

# Depression

(Easy Reading Version)



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Depression is more than just feeling sad. It is a mental illness. It's somewhat common.

## Symptoms

Common symptoms of depression are:

- Sleeping too much or too little
- Changes in how much you eat
- Trouble focusing, loss of energy, not wanting to do things you used to enjoy
- Not feeling good about yourself, feeling like there is no hope
- Feeling aches and pains in your body
- Being sad or numb most of the time

## Causes

Depression isn't caused by just one thing. Scientists believe many things can lead to depression:

- **Trauma.** Trauma at a young age can change a person's brain. These changes can lead to depression.
- **Genetics.** Depression often runs in families.
- **Life circumstances.** This can mean stress: feeling unsafe where you live, not having enough money, relationship conflict, work stress, etc.
- **Brain structure.** Some parts of the brain act differently in people with depression.
- **Other medical conditions.** People with certain illnesses or other conditions are more likely to get depression. These illnesses can be diabetes, MS, or heart conditions. Different illnesses, conditions, and injuries can lead to life-style changes. These changes can be short-term or long-term. These changes can make it hard to cope with daily tasks.
- **Drug and alcohol abuse.** About a third of people with drug problems also have depression.

## Treatments

There are lots of treatments for depression. Treatment can include one or more of these:

- **Medications:** A professional might recommend medication to help with your mood.
- **Psychotherapy:** This can be talking with a therapist by yourself or with your family.
- **Brain stimulation therapies** Doctors can stimulate your brain to help it feel more regular.
- **Light therapy** This uses a special light that feels like the sun. This can help you feel better. Our bodies absorb things from the sun that help brighten our moods. This treatment uses a special light that works like the sun to do the same thing.
- **Exercise:** Moving your body releases our natural "happy" chemicals. Even short walks can help.
- **Alternative therapies** including acupuncture, meditation, and eating right.
- **Mind/body/spirit approaches** such as meditation, faith, and prayer.

See more at: <http://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Depression>

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