

THE BASICS ON DEPRESSION

Nearly 15.7 million adults and 2.6 million adolescents suffer from depression in the United States. Untreated depression can cause many people to have a lower quality of life and increased risk of suicide. Untreated depression can also worsen other medical conditions.*

What is Depression?

The American Psychiatric Association describes depression as a “medical illness that negatively affects how one feels, thinks, and behaves”. Depression is a common but serious mental illness. Constant feelings of sadness occur that can be disabling and interfere with daily life. The results can be extreme feelings of despair and shame.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Not everyone with depression will experience the same symptoms. Depressive symptoms can be mild, moderate, or severe. They also appear differently in teens, adults, and the elderly. Some signs and symptoms are listed below.

- Feeling sad or having a depressed mood
- Loss of interest in activities
- Weight gain/loss or changes in eating habits
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Too much or too little sleep
- Feelings of guilt, being unworthy, or helpless
- Difficulty thinking or concentrating
- Thoughts of death or suicide

What causes depression?

Depression can occur at any age and can affect anyone. There is no single cause, and individuals can experience depression in different ways. Some factors include:

- Genetics or family history
- Chemical imbalance
- Stress (e.g. trauma, loss of a loved one, work, abuse, financial strains)
- Medical illnesses (e.g. stroke, heart attack, cancer)
- Hormones (e.g. before a woman’s menstrual cycle or after giving birth)

Where can I go for help?

Speaking to a mental healthcare provider is an important step for getting help with depression. Additionally, other sources such as family services or clergy, or peer support groups can offer assistance. Other mental health resources include:

- Local psychiatric society
- Private clinic or facility
- Community mental health centers
- Employee assistance program
- Hospital psychiatry department
- Mental health program at universities or medical schools

How is Depression treated?

The majority of people with depression respond well to treatment. Fortunately, there are many treatment options available to help. Treatments include medications, psychotherapy, and other complimentary therapies. In many cases, a combination of these treatments will be used. Remember, always speak with a healthcare provider about evaluation and treatment options.

Medications: There are a variety of medications that can be used to treat depression. These include different classes of antidepressants. Many antidepressants take a couple of weeks before they start to work. Often, these medications can take up to 6 to 8 weeks for full effects.

Psychotherapy: This type of therapy is conducted with a psychiatrist or psychologist. Other mental health care providers, such as counselors, also provide this type of treatment. Therapy focuses on identifying and changing behavioral or thought patterns. The goal is to develop more effective coping skills and a healthier state of mind.

Brain Stimulating Therapies: Electroconvulsive or magnetic therapies may be effective treatment options in serious cases. Electric current or magnetic field are used to stimulate the brain to cause chemical changes. The stimulation assists in relieving depression.

Complementary Therapies: Lifestyle modifications may also help treat depression. These changes are especially helpful when combined with medications or therapy. Lifestyle changes can include exercise, nutrition, and relaxation. Other complementary therapies include yoga, acupuncture, meditation, and massage therapy.

What if someone I know is having a crisis?

Never ignore comments about suicide. Get help or call 911 immediately if you or someone you know is thinking about harming him/herself. Toll-free hotlines are also available 24 hours of the day. Trained counselors will speak with you for any reason.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline	1-800-273-TALK (8255)
Spanish-Speaking Suicide Hotline	1-800-SUICIDA (2432)

** Statistics reported by the
National Institute of Mental Health.*

For informational purposes only; not meant to supersede the advice of a physician.
If you have questions regarding this information, please consult your medical professional.