

FAST FACTS

Depression: Symptoms, fast facts, and how to get help

What is Depression?

Depression, or major depressive disorder, is a mood disorder characterized by persistent feelings of sadness, hopelessness, or emptiness along with a lack of interest in activities you once enjoyed. In addition to the emotional manifestations of depression, it can also cause physical issues such as chronic pain or digestive issues. While clinical depression is persistent and can interfere with a person's ability to function, it's a very common and highly treatable medical illness.

TYPES OF DEPRESSION

Common types of depression include:

- **Major Depression:** The most common type of depression according to the National Institute of Mental Health, this is characterized by 2 or more weeks of a depressed mood and/or loss of interest as well as a minimum of 4 other symptoms (see below for the list of depression symptoms).
- **Bipolar Disorder:** Formerly known as Manic Depression or Manic Depressive Disorder. While different from depression, bipolar disorder is often included in discussions around depressive disorders as it involves episodes of extreme lows similar to major depression. Someone with bipolar disorder, however, will swing in the opposite direction towards mania or extreme highs.
- **Dysthymia:** Also known as "persistent depressive disorder," dysthymia is a depressed mood that lasts for 2 years or longer. This may include bouts of major depression, complemented by periods of less severe symptoms.
- **Postpartum Depression:** 85% of new moms feel sadness after the birth of their baby; with 16% of mothers experiencing a more extreme version known as postpartum depression, usually manifesting within a year after giving birth.
- **Seasonal Affective Disorder:** SAD is often related to winter blues, although as the name suggests, Americans can develop seasonal affective disorder (which can present as increased sleep, social withdrawal, and weight gain) in the summer as well. These symptoms usually pass with the seasonal shift.
- **Psychotic Depression:** A combination of severe depression and a form of psychosis such as hallucinations or delusions, usually around a depressive emotion such as guilt or illness.
- **Premenstrual Dysmorphic Disorder:** PMDD is a type of depression that affects women during their menstrual cycle, and can present as much more severe symptoms than the more common premenstrual syndrome (PMS).

- **Situational Depression:** Depressive episodes triggered by a major life event such as a breakup, the death of a loved one, trauma, a move, or job loss.

Depression and Anxiety

As the Anxiety and Depression Association of America notes, the link between depression and anxiety is common. Nearly 50% of those diagnosed with depression are also diagnosed with an anxiety disorder. It's important to note, however, that depression and anxiety disorders — while linked — are different in terms of symptoms and causes.

Risk Factors and Causes of Depression

Risk factors for depression include:

- Family or personal history of depression
- Major life stressors, including trauma or life changes
- Chronic disease or certain medications
- Current substance abuse issues
- Women of childbearing age are at increased risk for major depression.

Signs and Symptoms of Depression

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) lists the following 8 symptoms or diagnostic criteria of depression. Depression is often diagnosed when an individual experiences **5 or more of the below symptoms during the same 2-week period**, with special attention paid to Symptoms Nos. 1 and 2:

1. Depressed mood that carries through most of the day and nearly every day.
2. Loss of interest or pleasure in all or almost all daily activities.
3. Significant weight loss (without dieting) or weight gain, and/or a decrease or increase in appetite.
4. Slowing down of thoughts and a marked reduction in physical movement.
5. Daily fatigue or lack of energy.
6. Feelings of worthlessness or excessive guilt.
7. Inability to think or concentrate or indecisiveness.
8. Recurring thoughts of death or suicidal ideation.

Depression Statistics

A person with suicidal thoughts may threaten suicide by talking about:

1. Of people with depression, close to 50% report feelings of wanting to die. 33% consider suicide, and 9% report a suicide attempt.
2. 10% of college students have been diagnosed with depression, including 13% of college women.

3. 1 in 4 women will suffer from a major depressive episode during the course of her life.
4. 1 in 10 men will suffer from a major depressive episode during the course of his life.
5. According to a [CDC](#) study from 2009 to 2012, 7.6% of US citizens aged 12 and up reported having at least a 2-week period of depression.
6. 20% of teens experience depression before adulthood; only 30% of teens with depression are being treated for it. ([suicide.org](#))
7. People living below the poverty level are nearly 2.5 times more likely to have depression than those at or above the poverty level. ([CDC](#))
8. Almost 90% of people with severe depressive symptoms also experienced difficulty at work, home, and in social settings. (CDC)
9. Only 35% of those with severe symptoms reported having seen a mental health professional in the past year. (CDC)

Depression Treatment

Even the most severe cases of depression can be treated, and the sooner you seek help, the better. Treatment for depression typically consists of psychotherapy and medication. Other things to consider if you are managing depression:

- Engaging in regular physical activity and exercise
- Maintaining healthy and regular sleep patterns
- Spending time with friends and loved ones and accepting help when offered
- Understanding that your mood will improve gradually, not immediately
- Continuing to learn more about your depression and maintaining awareness of what works, and what doesn't, as you and your doctor try out different treatment options

Talking to your general physician is a great first step to learning more about how you're feeling, and the options around managing your mental wellness that will be most effective for you.