

Depression

Depression is a real, common and treatable illness.

Basic Facts About Depression

- Major depression is one of the most common mental illnesses, affecting 6.7% (more than 16 million) of American adults each year.
- Depression causes people to lose pleasure from daily life, can complicate other medical conditions, and can even be serious enough to lead to suicide.
- Depression can occur to anyone, at any age, and to people of any race or ethnic group. Depression is never a "normal" part of life, no matter what your age, gender or health situation.
- While the majority of individuals with depression have a full remission of the disorder with effective treatment, only about a third (35.3%) of those suffering from severe depression seek treatment from a mental health professional. Too many people resist treatment because they believe depression isn't serious, that they can treat it themselves or that it is a personal weakness rather than a serious medical illness.

Treatments for Depression

Depression is very treatable, with the overwhelming majority of those who seek treatment showing improvement. The most commonly used treatments are antidepressant medication, psychotherapy or a combination of the two. The choice of treatment depends on the pattern, severity, persistence of depressive symptoms and the history of the illness. As with many illnesses, early treatment is more effective and helps prevent the likelihood of serious recurrences. Depression must be treated by a physician or qualified mental health professional.

Symptoms of Clinical Depression

- Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" mood
- Sleeping too much or too little, middle of the night or early morning waking
- Reduced appetite and weight loss, or increased appetite and weight gain
- Loss of pleasure and interest in activities once enjoyed, including sex
- Restlessness, irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment (such as chronic pain or digestive disorders)
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feeling guilty, hopeless or worthless
- Thoughts of suicide or death

If you have five or more of these symptoms for two weeks or more, you could have clinical depression and should see your doctor or a qualified mental health professional for help.



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Causes of Clinical Depression

Many things can contribute to clinical depression. For some people, a number of factors seem to be involved, while for others a single factor can cause the illness. Oftentimes, people become depressed for no apparent reason.

- **Biological** - People with depression may have too little or too much of certain brain chemicals, called "neurotransmitters." Changes in these brain chemicals may cause or contribute to depression.
- **Cognitive** - People with negative thinking patterns and low self-esteem are more likely to develop clinical depression.
- **Gender** - More women experience depression than men. While the reasons for this are still unclear, they may include the hormonal changes women go through during menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth and menopause. Other reasons may include the stress caused by the multiple responsibilities that women have.
- **Co-occurrence** - Depression is more likely to occur along with certain illnesses, such as heart disease, cancer, Parkinson's disease, diabetes, Alzheimer's disease and hormonal disorders.
- **Medications** - Side effects of some medications can bring about depression.
- **Genetic** - A family history of depression increases the risk for developing the illness. Some studies also suggest that a combination of genes and environmental factors work together to increase risk for depression.
- **Situational** - Difficult life events, including divorce, financial problems or the death of a loved one can contribute to depression.

References

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