**Are you depressed?**

If you identify with several of the following signs and symptoms, and they just won’t go away, you may be suffering from clinical depression.

* you can’t sleep or you sleep too much
* you can’t concentrate or find that previously easy tasks are now difficult
* you feel hopeless and helpless
* you can’t control your negative thoughts, no matter how much you try
* you have lost your appetite or you can’t stop eating
* you are much more irritable, short-tempered, or aggressive than usual
* you’re consuming more alcohol than normal or engaging in other reckless behavior
* you have thoughts that life is not worth living (Seek help *immediately* if this is the case)

**Seek professional help**

If support from family and friends, positive lifestyle changes, and emotional skills building aren’t enough, seek help from a mental health professional. There are many effective treatments for depression, including therapy, medication, and alternative treatments. Learning about your options will help you decide what measures are most likely to work best for your particular situation and needs.

Are antidepressants right for you?

Medication can help relieve the symptoms of depression in some people, but they aren’t a cure and they come with drawbacks. Learning the facts about antidepressants and weighing the benefits against the risks can help you make an informed and personal decision about whether medication is right for you.

Effective treatment for depression often includes some form of talk therapy. Therapy gives you tools to treat depression from a variety of angles. Also, what you learn in therapy gives you skills and insight to prevent depression from coming back.

Some types of therapy teach you practical techniques on how to reframe negative thinking and employ behavioral skills in combating depression. Therapy can also help you work through the root of your depression, helping you understand why you feel a certain way, what your triggers are for depression, and what you can do to stay healthy.

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**Depression**



Feeling down from time to time is a normal part of life. But when emptiness and despair take hold and won't go away, it may be depression. More than just the temporary "blues," the lows of depression make it tough to function and enjoy life.

Depression can make you feel helpless, hopeless, or empty and numb;  but there’s a lot you can do to change how you feel. With help and support, you can overcome depression and get your life back.

The key to recovery is to start small and take things one day at a time. Feeling better takes time, but you can get there if you make positive choices for yourself each day and draw on the support of others

**Depression causes and risk factors**

Some illnesses have a specific medical cause, making treatment straightforward. Depression is more complicated. Depression is not just the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain, and is not simply cured with medication. Experts believe that depression is caused by a combination of biological, psychological, and social factors. In other words, your lifestyle choices, relationships, and coping skills matter just as much—if not more so—than genetics. Some people *do* have “biological” or “endogenous depression. Most people, however, have depression that is reactive to circumstances.

**Causes and risk factors** for depression

* Loneliness and lack of social support
* Recent stressful life experiences
* Family history of depression
* Marital or relationship problems
* Financial strain
* Early childhood trauma or abuse
* Alcohol or drug abuse
* Unemployment or underemployment
* Health problems or chronic pain

The cause of depression determines the treatment. Understanding the underlying cause of your depression may help you overcome the problem. For example, if you are depressed because of a dead end job, the best treatment might be finding a more satisfying career, not taking an antidepressant. If you are new to an area and feeling lonely and sad, finding new friends at work or through a hobby will probably give you more of a mood boost than going to therapy. In such cases, the depression is remedied by changing the situation.

**Types of depression**

Depression comes in many shapes and forms. The different types of depression have unique symptoms, causes, and effects.

## Major depression:

Major depression is characterized by the inability to enjoy life and experience pleasure. The symptoms are constant, ranging from moderate to severe. Left untreated, major depression typically lasts for about six months. Some people experience just a single depressive episode in their lifetime, but more commonly, major depression is a recurring disorder. However, there are many things you can do to support your mood and reduce the risk of recurrence.

**Dysthmia:**

is a type of chronic “low-grade” depression. More days than not, you feel mildly or moderately depressed, although you may have brief periods of normal mood. The symptoms of dysthymia are not as strong as the symptoms of major depression, but they last a long time (at least two years). These chronic symptoms make it very difficult to live life to the fullest or to remember better times. Some people also experience major depressive episodes on top of dysthymia, a condition known as “double depression.” If you suffer from dysthymia, you may feel like you’ve always been depressed. Or you may think that your continuous low mood is “just the way you are.” However, dysthymia can be treated, even if your symptoms have gone unrecognized or untreated for years.

## Seasonal affective disorder (SAD):

There’s a reason why so many movies and books portray rainy days and stormy weather as gloomy. Some people get depressed in the fall or winter, when overcast days are frequent and sunlight is limited. This type of depression is called seasonal affective disorder (SAD). Seasonal affective disorder is more common in northern climates and in younger people. Like depression, seasonal affective disorder is treatable. Light therapy, a treatment that involves exposure to bright artificial light, often helps relieve symptoms.

**Bipolar Disorder:**

Bipolar disorder, also known as manic depression, is characterized by cycling mood changes. Episodes of depression alternate with manic episodes, which can include impulsive behavior, hyperactivity, rapid speech, and little to no sleep. Typically, the switch from one mood extreme to the other is gradual, with each manic or depressive episode lasting for at least several weeks. When depressed, a person with bipolar disorder exhibits the usual symptoms of major depression. However, the treatments for bipolar depression are very different. In fact, antidepressants can make bipolar depression worse.