

Depression



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Depression is more than being sad or going through a rough patch. It is a serious mental health condition that requires understanding and medical care. Some people have only one episode in a lifetime, but for most people depression happens multiple times and may last a few months to several years. Depression affects all people and is somewhat common, although young adults are more likely to have depression than those who are older.

What are the symptoms?

Just like with any mental illness, people with depression show different signs of depression. But for most people, depression changes their daily life.

Common symptoms of depression include:

- Changes in sleep
- Changes in appetite
- Having a hard time focusing
- Feeling low energy
- Losing interest
- Low self esteem
- Feeling Hopelessness
- Changes in movement
- Aches and pains in the body
- Suicidal thoughts

What are the causes

Depression is not caused by just one thing, instead there are many things that may cause depression,

- **Trauma.** Trauma at an early age can change a person's brain. These changes can lead to depression.
- **Family History.** Depression can run in families.
- **Life Circumstances.** Such as being stressed, losing a job, feeling unsafe where you live, difficult relationships, etc.
- **Brain Structure.** Some parts of the brain may act differently in those with depression.
- **Medical Conditions.** People with medical illnesses such as diabetes, MS, or heart conditions are more likely to experience depression. Those who experience sleep disturbances, chronic pain, anxiety, or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) are also more likely.
- **Drug and alcohol use.**

Diagnosis

To be diagnosed with depression, a person must experience a major depressive episode for more than two weeks. The signs of a major depressive episode include,

- Loss of interest or pleasure in all activities
- Change in appetite or weight
- Difficulty sleeping
- Feeling nervous or feeling slowed down
- Feeling very tired
- Feelings of low self-worth or guilt
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Suicidal thoughts or intentions

Treatments

Although depression can be a devastating illness, it often responds to treatment. The key is to get a specific evaluation and a treatment plan. Treatment can include any one or combination of:

- **Medications** including antidepressants, mood stabilizers and antipsychotic medications
- **Psychotherapy** including cognitive behavioral therapy, family-focused therapy, and interpersonal therapy
- **Brain stimulation therapies** including electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) or repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS)
- **Light therapy**, which uses a light box to expose a person to full spectrum light and regulate the hormone melatonin
- **Exercise**
- **Alternative therapies** including acupuncture, meditation, and healthy eating
- **Self-management strategies and education**
- **Mind/body/spirit approaches** such as meditation, faith, and prayer

Updated June 2020