A devastating illness, affecting one in four women and one in 10 men at some point in their lives

Black dog, the blues, down in the dumps, the vapours – whatever you call it, it’s a rare human who doesn’t feel low from time to time. But occasional sad days are a million miles from true depression.

Though many casually use the term “depressed” to describe their glum moments, the condition is much more than simply feeling melancholy.

The fact is that depression is an illness, where sadness is persistent and intense and feelings of helplessness and hopelessness are accompanied by debilitating physical effects.

As Depression Alliance notes, these include disturbed sleep, loss of energy and even physical aches and pains.

Contrary to what some may believe, “snapping out” of a true depression is impossible; the only way to escape its clutches is to seek proper medical advice.

UK health charities are keen to share the warning signs of this devastating illness, which affects one in four women and one in 10 men at some point in their lives.

“Sometimes people may not realise how depressed they are, especially if they have been feeling the same for a long time, if they have been trying to cope with their depression by keeping themselves busy, or if their depressive symptoms are more physical than emotional,” explains Depression Alliance.

“As a general rule, if you have experienced four or more of these symptoms, for most of the day nearly every day, for over two weeks, then you should seek help.”

They include:
- Tiredness and loss of energy
- Persistent low mood or sadness
- Loss of self-confidence and self-esteem
- Feeling hopeless and helpless
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling tearful
- Feeling guilty-ridden
- Not being able to enjoy things that are usually pleasurable
- Sleeping problems - difficulties in getting to sleep or waking much earlier than usual
- Avoiding other people
- Finding it hard to function at work/college/school
- Loss of appetite
- Loss of sex drive
- Physical aches and pains
- Thinking about suicide and death
- Self-harm

The symptoms of depression can have a knock-on effect on daily life, with work suffering, social contact falling away and increased difficulties in home and family life.

“Depression can come on gradually, so it can be difficult to notice something is wrong.”

Often it takes a friend or family member to suggest there may be a problem. And while there is no single cause, it can be trig-
A research team in Japan used stem cell cultivation to create hair follicles from scratch. These follicles were then implanted into the hairless mice where they grew hairs.

The stem cells were taken from a balding man and the next step is to implant the created follicles into a human head in order to win the battle against balding, experienced by more than seven million men in the UK.

The technique may also allow men to re-grow hair in their original colour, even if they’ve already started to go grey.

The researchers from Tokyo University believe a cure for baldness could be engineered within three years. It will be an expensive treatment, however, and they believe it could be more useful in reconstructive situations where traditional hair transplant operations aren’t possible.

And there’s more research to be done, as the team do not yet know if it would be possible to recreate an entire head of hair. In this study, the hairs had to be implanted one at a time, which is fine on a mouse but a rather different proposition on an entire bald head!