

Depression

What is Depression?

Everyone feels sad, anxious, stressed, or worried at one time or another. However, if those feelings persist and interfere with activities of daily living and relationships, you may need help. Depression is a very common mental health concern that plagues individuals worldwide but often times goes untreated. Mental health is just as important as physical health so you should not ignore symptoms or try to will them away. There are many factors that may lead to depression. These include biochemical, genetic, psychological and environmental factors.

Depression feels different to everyone, but here are some signs and symptoms to look for:

Feeling sad, anxious or down	Crying Spells for no apparent reason
Feeling helpless, hopeless, or worthless	Irritability for no apparent reason
Loss of interest in activities you used to enjoy	Changes in weight (loss or gain)
Problems concentrating or making decisions	Fatigue or decreased energy
Thoughts of hurting yourself	Unexplained aches or pains
Changes in sleep habits (unable to sleep or oversleeping)	

If you are feeling depressed it is important to ask someone for help!

You are not alone. Talk with your health care provider about your symptoms of depression. Depression can be and should be treated. Like any physical disease, there are various treatment options for depression, including medications and individual or group counseling.

If you are having thoughts about hurting yourself:

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room

OR

Call the 24 hour toll free suicide hotline 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

If someone you know is depressed it is important to:

Learn about depression. Encourage the person to get help from a healthcare professional. Talk to them about their feelings and provide encouragement and support. Engage in social or physical activities with them. Do not disparage their feelings or ignore their cries for help.

If you think a friend or family member is considering suicide, express your concern and seek professional help immediately. Talking openly about suicidal thoughts and feelings can save a life. Most people do not want to die but want the hurt to go away.

Know the warning signs of suicide!

- Talking about killing or harming one's self
- Expressing strong feelings of hopelessness or being trapped
- An unusual preoccupation with death or dying
- Acting recklessly, as if they have a death wish (e.g. speeding through red lights)
- Calling or visiting people to say goodbye
- Getting affairs in order (giving away prized possession, tying up loose ends)
- Saying things like "Everyone would be better off without me" or "I want out"
- A sudden switch from being extremely depressed to acting calm and happy.

Self Care and Coping with Depression

Depression generally isn't an illness that you can treat on your own. Coping with depression can be challenging. Depression makes it hard to engage in the behavior and activities that may help you feel better. But you can do some things for yourself that will build on your treatment plan. In addition to professional treatment, follow these self-care and coping steps for depression:

Stick to your treatment plan.

Don't skip therapy sessions, even if you don't feel like going.

Take your medications as directed

Even if you're feeling well, resist any temptation to skip your medications. If you stop, depression symptoms may come back, and you could also experience withdrawal-like symptoms.

Learn about depression

Education about your condition can empower and motivate you to stick to your treatment plan.

Pay attention to warning signs

Work with your doctor or therapist to learn what might trigger your depression symptoms. Make a plan so that you know what to do if symptoms return. Contact your doctor or therapist if you notice any changes in symptoms or how you feel. Consider involving family members or friends in watching for warning signs.

Get active

Physical activity and exercise have been shown to reduce depression symptoms. Consider walking, jogging, swimming, gardening or taking up another form of exercise you enjoy.

Avoid drugs and alcohol

Alcohol and illicit drugs can worsen depression symptoms.

Simplify your life

Cut back on obligations when possible, and set reasonable schedules for goals.

Don't become isolated

Try to participate in normal activities and get together with family or friends regularly.

Take care of yourself

Eat a healthy diet and be sure to get sufficient sleep.

Join a support group

for people with depression so that you can connect to others facing similar challenges.

Learn relaxation and stress management

Try such stress reduction techniques as meditation, yoga or tai chi.

Don't make important decisions when you're in the depths of depression

You may not be thinking clearly.

Ask for help when you need it.