

Depression

Everyone gets sad at times. But for those with depression, bad feelings come often. And these feelings get in the way of every day life.

About 12% of women in the U.S. suffer from depression. (That's almost 2 times as many as men.) Many people don't know the signs of depression. So they suffer when they do not need to. The good news is that almost 80% of depressed people get better with treatment.

What is clinical depression?

- Clinical depression is a common form of mental illness. Depression can get in the way of caring about things, getting tasks done, or enjoying life.

What are the three main types of clinical depression?

- Major depression is a mood or lost of interest that lasts most of the day, and every day for at least 2 weeks or longer. It often comes back many times over the person's lifetime.
- Dysthymia (dis-THY-me-uh) is mild, and constant. It last 2 years or longer and it has the same signs as depression, but is milder. It doesn't interfere with daily life.
- Bipolar or manic depression involves mood swings between depression and mania. (See below for more about what these terms mean.)

What causes depression?

- Medical illness
- Losing someone you love
- Stressful event
- Drugs or alcohol
- Family history of depression
- Environmental factors
- Chemical imbalance in the brain

What are the signs of depression?

- Sadness, feeling "empty" a lot of the time
- Loss of interest or pleasure in every day life
- No interest in eating and losing weight; or overeating and gaining weight
- Sleeping too much or too little, waking very early in the morning
- Low energy, tired, feeling "slowed down"
- Feeling restless, easily irritated, or crying a lot
- Feeling guilty, worthless, helpless, hopeless, expecting the worst
- Trouble staying focused, remembering, or making decisions
- Thinking of death or suicide or trying to commit suicide

When taking your medicine, keep in mind...

- You should take medicine for at least 4 to 6 months for it to work.
- Anyone taking medicine for depression should be watched closely by a doctor.
- Tell your doctor about other medicines you are taking. Many medicines interfere with antidepressants.

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Depression (cont.)

How can I tell if I am depressed?

A person is clinically depressed if he or she has five or more of these symptoms and has not been acting normal for most days during the same two-week period.

If a person is bipolar or has manic depression, they may have signs of depression which may also include signs of mania.

What are the signs of mania?

- Unusually “high” mood
- Easily irritated
- Unable to go to sleep night after night
- Grand notions (wild plans or ideas)
- Talking too much
- Racing thoughts
- Increased activity, including sexual activity
- *Much* more energy than usual
- Poor judgment that leads to taking risks
- Doing things that are not appropriate with or around other people

How is depression treated?

Depression is usually treated with both medicine (antidepressants) and counseling (talk therapy).

To Learn More...

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
6001 Executive Blvd., Rm. 8184, MSC 9663
Bethesda, MD 20892
301-443-4513
www.nimh.nih.gov

Food and Drug Administration
FDA's Office of Women's Health website: www.fda.gov/womens