patterns and it's essential to try and restore a regular sleep pattern to make a full recovery. The sleep-wake cycle and you -

Think back over the last two weeks. Have you:

- Felt tired all the time?
- Spent more time in bed than usual?
- Had poor quality or fewer hours of sleep?
- Napped during the day?
- Cut down on physical activities?

If you've answered **YES** to one or more of these questions, the information that follows can help you get the sleep you need.

Tips for improving your sleep - There are a number of things you can do to improve your sleep.

❖ When you wake up in the morning

- Get out of bed as soon as you wake. Don't go back to sleep or try to make up for 'lost sleep'.
- Try to get up at about the same time each morning, perhaps around 7am to 7.30am.
- Go outside into the fresh air.
- Do some physical activity, for example, go for a walk.

❖ During the day

- Do not nap. If you nap, you'll be less tired when you go to bed and you'll probably take longer to fall asleep.
- If you're worrying about things during the night, set aside some time for problem-solving during the day. Identify problems that are causing you stress and solve them using Structured Problem-Solving (SPS) – see *beyondblue website* Fact sheet 10: Changing your thinking.
- Keep a sleep-wake diary.
- Review your sleep-wake progress with your doctor at each visit.
- During the day, try to be physically active.
- Avoid drinking caffeine after 4pm and try not to drink more than two cups of caffeine-type drinks each day e.g. coffee, strong tea, cola or energy drinks.

❖ Before going to bed

- Avoid going to bed too early. It isn't the right time for 'deep sleep'.
- Go to bed at around 10pm to 10:30pm.
- Avoid using alcohol to help you sleep. As the alcohol is broken down in your body, it causes you to sleep less deeply and to wake more frequently.
- Don't smoke within an hour or two of going to bed. Smoking stimulates your nervous system.
- Don't go to bed hungry or with a full bladder.
- Regular exercise can improve your sleep, but avoid vigorous exercise late in the evening.
- Allow yourself time to wind down before going to bed. If you are working or studying, stop at least 30 minutes before bedtime and do something relaxing.
- Use your bed only for sleep and sex so that you learn to associate your bed with sleep.
- Avoid taking sleeping pills. If you do need to take sleeping pills, try not to take them for longer than a week because they can be addictive.

❖ While you sleep

- Try to make your bedroom quiet, dim and cool.
- Avoid too many blankets and electric blankets. If you're too hot, you won't go into 'deep sleep'.

❖ Overcoming long-term sleeping problems

For some people, sleeping problems may last for weeks, months or even years. Not surprisingly this may lead to anxiety about getting to sleep, which in turn makes the problem even worse. It can be helpful to take specific steps to break the cycle of feeling anxious and restless in bed. Below are some steps to follow when you can't get to sleep.

1. Get up if you can't sleep after trying for 15 to 20 minutes. Staying in bed when you're feeling restless and anxious is unlikely to result in sleep.
2. Do something quiet and distracting, for example play cards, read, knit or enjoy a warm bath. If your mind is very active or you can't stop worrying, it may be helpful to concentrate on something else, such as doing a crossword or watching television. By distracting yourself from your worries, you may find it easier to wind down and become sleepy.
3. Go back to bed when you feel more relaxed and sleepy.
4. If you're still awake after a further 15 to 20 minutes, get out of bed again. Repeat this process until you fall asleep shortly after returning to bed.

Source: www.beyondblue.org.au

Fact Sheet 2.

Keeping Active

Keeping active is a good way to help prevent or manage mild to moderate depression and anxiety. Getting started or motivated to exercise and staying active can be difficult for people with depression.

❖ HOW DOES EXERCISE HELP WITH DEPRESSION?

There are many views as to how exercise helps people with depression. Exercise may block negative thoughts or distract people from daily worries. If a person exercises with others, exercise may increase social contact. Compared to people without depression, depressed people generally have lower fitness levels. Increased fitness may lift mood. Exercise may increase levels of neurotransmitters (chemical messengers in the brain) that have been found to be in short supply in depressed people. Exercise may increase the level of these chemicals as well as the level of endorphins, which are chemicals in the brain that have 'mood-lifting' qualities.

❖ IS IT EFFECTIVE IN HELPING DEPRESSION?

A number of studies have found that exercise helps depression. Jogging, weightlifting, walking, stationary cycling and resistance training (pushing or pulling weights with arms and legs) have all been found to be helpful in preventing or treating mild to moderate depression. In older people, exercise has been found to be as helpful as antidepressant medication or social contact in treating depression. The benefits that can be attained from exercise depend on the amount of exercise that is undertaken. A recent study has reported that total energy expenditure is a key factor in the remission of depression, leading the authors to recommend that individuals should be encouraged to achieve at least the minimum recommended levels of energy expenditure of 30 minutes or more of moderate intensity physical activity on most and preferably all, days of the week.

❖ WHY IS KEEPING ACTIVE IMPORTANT?

Keeping active can help a person stay *physically* fit and *mentally* healthy. Research shows that keeping active can:

- help lift mood
- help people get a good night's sleep
- increase energy levels
- help block negative thoughts and/or distract people from daily worries
- help people feel less alone if they exercise or socialise with others
- increase well-being.

❖ KEEPING ACTIVE

People with severe depression may find it hard to do simple things such as getting up and dressed in the morning. They may also find it difficult to become motivated or stick to a plan.

Tips to get started

Start simple

It's important to increase activity levels gradually. Start by planning simple daily activities such as shopping, driving, gardening, writing letters or completing simple household tasks. Completing these activities can increase a person's self-confidence and build the motivation needed to take on more energetic activities.

Do what is enjoyable

People with depression often lose interest and pleasure in doing things they once enjoyed. This loss of pleasure and enjoyment in life can make symptoms worse. To reverse this negative cycle, plan activities that are enjoyable, interesting, relaxing or satisfying. These activities are important in overcoming depression. At first, they may not feel as enjoyable as before, but with persistence, the pleasure should eventually return.

Include other people

People with depression often don't feel like socialising with others. However, spending time alone can make a person feel cut off from the world, making it harder to recover. That's why it's important to participate in activities with family members and close friends – and to accept social invitations, even though it's the last thing the person may want to do. Keeping connected with people helps increase levels of well-being, confidence and opportunities to participate in physical activities.

Make a plan

Planning a routine can help people to become more active. Make sure some form of exercise is scheduled each day. Try to stick to the plan as closely as possible, but be flexible. If an activity runs overtime or cannot be completed, shorten or skip it and move onto the next one at the appointed time. Ideas for activities to include in a personal schedule:

<p><u>Keep Fit</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Go for a 20 minute walk• Ride a bike• Do some gardening• Go bushwalking• Go to the gym• Go swimming	<p><u>Entertain yourself</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Read a newspaper book or magazine• Write a letter/email• Surf the internet• Play a solo card game• Do a sudoku or crossword
<p><u>Socialize</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organize a video evening• Invite a friend around for coffee• Visit a neighbour• Phone a friend for a chat• Take children and/or pets to the playground or park	<p><u>Away from home</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Visit a friend or family member• Join a club• Go to a market• Visit a museum• Visit an art gallery• Visit the library• Go to a movie
<p><u>Around the house</u></p> <p>Cook something new Listen to music/radio Do some gardening Play in the backyard with children or pets</p>	<p><u>Pamper yourself</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have a bubble bath• Buy some flowers• Lie on the beach and read a book

❖ WHO CAN HELP WITH ACTIVITY PLANS ?

While there are many things that can be done to help people become active, some people may need help to get moving and stay on track. There are many organisations and people in the community who can help. Ask a practice nurse, GP, midwife, Plunket nurse, counsellor or Maori health provider.

Things to remember

- *Depression and anxiety are manageable. With the right treatment most people recover from depression and/or anxiety*
- *Keeping active can help manage or prevent mild to moderate depression and anxiety*
- *There are things a person can do to keep active, at little or no cost*
- *Help an information is available for people with depression who want to keep active*

Source: www.beyondblue.org.au

Fact Sheet 3.

Tips to promote attachment when feeding:

- A mother who cannot or prefers not to breast feed can still evoke the warmth and responsiveness implicit in healthy breast feeding.
- Establish yourself as the primary feeder. Do not assume that just because a baby is taking a bottle that 'anyone' can feed her. Babies need nurturance and reassurance from their primary caregiver and consistent feeding is one way to communicate this. Fathers/partners can promote attachment this way also.
- Look at your baby while feeding. She will feel the acknowledgement and you will, too.
- Feed your baby with skin-to-skin contact when possible. Allowing your baby to smell your skin – and vice versa – activates the basic attachment system and provides an opportunity for oxytocin to rise.
- Feed your baby 'on demand', not on a schedule. Responding to his signals of need will fortify his sense of well-being and strengthen his trust in you.
- Be aware of potential distress that can occur when a baby must wait for a feed due to the time required for formula heating or preparation. If possible, hold your baby during this time and provide cuddles and comfort.
- Carrying baby, comforting touch and massage are also ways of increasing the flow of hormones like oxytocin and deepening the parent-baby bond. These strategies are available to all families regardless of feeding method.

Source: www.centreforattachment.com

Fact Sheet 4.

How to help someone with depression.

How do you let a person know that you think they might need help? It's not always easy to know how to help someone who is experiencing depression. It can be hard to know what to say or do. We all respond to situations and talk about things differently. The following approaches are designed with this in mind. They offer you a number of ways to help a friend or family member.

❖ **Initiate talk**

Taking that first step towards helping a person who appears to be in need, requires some thought and care. Choose a mutually convenient time and place.

❖ **Listen more than talk**

Sometimes, when a person you care about wants to talk, they're not necessarily seeking advice, but just need to talk about some of their concerns. Listening, rather than talking, is a way of understanding how someone feels. This is called *active* listening. You may like to save any suggestions, solutions or advice for a later discussion and instead, offer neutral comments such as 'I can see how that would bother you'.

❖ **Use appropriate body language**

Body language plays an important role in helping the person you care about to feel more comfortable. To show you are listening, try to maintain eye contact and sit in a relaxed position.

❖ **Use open-ended questions**

Open-ended questions are a good way to start a conversation. They require more information and can't be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'. Some examples are 'So tell me about..?' or 'What's troubling you?'.

❖ **Difficult conversations**

Sometimes, if people are experiencing the symptoms of depression, they may find it awkward to discuss their thoughts and emotions openly. They may even get angry with you when you ask if they're okay. The following tips may be helpful when approaching a difficult conversation:

- Stay calm
- Be firm, fair and consistent
- If you are wrong, admit it
- Don't lose control.

❖ **Spend time together**

Often, just taking the time to talk to or be with the person lets them know you care and can help you understand what they're going through.

❖ **Take care of yourself**

As a family member or friend of someone who is experiencing depression, it's important to look after yourself. Take time to relax and enjoy things you like doing. There are organisations that can provide support, education and information. Practical ways to help. People with depression often don't see the point of doing anything and may feel that no one can really help them. The type and amount of help you're able to provide may depend upon your relationship with the person experiencing depression. Helping someone who isn't ready to recognise they need assistance may be very difficult. Below are some do's and don'ts for helping a person with depression.

DO – You can help someone by:

- Spending time talking about their experiences
- Indicating that you've noticed a change in their behaviour
- Letting them know you're there to listen without being judgmental
- Suggesting they see a doctor or health professional
- Assisting them to make an appointment with a doctor or health professional
- Going with the person to the doctor or health professional
- Asking how their appointment went
- Assisting them to find information about depression
- Talking openly about depression
- Encouraging them to become involved in social activities
- Encouraging them to exercise and eat well
- Providing a change of scenery occasionally
- Maintaining contact
- Encouraging other close friends and family to adopt a similar, inclusive approach.

DON 'T – It's unhelpful to:

- Pressure them to 'snap out of it', 'get their act together' or 'cheer up'
- Stay away or avoid them
- Tell them they just need to stay busy or get out more
- Pressure them to party more or wipe out how they're feeling with drugs or alcohol
- Assume the problem will just go away

Source www.beyondblue.org.au

Fact Sheet 5.

Fathers

Strange New Worlds: The Voyage into Fatherhood

by Lauren Porter

Women's liberation is just a lot of foolishness. It's the men who are discriminated against. They can't bear children. And no one's likely to do anything about that. ~Golda Meir, world leader

Fatherhood is pretending the present you love most is "soap-on-a-rope." ~Bill Cosby, actor, comedian

From the moment of that first contraction, the world can appear to forget fathers. Everything suddenly revolves around breasts, bonding and maternal instinct, leaving fathers to wonder where and how they fit in. Yet the process of becoming a father is an equally important birth. As with women, the arrival of a baby gives rise to a new identity for men. Men experience the highs and the lows, the confusion and need for support, and the bold exploration into the final frontier called fatherhood.

Some people say that focusing on mothers is unnecessary, that babies don't care and caregivers are interchangeable. Unfortunately, this isn't true. Babies emerge from the womb preferring their mother's voices, knowing their mother's scent and wanting their mother's company. This doesn't mean that another person can't do the nurturing and do it well. It just means that physiologically and emotionally, mothers are primed to do this job. However, that's not the end of the story.

Fathers represent another way of looking at life - the possibility of an alternative dialogue. ~Louise Kaplan, psychiatrist and author

Babies may need their mothers but that's not the complete picture. Every relationship in a child's life sculpts the brain architecture and imprints a map for negotiating the world. Just as plants need sunshine along with soil and water, babies need more than just one important person in their lives. Fathers – or significant others of any kind, including grandparents, same sex partners and close friends – bring another way of being and being loved to the lives of their children.

Fathers offer children a different lens, a unique and alternative way to view the world. Mothers are often the source of comfort and reassurance, the safe haven from life's trials. While fathers possess immense nurturing abilities, too, they are also often well suited to being the base from which babies explore the world. Because they are often not the all day feeders and all night comforters, they have the energy and excitement to introduce babies to new people, new games and new ideas.

It is a wise father that knows his own child. ~ William Shakespeare

Getting to know your baby, discovering who she or is, their likes and dislikes, their temperament and style is paramount. Having a baby is like moving to a strange new country. The best thing you can do is buy a good map and learn how to order off a menu. Start small and learn about this new creature. You will soon become fascinated and will likely find that your insights are helpful to your partner as well. Research shows that fathers are typically better able to describe their baby's behaviours and personalities, likely because their perspective affords them some objectivity.

The most important thing a father can do for his children is to love their mother. ~ David O. McKay, teacher, pastor

Sometimes the biggest struggle for dads is in those first few months of life, the time when the only jobs available for them seem to be changing nappies and making tea. It is important to remember that this is a huge time of change for everyone and that often the best way to parent your child is to support her

mother. If you have an older child, your role with them can expand and grow as you become their temporary focus. Not only is this sort of practical assistance likely to ease the stress and assist the mother-baby bonding that leads to better bonding with everyone, but it also begins an important lesson for baby: how adults understand love.

While what we do with our children is obviously critical, it is in the quality and essence of our adult relationships that children learn the most about their future. A child who is nurtured but never sees mum and dad speak and act in a supportive and loving way toward each other misses out on the big picture. If you have a daughter, you are teaching her what to expect of a man; if you have a son, he is learning about manhood itself.

We give our children a great if unseen gift when we wrestle with our own expectations and are able to consciously let go of those that are destructive to their well-being. ~ Jon Kabat Zinn, professor

It's not always so easy, however. The shift from husband to father, wife to mother, and couple to family can be an intense one, often pitting the baby's needs against those of the parents. Men can end up feeling confused about the part they play and the feelings they experience. Fathers report that they miss their partner's time and attention, that her focus is solely on the baby, that they are sleep deprived and cranky, that the baby has changed their life in ways they didn't predict (and aren't too happy with). It is critical to realise that these changes are both normal and temporary. A baby has intense needs and meeting these needs may be tiring work, but it is time well spent. You are laying the foundation for a happy, well-adjusted child, not to mention a child who will be easier to parent as they grow.

Remain steadfast in the belief in your partnership. Remember that if you feel your union is under stress, it is time to reassess your expectations and priorities, not blame your child. A mother and father whose commitment to and love for each other is strong can endure this short-term adjustment to a new phase of life. Before you realise it, you will regain your ability for free time and private moments and you will arrive there with a sense of pride in your accomplishments as parents, not at the expense of your child's development.

My father used to play with my brother and me in the yard. Mother would come out and say, "You're tearing up the grass." "We're not raising grass," Dad would reply. "We're raising boys." ~Harmon Killebrew, baseball hall-of-fame star

In the meantime, if you are feeling left out, take heart. You are more important than you think and you can enjoy your influence. Your special way of interacting with and thinking about your child gives them new avenues to develop, new options in life and a belief in themselves as most important. For example, research into breastfeeding shows that one of the strongest predictors of whether a mother will breastfeed or not is the father's feelings about breastfeeding and his support. Don't assume that breastfeeding – or any other mother-baby issue – is out of your reach. Fathers have great influence and it is important to your baby that you educate yourself and take a stand. You have a huge impact on your baby's physical, emotional and psychological health.

Sometimes the poorest man leaves his children the richest inheritance. ~ Ruth E. Renkel, author

Finally, it is important to remember that you are in this for the long haul. Just like the farmer who can't rush the crops, parenting is an enduring process that requires great care and often doesn't produce a harvest until much later on. You may be surprised at the fruits of your labour. The early years of parenting are the most demanding, but also the most important. Like most things that matter, they require a huge investment of time, energy and feeling. But the transformation defies words. If you can step into this new world and embrace the voyage, you will find it is definitely worth the trip.

Source: www.centreforattachment.com

Fact Sheet 6.

Stress and depression

It is important to note that stress is not depression. However, acute distress associated with tough times can occur and may be a risk factor for depression if it persists.

Stress management

Stress is a response to an event or situation. It can be positive or negative. Stress is common in daily life and may be associated with work, family or personal relationships. It usually means that something is happening that's causing worry and affecting how we are thinking and feeling.

Think about what you've been doing and how you've been feeling over the last two weeks. Have you:

1. Found it hard to relax most of the time? YES NO
2. Felt stressed and overwhelmed most of the time? YES NO
3. Felt panicky and anxious most of the time? YES NO

If you've answered YES to one or more of these questions, it might be helpful to use the information in this fact sheet to reduce your stress.

Stress management teaches you about:

- Managing stress and anxiety symptoms
- Breathing exercises to decrease your stress and anxiety
- Relaxing and the importance of physical activity.

Ways to reduce Stress

Stress is common in daily life and may be associated with work, family or personal relationships. Whatever the cause, there are some simple steps that can help you to reduce stress.

Postpone major life changes

- Making major changes in your life can be stressful at any time. If you're feeling stressed or anxious, it's probably a good idea to try to avoid moving house or changing jobs.

Leave them to a time when you're feeling better.

Resolve personal conflicts

- Stress in personal relationships often contributes to depression. Talk to a counsellor or psychologist who can help you find ways to address your problems.

Do the things you enjoy

- You may find you are enjoying yourself less and spending more time worrying. In order to relax effectively, you need to allocate time to do the things you enjoy, such as exercising,

meditating, reading, gardening or listening to music.

Control your work

- Take control of your work by avoiding long hours and additional responsibilities. This can be difficult, but small changes can make a difference.

- Learn to say 'No' more often. Create a balance between work and the things you enjoy doing. Don't allow yourself to be overwhelmed by new commitments.
- Make sure you have enough time to rest, relax and exercise.
- Part of learning to relax requires you to set aside some time in the day to do the things you enjoy.

Exercise regularly

- Physical exercise such as walking, swimming, dancing, playing golf or going to the gym can help relieve the tension in your muscles and relax your mind.
- Try to do some physical exercise every day, even if it's just going for a walk.

Seek help

- Talking to a friend, doctor, counsellor or someone else you trust, can help to relieve your stress. Asking for help and support at home, at work or in your other activities can also reduce stress.

Slow breathing exercise

Have you noticed that you're breathing too fast? Stress and anxiety can affect your heart rate and breathing patterns. A relaxed breathing rate is usually 10 to 12 breaths per minute.

Practise this exercise three to four times a day when you're feeling stressed or anxious so that you can use this as a short term coping strategy.

1. Time the number of breaths you take in one minute. Breathing in, then out is counted as one breath.
2. Breathe in, hold your breath and count to five. Then breathe out and say the word 'relax' to yourself in a calm, soothing manner.
3. Start breathing in through your nose and out slowly through your mouth, in a six-second cycle. Breathe in for three seconds and out for three seconds. This will produce a breathing rate of 10 breaths per minute. In the beginning, it can be helpful to time your breathing using the second hand of a watch or clock.
4. Count to yourself.
5. Continue breathing in a six-second cycle for at least five minutes or until the symptoms of overbreathing have settled. After practising this exercise, time the number of breaths

you take in one minute. Practise the slow breathing exercise each day before breakfast, lunch, dinner and bedtime. Use the technique whenever you feel anxious. Gradually, you'll be familiar enough with the exercise to stop timing yourself.

Practise this exercise three to four times each day, so that it becomes easy to use as a short-term coping strategy when you feel anxious.

Muscle tension exercise

When you are feeling anxious, your muscles become tense. When your muscles remain tense for long periods, you can start to develop aches and pains, fatigue, headaches and difficulty

breathing. Take a few minutes to do this exercise. It will help you understand how muscle tension can cause pain and fatigue.

1. Hold a piece of paper in your hand and stretch your arm out in front of you.
2. Keep holding the paper for a few minutes without moving your arm.

You will probably notice that your arm feels tired after only a few minutes and may even start to ache in some places. Imagine how your arm would feel if you continued to hold that piece of paper for a number of hours. Although the paper is not heavy, keeping your muscles tense for any length of time can cause pain.

Muscle relaxation exercise

This exercise helps to reduce physical and mental tension. Practise this exercise regularly and at the first signs of muscle tension.

1. Sit in a comfortable chair in a quiet room
2. Put your feet flat on the floor and rest your hands in your lap
3. Close your eyes
4. Do the slow breathing exercise for three minutes
5. After three minutes of slow breathing, start the muscle relaxation exercise below
6. Tense each of your muscle groups for 10 seconds, then relax for 10 seconds, in the following order:
 - **Hands:** clench your hands into fists, then relax
 - **Lower arms:** bend your hands up at the wrists, then relax
 - **Upper arms:** bend your arms up at the elbow, then relax
 - **Shoulders:** lift your shoulders up, then relax
 - **Neck:** stretch your neck gently to the left, then forward, then to the right, then backwards in a slow rolling motion, then relax
 - **Forehead and scalp:** raise your eyebrows, then relax
 - **Eyes:** close your eyes tightly, then relax
 - **Jaw:** clench your teeth, then relax
 - **Chest:** breathe in deeply, then breathe out and relax
 - **Stomach:** pull your tummy in, then relax
 - **Upper back:** pull your shoulders forward, then relax
 - **Lower back:** while sitting, roll your back into a smooth arc, then relax
 - **Buttocks:** tighten your buttocks, then relax
 - **Thighs:** push your feet firmly into the floor, then relax
 - **Calves:** lift your toes off the ground, then relax and
 - **Feet:** gently curl your toes down, then relax.
7. Continue slow breathing for five more minutes, enjoying the feeling of relaxation
8. As you become better at relaxation, it can be more interesting to combine these exercises with memories of relaxing situations eg. lying on a beach or doing a favourite activity. A full session of relaxation takes about 15 to 20 minutes. Once you are good at relaxing your muscles, start relaxing tense parts of your body during the day while you are going about your daily activities.

Source: www.beyondblue.org.au

Fact Sheet 7.

Complementary Therapies

It's not uncommon for people with depression or anxiety to try to manage the illness themselves. It's important to know that while there are other non-medical treatments available these may be either helpful or harmful. Treatments that are helpful include increasing physical exercise or getting enough sleep. Harmful strategies include drinking more alcohol and smoking marijuana. Some non-medical treatments have undergone scientific testing and may be tried if the depression or anxiety is not severe or life threatening.

The tables below show the range of other treatments available and the evidence for their use in treating depression (Table 1) and anxiety (Table 2). Treatments in the 'Poor Evidence' box need more research to determine their helpfulness.

Table 1. Evidence -base of alternative treatments for depression

Good Evidence	Some Evidence	Poor Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• St John's Wort (herb)• Physical exercise• Self-help books involving cognitive therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Acupuncture• Massage therapy• Negative air ionisation (for winter therapy)• Relaxation therapy• SAME (S-Adenosylmethionine)• Folate• Yoga breathing exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ginseng• Lemon balm• Painkillers• Vervain• Colour therapy• Prayer• Chocolate

* SAME is an amino acid that occurs naturally in cells.

Vervain is a traditional herbal remedy for depression consisting of the aerial parts of a flowering plant. Source: Jorm AF, Christensen H, Griffiths KM, Rodgers B. 'Effectiveness of complementary and self-help treatments for depression'. MJA 2002; 176 Suppl May 20: p. S84-96.

Table 2. Evidence -base of alternative treatments for anxiety

Good Evidence ¹	Some Evidence	Poor Evidence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical exercise • Relaxation therapy • Bibliotherapy² 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acupuncture • Music • Autogenic training³ • Meditation • Inositol⁴ • Alcohol avoidance • Dance/movement therapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bach flower remedies Berocca Ginger Herbal preparations Homeopathy Lemongrass Licorice Magnesium Passionflower St John's Wort Valerian Vitamin C 5-Hydroxytryptophan massage/touch therapy humour prayer yoga caffeine reduction carbohydrate rich, protein-poor diet nicotine avoidance

Source: www.beyondblue.org.au

There are many complementary and alternative therapies that people use for depression. The Ministerial Committee on Alternative Health has identified 76 complementary and alternative therapies practiced in New Zealand⁵. You can read more about these at www.mentalhealth.org.nz Information and resource service - Complementary and Alternative Therapies and Mental Health.

Some popular therapies include: massage, acupuncture and St John's Wort. For more information www.granitescientific.com offers a forum for sharing current research on postpartum depression; inflammation, Omega-3s, and depression; the health effects of psychological trauma; and breastfeeding.

Omega-3 Fatty Acids:

Omega-3 fatty acids have been promoted in the lay press for treatment of various medical disorders. There is increasing research evidence indicating their possible value in the treatment of mood disorders, including depression in the perinatal period. Evidence supporting this theory include; first, an epidemiological link between fish intake and depressive mood states, including postnatal depression. Second, laboratory studies show correlations between low omega- 3 fatty acid blood levels and depression, and also depletion of

¹ The evidence for the alternative treatments in this column pertains to specific types of anxiety disorders ranging from generalised anxiety disorder to obsessive compulsive disorder.

² Bibliotherapy is the use of written materials or computer programs, or listening to or viewing audiotapes or videotapes, for the purpose of gaining understanding or solving problems relevant to a person's development or therapeutic needs. Source: Jorm AF, Christensen H, Griffiths KM, Parslow RA, Rodgers B, Blewitt KA. "Effectiveness of complementary and self-help treatments for anxiety disorders". *MJA*, 2004, Vol. 181, no. 7, October 2004, S35.

³ Autogenic training is a self-relaxation procedure that is based on passive concentration on bodily perceptions (eg. heaviness and warmth of legs).

⁴ Inositol is an isomer of glucose and it occurs in the normal human diet with around one gram per day being consumed. Source: Jorm AF, Christensen H, Griffiths KM, Parslow RA, Rodgers B, Blewitt KA. "Effectiveness of complementary and self-help treatments for anxiety disorders". *MJA*.

⁵ Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand 2003. Complementary and Alternative Therapies and Mental Health.

omega-3 during the perinatal period in non-depressed women. Third, there are a number of intervention studies showing the benefit of omega-3 for the treatment of mood disorders. A 2008 Australian study concluded: 'This is formally a negative study, suggesting that there is no benefit for omega-3 fatty acids over placebo in treating PND. The reason could be that the study was underpowered due to recruitment difficulties and therefore we suggest that it may be unwise to interpret this result as conclusive. Omega-3 is a natural product that is a safe and well-tolerated treatment. Further research is therefore needed in this area to establish whether omega-3 fatty acids are an effective treatment for PND'⁶.

St John's Wort:

St. John's wort is a herbal treatment for depression. You can buy it in pharmacies and health food shops. It comes as tablets. They have concentrated extracts from the plant in them. But exactly how much is in the tablets varies from brand to brand. St. John's wort is sold as a food supplement, not as medicine. This means it hasn't been tested for safety in the same way as medicines.

Other guidance says that St. John's wort and other alternative medicines should not be used during pregnancy and while breastfeeding until we know more about their safety for babies. Most studies of St. John's wort in people who have depression at times other than after having a baby don't look properly at side effects. The most common side effects seem to be stomach problems (such as sickness or diarrhoea), dizziness or confusion, tiredness, and a dry mouth. People in some studies also said St. John's wort gave them headaches or reduced their enjoyment of sex.

The biggest problem with St. John's wort is that it interferes with lots of other medications. For example, you shouldn't take St. John's wort if you are taking:

- The contraceptive pill. St. John's wort makes the pill less effective, so there is a higher chance you'll get pregnant
- A drug called simvastatin (brand name Zocor). This is a medicine used to treat or prevent high cholesterol and heart disease
- Drugs for migraine called triptans
- Drugs for epilepsy
- Warfarin, and similar drugs used to prevent blood clots
- Drugs for eczema
- Drugs for HIV
- Antidepressants

Source: www.besttreatments.bmj.com

⁶ Rees, A. Austin, M. Parker, G. Role of omega-3 fatty acids as a treatment for perinatal depression: randomised double-blind placebo-controlled trial. Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, vol 2, issue 3, March 2008 p199-205.