

Depression

What Is Depression?

Depression is a serious medical condition. Everyone experiences “ups” and “downs” in their life. But for some people the “downs” can outweigh the “ups.” This can cause problems with everyday activities such as eating, sleeping, working, and getting along with friends. If this happens for more than a few weeks, depression may be the reason.

Depression is very common – it affects an estimated 19 million American adults every year. Nearly twice as many women (12%) as men (6.6%) suffer from depression each year. The good news is that it is possible to manage the symptoms of depression.



Symptoms can include:

- Constant sadness
- Lack of motivation
- Irritability
- Trouble concentrating
- Feelings of isolation, not as involved with family and friends
- Loss of interest in favorite activities
- Hopelessness
- Feeling worthless or guilty for no reason
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Fatigue
- Low energy
- Trouble sleeping
- Significant weight change

Tips for Feeling Better

- Your best chance to virtually eliminate the symptoms of depression is to **seek treatment** as early as possible and continue therapy as recommended by your health care provider.
- Although the exact causes of depression are unknown, it may be due to a chemical imbalance in the brain. **Medications** that affect this chemical imbalance may play a role in treating depression.
- For some people, medicine combined with psychotherapy, or **“talk therapy,”** is an effective way to treat depression. Talking with a psychiatrist or another qualified health care professional may help you explore your relationships, feelings, and experiences in a meaningful way. Talk therapy is also covered by many insurance plans.



- **Friends and family members** can play an important role in helping you cope with depression. Keep in mind that knowing the facts about depression can help you make progress, and it can also help your loved ones help you.
- **Exercise and eating right** may help improve your overall health. Whether or not this is your first experience with a nutrition or exercise regimen, you will be taking an important step.

See the *Therapy for Depression or Anxiety Disorders* info sheet for more information.

You may also find helpful information at these links:

National Alliance on Mental Illness
www.nami.org

Mental Health America
www.mentalhealthamerica.net

Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance
www.dbsalliance.org

Wyeth
Neuroscience

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