



## Depression : Take it seriously

**What is depression** :An affective disorder characterized by extreme and intense sadness, pessimism, sense of inadequacy, etc.

A mental state of depressed mood characterized by feelings of sadness, despair and discouragement. Depression ranges from normal feelings of the blues through dysthymia to major depression. It in many ways resembles the grief and mourning that follow bereavement, there are often feelings of low self esteem, guilt and self reproach, withdrawal from interpersonal contact and physical symptoms such as eating and sleep disturbances.

A clinical mood disorder associated with low mood or loss of interest and other symptoms that prevents a person from leading a normal life. Types of depression include: Major depression, bipolar depression, dysthymia, and seasonal depression (seasonal affective disorder).

**Causes** : 3 main causes :

**Biological** : Biological causes are due to changes in the chemistry of the brain, such as fluctuations in the levels of important hormones.

**Genetic** : Genetic causes are the result of what you inherit from your parents. If one or both of your parents have a vulnerability to depression, then it can be transmitted to you.

**Environmental factors.** Environmental factors (also called emotional factors) result from stressful emotional situations, such as lack of loving parents or the death of a parent during childhood. To make it even more complicated, depression can also occur as a result of a combination of these three factors.

**Women** may be more likely than men to seek treatment. They may be more willing to accept that they have emotional symptoms of depressed mood and feelings of worthlessness or hopelessness.

**Men** may be less willing to acknowledge their emotional symptoms and more apt to suppress their depression through the use of alcohol or other substances. In such cases depression can be "masked," or viewed only as alcohol or drug dependency/abuse rather than as clinical depression.

**Women** may tend to be under more stress than men. In today's society women often have to manage a variety of conflicting roles. They have many responsibilities and full schedules at home and work.

**Women** may be more prone to depression because of the possible effects of hormones. Women have frequent changes in their hormone levels, from their monthly menstrual cycles, to the time during and after pregnancy, to menopause. Some women develop a depressive illness around these events.

**Marital factors:** Women who are unhappily married, divorced, or separated, have high rates of major depression. The rates are lower for those who are happily married.

**Age:** While clinical depression usually occurs for the first time when a person is between the ages of 20 and 50, people over the age of 65 may be especially vulnerable.



**Previous episode:** If you have had major depression once before, your chances of developing it again increase. According to some estimates, approximately one-half of those who have developed depression will experience it again.

**Heredity:** People who have relatives who have had clinical depression have a greater chance of developing it themselves. Also, having a close relative with bipolar disorder may increase a person's chances of developing major depression.



**Symptoms of Depression** :If you are depressed at the moment some of the following symptoms may sound familiar:

- You feel miserable and sad.
- You feel exhausted a lot of the time with no energy
- You feel as if even the smallest tasks are sometimes impossible.
- You feel very anxious sometimes.
- You don't want to see people or are scared to be left alone
- You find it difficult to think clearly.
- You feel like a failure and/or feel guilty a lot of the time.
- You feel a burden to others.
- You sometimes feel that life isn't worth living.
- You can see no future. There is a loss of hope. You feel all you've ever done is make mistakes and that's all that you ever will do.
- You feel irritable or angry more than usual.
- You feel you have no confidence.
- You spend a lot of time thinking about what has gone wrong, what will go wrong or what is wrong about yourself as a person. You may also feel guilty sometimes about being critical of others (or even thinking critically about them).
- You feel that life is unfair.
- You have difficulty sleeping or wake up very early in the morning and can't sleep again. You seem to dream all night long and sometimes have disturbing dreams.
- You feel that life has/is 'passing you by.'
- You may have physical aches and pains which appear to have no physical cause, such as back pain.
- Prolonged sadness or unexplained crying spells
- Significant changes in appetite and sleep patterns
- Unexplained Recurring thoughts of death or suicide
- Head aches and pains
- Mania
- Abnormal or excessive elation
- Unusual irritability
- Decreased need for sleep
- Grandiose notions
- Increased talking
- Racing thoughts
- Increased sexual desire
- Markedly increased energy
- Poor judgment
- Inappropriate social behavior





**Treatments for Depression :** Treatment of depression may include medication, talk therapy, or other strategies that you and your health care provider may want to try. The right treatment is the one that works best for you. The good news is that of all psychiatric illnesses, depression is one of the most responsive to treatment. With proper care, approximately 80 percent of people with major depression experience significant improvement and lead productive lives – even those with severe depression can be helped. Be patient and persistent. Do not give up hope and remember you are not alone

**Medication :** There are approved dozens of medications to treat depression. These medications are divided into various classes; each one having a distinct chemical structure that acts on different chemicals in the brain. These medicines for depression are effective – they just don't work the same for everyone. You should work closely with your doctor to determine which medication might be best for you. Sometimes this may involve trying more than one medication or a combination of medications. Never change your dosage or discontinue your medication without talking to your doctor.

**Talk therapy :** Psychotherapy, or "talk therapy" is an important part of treatment of depression for many people. It can sometimes work alone in cases of mild to moderate depression or it can be used in conjunction with other treatments. People who are severely depressed may not be able to benefit from psychotherapy until their symptoms have been lifted through another means of treatment. A good therapist can help you modify behavioral or emotional patterns that contribute to your depression. There are several types of psychotherapy: interpersonal, cognitive-behavioral, group, marriage and family, to name a few. Research the different types and find one that is right for you. Psychotherapists, while highly-educated professionals, are not medical doctors and therefore cannot prescribe medication. If you or your therapist think you could benefit from medication, you need to see a general practitioner or a psychiatrist.

**Herbal or Natural Treatments :** Dietary supplements and other alternative treatments that are advertised to have a positive effect on depression regularly enter the marketplace. These alternative treatments include a number of products on the shelves in the market.. However, remember that natural is not always synonymous with safe. Different brands of supplements may contain different concentrations of the active substance when processed in different ways and these alternative treatments may have side effects, so read labels carefully and discuss them with your doctor or pharmacist.

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