



DEPRESSION

WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Depression is more than simply being unhappy. Clinical depression, sometimes called major depression, is a complex mood disorder caused by many factors, including genetic predisposition, personality, and stress and brain chemistry.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION?

The main symptom of depression is a sad, despairing mood that:

- ✓ Is present most days and lasts most of the day;
- ✓ Lasts for more than two weeks; and
- ✓ Impairs the person's functioning at work, at school or in social relationships.



Other symptoms of depression

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| ✓ Changes in appetite, weight, and personal hygiene; | ✓ Feeling useless, hopeless, excessively guilty, pessimistic or having low self-esteem; | ✓ Trouble concentrating, remembering and with decision making; |
| ✓ Sleep problems; | ✓ Agitation or feeling slowed down; | ✓ Crying easily, or feeling like crying but not being able to; and |
| ✓ Loss of interest in work, hobbies, people, or sex; | ✓ Irritability; | ✓ Thoughts of suicide. |
| ✓ Withdrawal from family and friends; | ✓ Fatigue; | |



Different types of clinical depression:

- ✓ **Seasonal affective disorder:** This type of depression is usually affected by the weather and time of year.
- ✓ **Postpartum depression:** Most often occurs in women, following the birth of a child, still birth or termination of pregnancy.
- ✓ **Depression with psychosis:** Depression may become so severe that a person loses touch with reality and experiences hallucinations (hearing voices or seeing people or objects that are not really there) or delusions (beliefs that have no basis in reality).
- ✓ **Dysthymia:** This is a chronically low mood with moderate symptoms of depression

CAUSES AND RISK FACTORS FOR DEPRESSION

Various factors may play a part in the onset of depression, including: genetic or family history of depression, psychological or emotional vulnerability to depression, biological factors such as imbalances in brain chemistry and in the endocrine/immune systems, or a major stress.



Depressive Symptoms may be a result of:

- ✓ Another illness that shares the same symptoms, such as lupus or hypothyroidism;
- ✓ A reaction to another illness, such as cancer or a heart attack; and
- ✓ An illness itself, such as a stroke, where neurological changes have occurred.



HOW DOES DEPRESSION IMPACT...



Men

Men with depression typically have a higher rate of feeling irritable, angry and discouraged. This can make it harder to recognize depression in men. The rate of completed suicide in men is four times that in women.



Children

A child who is depressed may pretend to be sick, refuse to go to school, cling to a parent or worry that the parent may die. Older children may sulk, get into trouble at school, be negative or grouchy, and feel misunderstood. Because normal behaviours vary from one childhood stage to another, it can be difficult to tell whether a child is going through a temporary “phase” or is experiencing depression.



Women

Depression is more common in women than men, although gender differences diminish with age. Many hormonal factors may contribute to the increased rate of depression in women, particularly during times such as menstrual cycle changes, pregnancy and postpartum, miscarriage, pre-menopause and menopause.



Older Adults

There is a mistaken notion that older adults normally feel depressed. Older adults often do not want to talk about feeling hopeless, sad, losing interest in normally pleasurable activities, or experiencing prolonged grief after a loss. Men



TREATMENT FOR DEPRESSION

If you or someone you know is experiencing depressive symptoms, there are effective treatment options available, including:

- ✓ Medications;
- ✓ Education;
- ✓ Psychotherapy;
- ✓ Brain intervention therapies such as electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) and magnetic seizure therapy (MST); and
- ✓ Mindfulness-based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT);

Treatments can be used individually or in combination. Self-help organizations run by clients of the mental health system and their families can be an important part of treatment and recovery for people with depression and their families.

Depression needs to be managed over a person's lifetime. Depression, like disorders such as diabetes, can be effectively managed and controlled by combining a healthy lifestyle and treatments. Watching for early warnings of relapse may help prevent a full depressive episode.

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