



Depression Basics: Signs, Treatments and Help

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One of the most common mental health disorders in the United States, major depression can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, race, ethnicity, socio-economic level or social status. Causes of depression can range from a genetic predisposition to a life situation to seemingly no trigger at all.

For someone living with untreated depression, the tasks of everyday life – like getting out of bed, showering, eating or dressing – can feel overwhelming. All parts of life can be affected. Relationships, work, education, and financial matters can all suffer.

People living with depression may feel like recovery is impossible, but it's not. Depression is a medical illness and can be treated. Help is available – and seeking professional help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Signs and symptoms of depression

You may be living with depression if you experience two or more of the following symptoms for more than two weeks:

- Significant changes in sleeping patterns – too little, too much or changes in habits
- Significant changes in appetite, either eating too little or too much
- Feeling helpless or hopeless or sad for a long time
- Ongoing aches, pains, cramps or digestive problems
- Constantly irritated or angered easily
- Suicidal thoughts

- No longer enjoy things you did before
- Trouble focusing or showing up to work
- Feeling slowed down or difficulty concentrating
- Feeling anxious
- Crying for no reason
- Feeling isolated

Treating depression

Fortunately, depression is a highly treatable illness, generally with therapy and/or medication. The earlier treatment begins the more effective it is.

- **Therapy** – To learn coping strategies to handle problems, you may talk with a trained mental health professional. This can also alleviate symptoms of depression. Cognitive/behavioral therapy, a type of psychotherapy, may help change negative styles of thinking and behavior, which may contribute to clinical depression. Interpersonal therapy helps you deal with other people and relationships that may affect or contribute to clinical depression
- **Medication** – Commonly, antidepressant medications that affect chemicals in the brain are used to treat depression. Several different types of antidepressant medications are available. It may take up to six to eight weeks for these medications to be effective, and varies from person to person. The decision regarding the most appropriate antidepressant depends on several factors and should only be made with a treating physician. Medication may cause side effects and should be discussed a physician, as many alternative medications are available.

Get help

Are you or someone you love suffering from depression? Get help. Talk with your doctor or a trained counselor.

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide, seek help right away. If someone is in immediate danger, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.