

# Depression and anxiety

A 29-year-old woman presented with depression and anxiety. She does not have a job (was a secretary), and feels very low, empty, and has trouble getting out of bed. She also suffers from panic attacks. Her problems stem from her divorce 8 years ago, when she was stalked by her violent husband. The panic attacks started 2 years ago. She has a lack of concentration and drive, and is worried she will be unable to cope. She has no confidence, and suffers from palpitations and sweating attacks.

# Depression and anxiety

She found counselling helpful (has requested more) and her fiancé is supportive. Her fiancé's mother was depressed and committed suicide.

The problems are not related to her cycle.

# Depression and anxiety

## DH

- Was prescribed antidepressants by GP 2 years ago for her panic attacks, but has only been depressed since coming off these.
- Has taken a herbal sedative product for the last week.

## Soch

- She used to go to the gym, which helped her depression – intends to restart
- Drinks almost no alcohol.

# Depression and anxiety

## Diet

- Breakfast: White toast + butter + marmalade
- Lunch: White sandwich with tuna, ham or egg
- Dinner: Chicken/beef/ lamb (no fish) + 4-5 vegetables + crumble/trifle
- 3 pieces of fruit/day
- Decaff tea x 2 cups; no coffee

# Depression and anxiety

## CVS

- Sometimes wakes up at night – and always in the morning – with palpitations, which she calms by breathing
- Extremities are very cold

## RS

- 4-5 colds per year – sometimes goes to chest
- Nose always blocked – has to use Sinex (phenylephrine –  $\alpha_1$ -adrenergic agonist) or wakes with blocked nose.

# Depression and anxiety

## NS

- Feels as if 'in a daze'.
- Headaches, with 'band round head', sometimes every other day: if doesn't take analgesics this can lead to migraine and nausea, which can last half a day.
- Sometimes memory is poor.

## GIT

- Has 'gone off food', esp. breakfast.
- Sometimes has diarrhoea in a.m. – feels 'hot and bothered'.

# Depression and anxiety

## Gynae

- Has been on Pill for 5 years; took a break 1 year ago for 6 months, but this made no difference to mental and emotional problems.
- Before she was on Pill periods were heavy, lasted 1 week.
- Still has dysmenorrhoea – takes painkillers.

# Depression and anxiety

## Prescription

Rx1

*Hypericum perforatum* (St John's Wort)  
– 1 tablet 3 times daily x 4 weeks

Rx2

*Withania somnifera* (Ashwagandha) + *Panax ginseng*  
(Korean Ginseng)  
– 2 tablets twice daily x 4 weeks



# Depression and anxiety

## Follow-up 4 weeks later

- Feels much better, with reduced depression and anxiety – noticed an improvement after about 3 weeks.
- She now has a job, working in a cleaner's, and has joined a gym; she finds that being around people is also helping.

All medication repeated.

# Depression and anxiety

## Follow-up 6 weeks later

- Has been fine taking Hypericum at 1 tab twice daily and Withania & Ginseng at 2 tabs twice daily.
- Has been seeing a psychotherapist, who taught her how to deal with panic attacks.

All medication repeated, Hypericum at 1 tab twice daily and Withania & Ginseng at 1 tab 3 times daily.

She phoned 3 months later to say that she had weaned herself off the tablets while on holiday and was coping well.