



# WHEN IT'S MORE THAN JUST FEELING BLUE.

Signs and symptoms of depression.

Depression is serious medical illness - a disorder of the brain that's more than just a feeling of being "down in the dumps" or "blue" for a few days. If you have depression, the feelings do not go away, and can interfere with your everyday life.<sup>1</sup>

Left untreated, depression can lead to:<sup>2,3</sup>

- › An increased risk of suicide
- › An increased risk of heart disease
- › A higher risk for other conditions such as stress or eating disorders
- › Substance use or smoking

## Symptoms

If you've been experiencing some of the following symptoms for at least two weeks, you may be suffering from depression.<sup>3</sup>

- › Persistent sad, anxious or "empty" mood; feeling hopeless
- › Feeling guilty, worthless or helpless
- › Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities
- › Decreased energy or fatigue; moving or talking more slowly
- › Feeling restless or having trouble sitting still; difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- › Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- › Appetite and/or weight changes
- › Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts
- › Aches or pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems without a clear physical cause

Not everyone who is depressed experiences all these symptoms. You may only have a few of these signs, or you could have many.

### Risk factors<sup>3</sup>

Depression often begins in adulthood, but can happen at any age. In children and adolescents it often seems more like irritability than a low mood.

Depression can occur with illnesses and medications taken for diabetes, cancer, heart disease or Parkinson's disease.

Here are some other risk factors to be aware of.

- › Personal or family history of depression
- › Major life changes, trauma, or stress

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## Treatment and therapies

Depression, even the most severe cases, can be treated. The earlier you can begin treatment the more effective it can be. Here are some common treatments for depression.<sup>3</sup>

### Medications

- › Antidepressants may help improve the way your brain uses certain chemicals that control mood or stress. You may need to try several different antidepressants before finding the one that improves your symptoms, and that has manageable side effects. A medication that has helped you or a close family member may be considered.

Antidepressants take time to work – usually two to four weeks. Often, your sleep, appetite and concentration may improve before your mood lifts, so it is important to give it some time before deciding about its effectiveness. Do not stop taking antidepressants without the help of a doctor.

### Talk therapy

- › Talk therapy – or counseling – often helps with depression. Types include cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), interpersonal therapy (IPT) or problem-solving therapy.

Depression is usually treated with a combination of medication and talk therapy.

### Brain stimulation therapies

- › If medication and therapy do not reduce symptoms, electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) may be an option.



Some children, teenagers and young adults under age 25 may experience an increase in suicidal thoughts or behavior when taking antidepressants, especially in the first few weeks or when the dose is changed. Patients of all ages taking antidepressants should be watched closely, especially during the first few weeks of treatment.<sup>3</sup>

## Beyond treatment: Things you can do

Here are other tips that may help you or a loved one during treatment for depression.<sup>3</sup>

- › Stay active and try to exercise.
- › Set realistic goals for yourself.
- › Try spending more time with others, and confide in people you trust.
- › Expect your mood to improve gradually, not immediately.
- › Try not to make any important decisions – such as getting married or divorced, or changing jobs – until you're feeling better.

#### Sources:

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "Depression." <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/what-to-look-for/mood-disorders/depression> (last updated August 22, 2017).
2. National Institute of Mental Health. "Depression." <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml> (February 2018).
3. U.S. National Library of Medicine. "Heart disease and depression." <https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000790.htm> (last reviewed April 30, 2018).

If you or someone you know has suicidal thoughts or behaviors, get emergency treatment:

**Call 911 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800.273.8255.**



This is general health information and not medical advice or services. Always consult with your doctor for appropriate examinations, treatment, testing and health care recommendations.

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