



Understanding depression



Get the facts about depression

More than one in every 20 adults in the U.S. suffers from depression each year.¹ Ongoing sadness and loss of interest in life are symptoms of depression. Unlike normal sadness or grief, depression won't go away on its own. If you have depression, you can't just "snap out of it." Without help, depression can go on for months or years, and it can be life-threatening.

Five causes of depression²

- **Brain chemistry.** Researchers believe an imbalance of chemicals in your brain may cause depression.
- **Genetics.** Having a close family member with depression might increase your risk.
- **Environment.** Difficult life circumstances – like being exposed to violence or living in poverty – can make you more likely to have depression.
- **Illness.** Depression can be a symptom of another illness. Talking to a doctor is important to rule out other health problems.
- **Stress.** Stress and depression often go together. A job loss, money problems, a breakup or the loss of a loved one can all trigger depression. Even happy changes – like a new baby or a promotion at work – can cause enough stress to create major depression.

How do I know if I'm depressed?

You could be depressed if you have any of these feelings:³

- Sadness or anxiety that won't go away
- Feeling hopeless or guilty for no reason
- Loss of interest in favorite activities
- Low energy
- Problems concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Trouble sleeping, waking too early or oversleeping
- Eating too much or not wanting to eat
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Wanting to avoid other people, including friends and family
- Health problems like headaches, stomach issues, and chronic pain

If you or someone you know is suicidal, call 911 right away.



Sources

¹ National Institute of Mental Health, Major Depression Among Adults (accessed December 2016): <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/major-depression-among-adults.shtml>

² WebMD, Common Causes of Depression (accessed December 2016): <http://www.webmd.com/depression/common-causes>

³ Center for Disease Control, Mental Illness: Depression (accessed December 2016): <http://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/basics/mental-illness/depression.htm>

⁴ Mayo Clinic, Depression: Supporting a family member or friend (accessed December 2016): <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression/art-20045943>

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How can I help someone with depression?

- **Help them get treatment.** Someone who's depressed often feels too overwhelmed to get help. You may need to schedule appointments or remind your loved one to take medication on time.
- **Offer support.** Listen carefully to your loved one. Try to get them interested in things they used to enjoy.
- **Be patient.** Remember that your loved one is not trying to get attention. They're in real pain.

Five ways to beat depression

- **Ask for help.** Reach out to a doctor or a trusted friend or family member. Depression won't go away by itself, so it's important to get professional help.
- **Set realistic goals.** Break big tasks into smaller ones so you feel less overwhelmed.
- **Spend time with loved ones.** You might feel like hiding from the world, but being alone can make depression worse. Spend time with people you care about.
- **Avoid making big decisions.** Depression can cloud your thinking. Discuss any big changes with people who know you well.
- **Be patient with yourself.** Remind yourself to take it one day at a time. With time and treatment, you'll feel like yourself again.

To get support for yourself or someone else who is struggling with depression, call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-8255 (TALK). If someone is suicidal, call 911 right away.⁴

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