



# How to Know if You're Depressed (and What to Do About It)

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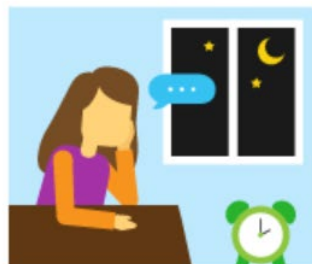
## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Depression is a common and serious condition. It's a type of mood disorder. Symptoms of depression may occur every day or less frequently, and some may never occur at all.

Here are common signs to look for:



- ✓ You've lost interest in things you used to enjoy, or they no longer bring you pleasure.



- ✓ You have trouble falling or staying asleep, or you sleep too much.



- ✓ You have trouble concentrating on reading or watching television.



- ✓ You feel tired and have very little energy.



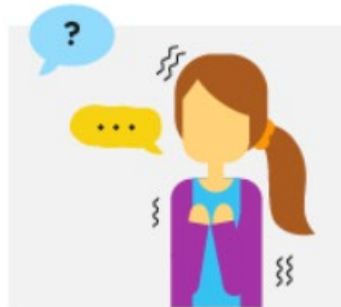
- ✓ You overeat or have very little appetite.



- ✓ You feel down, depressed, or hopeless.



- ✓ You feel bad about yourself —that you've let yourself or your family down or that you are a failure.



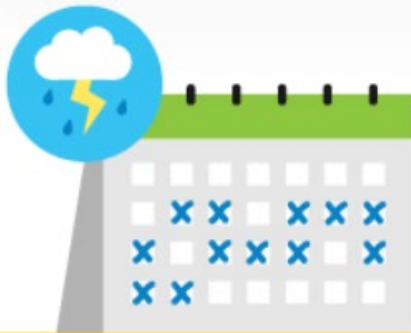
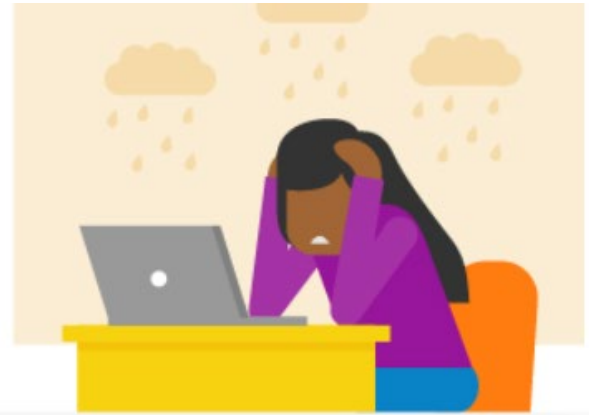
- ✓ You move or speak so slowly that other people have noticed. Or conversely, you are fidgety and more restless than usual.



- ✓ You have thoughts of hurting yourself, or that you would be better off dead.

If you're in crisis or in immediate need of assistance due to thoughts of suicide, go to the nearest emergency room or dial **911** in the U.S. If you're in emotional distress or having suicidal thoughts, call **1-800-273-TALK** in the U.S. or visit **suicide.org** for a list of international hotlines.

If you've been feeling down, blue, or depressed and experience as little as **2 to 3** of these symptoms more days than not, you may have a form of **depression**.



If you have either (1) depressed mood or (2) loss of interest or pleasure, or both, and **at least 4** of these symptoms for a two-week period on more days than not, you likely have **major depressive disorder**.

The more symptoms you have and the more frequently they occur, the more severe your depression may be. If you believe you are affected, see a health care professional right away.



## A Condition That Takes Many Forms

The three main types of depressive disorders are:

### 1 Major depressive disorder

This may be triggered by a loss, such as loss of status, a job, a person, or a relationship. It may also not have a trigger at all. It is disabling and will interfere with your ability to work, eat, and sleep.

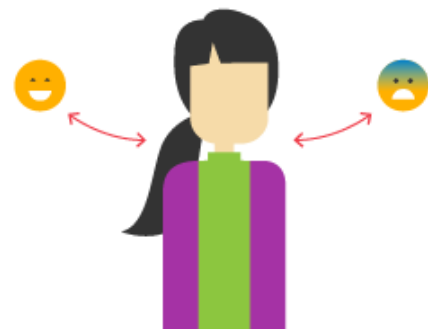


### 2 Persistent depressive disorder

Less severe but more chronic than major depression, this has very similar symptoms and usually lasts for at least two years.

### 3 Bipolar disorder

Moods that shift from mild or severe highs to severe lows. The mood swings may be gradual or abrupt. Note: "Highs" are not necessarily happy—you could experience agitation or even anger as part of the highs.



## GENDER MATTERS



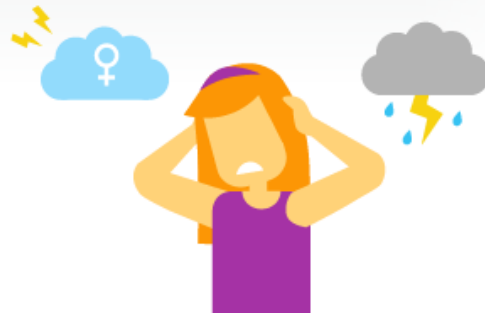
### More Women Than Men

Twice as many women as men are diagnosed with depression, but male depression often goes undiagnosed. Experts believe there may be several reasons for this, including a failure to recognize depression, downplaying of symptoms, or even turning to substance abuse as a coping mechanism.



# 12

The age at which girls' depression begins to overtake that of boys. Experts believe this may be due to the onset of puberty.



## WHEN CHILDBIRTH IS A TRIGGER

### Postpartum Depression Can Persist

# 10-15%

Women who experience depression in the aftermath of pregnancy.



# 30-70%

of those women have symptoms that persist for a year or longer.



Most postpartum depression is clinically considered minor depression, but **4-5%** of cases meet the criteria for major depression.

# HOW TO GET HELP

## Treatment Is Available

Most depression, even the most severe, is treatable. The most common treatments are **medications** and **therapy**.



## CBT Works

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy aims to teach coping skills and healthy responses to challenging situations, and is well-known as an effective treatment for depression.

Some research shows that CBT may work even as an alternative to anti-depressant medication.



## Success with Positive Psychology

Positive psychology interventions teach people to pay attention to the good things in their lives and create meaningful experiences. Research shows they can significantly enhance well-being and decrease depressive symptoms, especially when delivered individually and for relatively longer periods of time.



## Mindfulness: A Helpful Tool

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention to and accepting what you're feeling without trying to change it. A study in Sweden showed that group therapy based in mindfulness was equally effective as individual CBT for the treatment of depression, anxiety, and stress-related disorders.



## The Rx Route

If you and your doctor decide to go the medication route, frequently prescribed medications include:

- ✓ Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI)
- ✓ Serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRI)
- ✓ Other medications like mood stabilizers



## Other Tools to Try:

In addition to seeking professional treatment, you may also want to consider the following:



Join a support group (search online for "depression support group.")



Try evidence-based digital programs like Happify that can help reduce depressive symptoms



Find some physical exercise you like and do it most days

# WHAT MAY HELP PREVENT DEPRESSION

If you have depression, it's absolutely key to seek treatment from a professional.

If you think you're at risk of developing depression, recent studies have found that what we eat and how we move may have preventative effects for some types of depression.

## How Food Affects Your Mood



A meta-analysis of 41 studies showed that people who adhered strictly to the Mediterranean diet had a 33% lower chance of developing depression than those who didn't.

## How to Eat Mediterranean

The best thing about the Mediterranean diet is that it's not a diet, but a set of guidelines for eating:

Eat lots of vegetables: strive for half your plate.

Make meat a condiment, not the main attraction.

Eat seafood twice a week.



Eat fruit for dessert.



Use good fats like extra-virgin olive oil and nuts.

Switch to whole grains.





## Exercise for Optimal Emotional Health

A Rutgers University study showed that a combination of meditation and exercise decreased depressive symptoms by 40% in a group of depressed individuals.



A study in *The Lancet* showed that people who exercise enjoy better general mental health. Team sports, cycling, aerobics, and going to the gym seemed to have the best results.



Also, exercising for just **45 minutes**, 3 to 5 times per week, gave the optimal boost in mood, and more did not help increase the effect.

New research from the Massachusetts General Hospital shows that physical activity can work in advance, preventing the development of depression.

