

Depression

Depression is a very common mental health problem. It's not just a state of being unhappy or sad. It's a true disease. The cause seems to be linked to a change in chemicals that send signals in the brain.

These things increase a person's risk of depression:

- A family history of depression, alcoholism, or suicide
- Chronic illness
- Chronic pain
- Migraine headaches
- High emotional stress

Depression may be easier to see in others. You may have a hard time seeing it in yourself. It can show in many physical and emotional ways. These include:

- Loss of appetite
- Overeating
- Not being able to sleep
- Sleeping too much
- A lot of tiredness not linked to physical activity
- Restlessness or irritability
- Slowness of movement or speech
- Feeling sad or withdrawn
- Loss of interest in things you once enjoyed
- Trouble concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Thoughts of harming or killing yourself, or thoughts that life is not worth living
- Low self-esteem

The treatment for depression may include both medicine and psychotherapy. Antidepressants can ease symptoms. They can also make it easier for you to do daily tasks. Therapy can offer emotional support. It can also help you understand things that may be causing the depression.

Home care

- Ongoing care and support help people manage this disease. Find a healthcare provider and therapist who meet your needs. Get help when you feel like you may be getting ill.
- Be kind to yourself. Make it a point to do things that you enjoy. This may be gardening, walking in nature, or going to a movie. Reward yourself for small successes.
- Take care of your body. Eat a balanced diet. Eat foods low in saturated fat. Eat a lot of fruits and vegetables. Exercise at least 3 times a week for 30 minutes. Even mild to moderate exercise like brisk walking can make you feel better.
- Take medicine as prescribed. Don't stop your medicine or change the dose unless you talk with your healthcare provider.
- Once you start medicine, expect your symptoms to get better slowly. Depression will lift over time. It doesn't get better right away. Ask your healthcare provider how long it will take for a medicine to start working.
- Don't share your medicine. Don't use someone else's medicine.
- Tell your healthcare providers all the medicines you take. This includes prescription and over-the-counter medicines. It includes vitamins and herbal supplements. Some supplements can interact with medicines. They can cause dangerous side effects. Ask your pharmacist about medicine interactions when you have questions.
- Don't make major decisions until you feel better. This includes things such as a job change, a divorce, or a marriage.

- Don't drink alcohol. It can make depression worse.
- Talk with your family and trusted friends about your feelings and thoughts. Ask them to help you notice behavior changes early. You can then get help and, if needed, your medicine can be changed.
- Talk with your healthcare provider if you are not getting better. They may change your medicine or have you try another treatment.

Follow-up care

Follow up with your healthcare provider as advised.

Crisis care

Call 988 if you have thoughts of harming yourself or others. When you call or text 988, you will be connected to trained crisis counselors. An online chat option is also available. Lifeline is free and available 24/7. 988 counselors will work with 911 to help you get the care you need.

Call 988 if you:

- Have suicidal thoughts, a suicide plan, and a way to carry out the plan
- Have serious thoughts of hurting someone else
- Have trouble breathing
- Are very confused
- Feel very drowsy or have trouble awakening
- Faint
- Have new chest pain that becomes more severe, lasts longer, or spreads into your shoulder, arm, neck, jaw, or back

When to get medical care

Call your healthcare provider right away if any of these happen:

- Your symptoms get worse
- You have extreme depression, fear, anxiety, or anger toward yourself or others
- You feel out of control
- You feel that you may try to harm yourself or another
- You hear voices other people don't hear
- You see things other people don't see
- You don't sleep or eat for 3 days in a row
- Friends or family express concern over your behavior and ask you to get help

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