

# What is Depression?



**Depression is a mood disorder that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss of interest.**

You may have trouble doing normal day-to-day activities, and sometimes you may feel as if life isn't worth living.

Depression (also known as major depression, major depressive disorder, or clinical depression) is a common but serious mood disorder.

It causes severe symptoms that affect how a person feels, thinks, and handles daily activities, such as sleeping, eating, or working.

To be diagnosed with depression, the symptoms must be present for at least 2 weeks.

More than just a bout of the blues, depression isn't a weakness, and you can't simply "snap out" of it. Depression may require long-term treatment.

But don't get discouraged. Most people with depression feel better with medication, psychotherapy or both.

## Key facts

- Depression is a common mental disorder.
- Globally, an estimated 5% of adults suffer from depression.
- More women are affected by depression than men.
- Depression can lead to suicide.
- There is an effective treatment for mild, moderate and severe depression.

- An estimated 3.8% of the population experience depression, including 5% of adults (4% among men and 6% among women), and 5.7% of adults older than 60 years.
- Approximately 280 million people in the world have depression.
- Worldwide, more than 10% of pregnant women and women who have just given birth experience depression
- More than 700 000 people die due to suicide every year. Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death in 15–29-year-olds.

## Risk Factors for Depression

Depression can affect anyone—even those who seemingly have it all. Several factors can play a role in depression:

- **Biochemical:** Differences in certain chemicals in the brain (such as the neurotransmitters serotonin, dopamine and norepinephrine) may contribute to symptoms of depression.
- **Genetics:** Depression can run in families. For example, if one identical twin has depression, the other has a 70 percent chance of having the illness sometime in life.
- **Personality:** People with low self-esteem, who are easily overwhelmed by stress, or who are generally pessimistic may be more likely to experience depression.
- **Environmental:** Continuous exposure to violence, neglect, abuse or poverty can also pose risks for developing depression.

## What Are the Signs and Symptoms of Depression?



If you have been experiencing some of the following signs and symptoms, most of the day, nearly every day, for at least 2 weeks, you may have depression:

- Persistent sad, anxious, or “empty” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of irritability, frustration, or restlessness
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, or helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities
- Fatigue, lack of energy, or feeling slowed down
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping, waking too early in the morning, or oversleeping
- Changes in appetite or unplanned weight changes
- Physical aches or pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause that do not go away with treatment
- Thoughts of death or suicide or suicide attempts

- ❖ Not everyone who is depressed experiences all these symptoms. Some people experience only a few symptoms, while others experience many. Symptoms associated with depression interfere with day-to-day functioning and cause significant distress for the person experiencing them.

### Depression can also involve other changes in mood or behavior that include:

- Increased anger or irritability
  - Feeling restless or on edge
  - Becoming withdrawn, negative, or detached
  - Increased engagement in high-risk activities
  - Greater impulsivity
  - Increased use of alcohol or drugs
  - Isolating from family and friends
  - Inability to meet the responsibilities of work and family or ignoring other important roles
  - Problems with sexual desire and performance
- ❖ Depression can look different in men and women. Although people of all genders can feel depressed, how they express those symptoms and the behaviors they use to cope with them may differ.



## Who gets Depression?

Depression can affect people of all ages, races, ethnicities, and genders.

Women are diagnosed with depression more often than men, but men can also be depressed. Because men may be less likely to recognize, talk about, and seek help for their feelings or emotional problems, they are at greater risk of their depression symptoms being undiagnosed or undertreated.



## How is Depression Treated?

- Depression, even the most severe cases, can be treated.
- The earlier treatment begins, the more effective it is.
- Depression is usually treated with psychotherapy, medication, or a combination of the two

- No two people are affected the same way by depression, and there is no "one-size-fits-all" treatment.

## Psychotherapies

Several types of psychotherapy (also called talk therapy or counseling) can help people with depression by teaching them new ways of thinking and behaving and helping them change habits that contribute to depression.

## Medications

Antidepressants are medications commonly used to treat depression. They work by changing how the brain produces or uses certain chemicals involved in mood or stress.

## Brain stimulation therapies

If psychotherapy and medication do not reduce symptoms of depression, brain stimulation therapy may be an option to explore.

The brain stimulation therapies with the largest bodies of evidence include:

- Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)
- Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS)
- Vagus nerve stimulation (VNS)
- Magnetic seizure therapy (MST)
- Deep brain stimulation (DBS)



## Self-care

Self-care can play an important role in managing symptoms of depression and promoting overall well-being.

### What you can do:



- Try to keep doing activities you used to enjoy
- Stay connected to friends and family
- Exercise regularly, even if it's just a short walk
- Stick to regular eating and sleeping habits as much as possible
- Avoid or cut down on alcohol and don't use illicit drugs, which can make depression worse
- Talk to someone you trust about your feelings
- Seek help from a healthcare provider.

### If you have Thoughts of Suicide:

- Remember you are not alone, and that many people have gone through what you're experiencing and found help
- Talk to someone you trust about how you feel
- Talk to a health worker, such as a doctor or counsellor
- Join a support group.

If you think you are in immediate danger of harming yourself, contact any available emergency services or a crisis line.

## Different Types of Depression



**Some of which develop due to specific circumstances.**

- **Major Depression** includes symptoms of depressed mood or loss of interest, most of the time for at least 2 weeks that interfere with daily activities.
- **Persistent Depressive Disorder** (also called dysthymia or dysthymic disorder) consists of less severe symptoms of depression that last much longer, usually for at least 2 years.
- **Perinatal Depression** is depression that occurs during pregnancy or after childbirth. Depression that begins during pregnancy is prenatal depression, and depression that begins after the baby is born is postpartum depression.

- **Seasonal Affective Disorder** is depression that comes and goes with the seasons, with symptoms typically starting in the late fall or early winter and going away during the spring and summer.

- **Depression with Symptoms of Psychosis** is a severe form of depression in which a person experiences psychosis symptoms, such as delusions (disturbing, false fixed beliefs) or hallucinations (hearing or seeing things others do not hear or see).



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