

# Depression

*Do you feel very tired, helpless and hopeless? Are you sad most of the time and take no pleasure in your family, friends or hobbies? Are you having trouble working, sleeping, eating and functioning? Have you felt this way for a long time? If so, you may have depression.*



**6.7%**

of adults suffer from major depressive disorder in a given year

\*National Survey on Drug Use and Health 2014

## does depression look the same in everyone?

No. Depression affects different people in different ways.



**Women** experience depression more often than men. Women with depression typically have symptoms of sadness, worthlessness and guilt.



**Men** are more likely to be tired, irritable, and sometimes even angry. They may lose interest in work or activities they once enjoyed, and have sleep problems.



**Older Adults** may have less obvious symptoms, or may be less likely to admit to feelings of sadness or grief. They are more likely to have medical conditions like heart disease or stroke, which may cause or contribute to depression.



**Children** may pretend to be sick, refuse to go to school, cling to a parent or worry that a parent may die. Older children and teens may get into trouble at school and be irritable.



## what is depression?

Everyone feels low sometimes, but these feelings usually pass after a few days. When you have depression, the low feelings persist and they can be intense. These low feelings hurt your ability to do the things that make up daily life for weeks at a time. Depression is a serious illness that needs treatment. The most common types of depression are:



**Major Depression** – severe symptoms that interfere with your ability to work, sleep, study, eat and enjoy life. An episode can occur only once, but more often, a person has several episodes in their lifetime.



**Persistent Depressive Disorder** – depressed mood that lasts for at least two years. A person diagnosed with persistent depressive disorder may have episodes of major depression along with periods of less severe symptoms, but symptoms must last for two years.

## what causes depression?

Different factors can affect the risk of depression. Depression tends to run in families. One of the reasons for this has to do with genes. Some genes increase the risk of depression, while others increase resilience and protect against depression. Experiences like trauma or abuse during childhood and stress during adulthood can raise risk. However, the same stress or losses may trigger depression in one person and not another. Factors like a strong familial bond and healthy social connections can increase resilience.

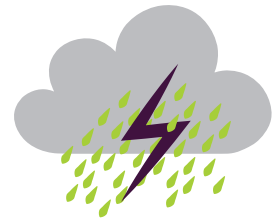
Research has shown that in people with depression, there can be subtle changes in the brain systems involved in mood, energy, and thinking, and how the brain responds to stress. The changes may differ from person to person, so that a treatment that works for one person may not work for another.

## signs and symptoms of depression

- Feeling sad or “empty”
- Feeling hopeless, irritable, anxious or guilty
- Losing interest in favorite activities
- Feeling very tired
- Not being able to concentrate or remember details
- Not being able to sleep, or sleeping too much
- Overeating, or not wanting to eat at all
- Thinking suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts
- Having aches/pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems

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If you think you are experiencing depression, finding help is the first step to recovery. Take an anonymous mental health screening at [www.mhamd.org](http://www.mhamd.org).



## how can I help a loved one who is depressed?

If you know someone who may be depressed, first help them see a doctor or mental health professional.

- ⚡ Offer support, understanding, patience and encouragement.
- ⚡ Talk to them, and listen carefully.
- ⚡ Never ignore comments about suicide. Help them reach out and find help in a crisis.
- ⚡ Invite them out for walks, outings and other activities.
- ⚡ Remind them that with time and treatment, they can get better.

## how can I help myself if I am depressed?

As you continue treatment, gradually you will start to feel better. Remember that if you are taking an antidepressant, it may take several weeks for it to start working. Try to do things that you used to enjoy before you had depression.

- ⚡ Break up large tasks into small ones, and doing what you can as you can. Try not to do too many things at once.
- ⚡ Spend time with other people and talk to a friend or relative about your feelings.
- ⚡ Once you have a treatment plan, try to stick to it. It will take time for treatment to work.
- ⚡ Don't make important life decisions until you feel better. Discuss decisions with others who know you well.

## how is depression treated?

The first step to getting the right treatment is to visit a doctor or mental health professional. They can rule out other conditions that may have the same symptoms as depression, and can tell if medications you're taking may be affecting your mood.

- ⚡ **Medications** called antidepressants can work to treat depression, but can take several weeks to work. They can have side effects including headache, nausea, difficulty sleeping or nervousness, agitation or restlessness, and sexual problems. **Talk to your doctor about any side effects you have.**

It's important to know that although antidepressants can be safe and effective for many people, they may present serious risks to some, especially children, teens and young adults. Anyone taking antidepressants should be monitored closely, especially when they first start taking them. For most people, though, the risks of untreated depression far outweigh those of antidepressant medications when they are used under a doctor's careful supervision.

- ⚡ **Psychotherapy** teaches new ways of thinking and behaving, and changing habits that may contribute to depression. Therapy can help you understand and work through difficult relationships or situations that may be causing your depression or making it worse.

## where can I go for help?

Talk with someone you feel comfortable with, like your family doctor, religious leader or friend. They may give you suggestions or referrals for mental health treatment.

If you have private insurance, call the number on your insurance card specifically for mental health and substance use disorders. For information on public mental health services in your county, call your local Core Service Agency. Visit [www.mhamd.org](http://www.mhamd.org) for a listing of local Core Service Agencies.

### Get help quickly

Call the Maryland Crisis Hotline at  
**1-800-422-0009**  
if you or someone you know is in crisis.



Information adapted from National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) NIH Publication No. TR 13-3561 (2013).