



Depression

Guide to Good Health

Healthy Living Guide

- ▶ Asthma
- ▶ Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS)
- ▶ Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- ▶ Coronary Artery Disease (CAD)
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Hyperlipidemia
- ▶ Hypertension
- ▶ Osteoarthritis (OA)
- ▶ Osteoporosis
- ▶ Type 2 Diabetes
- ▶ Back Pain
- ▶ Chronic Pain
- ▶ Healthy Eating
- ▶ Healthy Pregnancy
- ▶ Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA)
- ▶ Sleep
- ▶ Smoking Cessation
- ▶ Stress Management
- ▶ Weight Management
- ▶ Bariatric Surgery

What is Depression?

Everyone occasionally feels blue or sad, but these feelings are usually fleeting and pass within a couple of days. When a person has a depressive disorder, it interferes with daily life, normal functioning, and causes pain for both the person with the disorder and those who care about him or her. Depression is a common but serious illness, and most that experience it need treatment to get better.

Many people with a depressive illness never seek treatment. But the vast majority, even those with the most severe depression, can get better with treatment.

Overview & Facts

- Depression is a common and debilitating illness. It is treatable, but the majority of persons with depression do not receive even minimally adequate treatment.
- Depression is characterized by changes in mood, self-attitude, cognitive functioning, sleep, appetite, and energy level.
- Major depression is the leading cause of disability worldwide.
- Depression causes suffering, decreases quality of life, and causes impairment in social and occupational functioning.
- It is associated with increased health care costs as well as with higher rates of many chronic medical conditions.



Signs & Symptoms

People with depressive illnesses do not all experience the same symptoms. The severity, frequency and duration of symptoms will vary depending on the individual and his or her particular illness. Symptoms include:

- ✓ Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" feelings
- ✓ Feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism
- ✓ Feelings of guilt, worthlessness and/or helplessness
- ✓ Irritability, restlessness
- ✓ Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex
- ✓ Fatigue and decreased energy
- ✓ Difficulty concentrating, remembering details and making decisions
- ✓ Insomnia, early-morning wakefulness, or excessive sleeping
- ✓ Overeating or appetite loss
- ✓ Thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts
- ✓ Persistent aches or pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems that do not ease even with treatment

Causes

- There is no single known cause of depression. Rather, it likely results from a combination of genetic, biochemical, environmental, and psychological factors.
- Some types of depression tend to run in families, suggesting a genetic link. However, depression can occur in people without family histories of depression as well. Genetics research indicates that risk for depression results from the influence of multiple genes acting together with environmental or other factors.
- In addition, trauma, loss of a loved one, a difficult relationship, or any stressful situation may trigger a depressive episode. Subsequent depressive episodes may occur with or without an obvious trigger.

Risk Factors

Women

- Depression is more common in women than men
- Women are particularly more vulnerable to depression after giving birth. Many new mothers experience a brief episode of the "baby blues," but some will develop postpartum depression, a much more serious condition that requires active treatment and emotional support for the new mother.
- Some women may be susceptible to a severe form of premenstrual syndrome, called premenstrual dysphoric disorder.

Men

- Men are more likely than women to turn to alcohol or drugs when they are depressed, or become frustrated, discouraged, irritable, angry and sometimes abusive. Some men throw themselves into their work to avoid talking about their depression with family or friends, or engage in reckless, risky behavior. And even though more women attempt suicide, many more men die by suicide in the United States.



Risk Factors continued

Older Adults

- Depression is not a normal part of aging, and studies show that most seniors feel satisfied with their lives, despite increased physical ailments. However, when older adults do have depression, it may be overlooked because seniors may show different, less obvious symptoms, and may be less inclined to experience or acknowledge feelings of sadness or grief.
- Although many people assume that the highest rates of suicide are among the young, older white males age 85 and older actually have the highest suicide rate. Many have a depressive illness that their doctors may not detect, despite the fact that these suicide victims often visit their doctors within one month of their deaths.

Children and Adolescents

- A child with depression may pretend to be sick, refuse to go to school, cling to a parent, or worry that a parent may die. Older children may sulk, get into trouble at school, be negative and irritable, and feel misunderstood.
- Before puberty, boys and girls are equally likely to develop depressive disorders. By age 15, however, girls are twice as likely as boys to have experienced a major depressive episode.
- Depression in adolescence frequently co-occurs with other disorders such as anxiety, disruptive behavior, eating disorders or substance abuse. It can also lead to increased risk for suicide.



Questions to Ask/Important Information to Share with Your Provider

1. Share any family history of mental illness.
2. Share what changes have taken place in your life lately (include changes to your life situation such as a new job or new home, and physical changes such as trouble sleeping, loss of appetite or other illnesses).
3. Share what medications you have taken in the past.
4. Share alcohol and drug history as well as if you are currently using.
5. Share thoughts of death, suicide or self-harm now or ever.
6. Share what medications you are currently taking (for all illnesses).



Diagnostic Workup

- Depression, even the most severe cases, is a highly treatable disorder. As with many illnesses, the earlier that treatment can begin, the more effective it is and the greater the likelihood that recurrence can be prevented.
- The first step to getting appropriate treatment is to visit a doctor. Certain medications, and some medical conditions such as viruses or a thyroid disorder, can cause the same symptoms as depression. A doctor can rule out these possibilities by conducting a physical examination, interview and lab tests.
- The doctor or mental health professional will conduct a complete diagnostic evaluation.
- Once diagnosed, a person with depression can be treated with a number of methods. The most common treatments are medication and psychotherapy.



Treatment and Care

1. Medical – Electroconvulsive Therapy. For cases in which medication and/or psychotherapy does not help alleviate a person's treatment-resistant depression, electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) may be useful.
2. Pharmacological – Antidepressants. Antidepressants work to normalize naturally occurring brain chemicals called neurotransmitters, notably serotonin and norepinephrine.
3. Emotional/Psychological – Psychotherapy. Several types of psychotherapy – or "talk therapy" – can help people with depression.
4. Physical – Engage in Mild Activity or Exercise. Go to a movie, a ballgame, or another event or activity that you once enjoyed. Participate in religious, social or other activities.
5. Nutritional – Mindful Eating. Good nutrition helps everyone, but people with illnesses like depression may find that being aware of what, when, how much and sometimes why they eat helps them more than they thought it would. If your body has the nourishment it needs, your brain can function more effectively.

Healthy Lifestyle Management

How can I help myself?

- ▶ Break up large tasks into small ones, set some priorities and do what you can as you can.
- ▶ Try to spend time with other people and confide in a trusted friend or relative. Try not to isolate yourself, and let others help you.
- ▶ Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately. Do not expect to suddenly "snap out of" your depression. Often during treatment for depression, sleep and appetite will begin to improve before your depressed mood lifts.



- ▶ Postpone important decisions, such as getting married or divorced or changing jobs, until you feel better. Discuss decisions with others who know you well and have a more objective view of your situation.
- ▶ Remember that positive thinking will replace negative thoughts as your depression responds to treatment.

Resources

- ❖ Medline Plus: www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus - up-to-date, quality health care information from the National Library of Medicine at the National Institutes of Health
- ❖ WebMD: www.webmd.com
- ❖ Mental Health
 - ✓ Mental health specialists, such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, or mental health counselors
 - ✓ Health maintenance organizations
 - ✓ Community mental health centers
 - ✓ Hospital psychiatry departments and outpatient clinics
 - ✓ Mental health programs at universities or medical schools
 - ✓ State hospital outpatient clinics
 - ✓ Family services, social agencies or clergy
 - ✓ Peer support groups
 - ✓ Private clinics and facilities
 - ✓ Employee assistance programs
 - ✓ Local medical and/or psychiatric societies
 - ✓ You can also check the phone book under "mental health," "health," "social services," "hotlines," or "physicians" for phone numbers and addresses. An emergency room doctor also can provide temporary help and can tell you where and how to get further help.