

Depression

Depression is not just “feeling blue” or “down in the dumps.” It is not just being sad after a loss. Depression is a medical disorder — just like diabetes, high blood pressure, or heart disease — that day after day affects your thoughts, feelings, physical health, and behaviors.

What Is Depression?



Depression is a feeling of sadness that lasts for many weeks and does not go away. It interferes with your daily activities and may keep you from eating, sleeping, or enjoying yourself.

You may feel more tired than usual and have difficulty concentrating or remembering. You may also feel more cranky or grumpy than usual.

The good news is that people who are depressed often feel better with the right treatment. Your doctor can help you decide about treatment.

What Causes Depression?

There is no one reason people become depressed. For some people, a single event can bring on the illness. A death in the family, or a serious illness, or even coping with retirement can cause depression.

Mood changes can also be caused by medicines you might take for arthritis, high blood pressure, or heart disease.

Depression is not caused by personal weakness, laziness, or lack of will power.

When a person is depressed, the levels of certain brain chemicals become too low. This changes the way the brain sends messages. Most treatments for depression help to rebalance these special brain chemicals.

When Should I Seek Help?



If you think you or someone you know might have depression, seek help quickly. The longer treatment is delayed, the more difficult depression is to treat.

Remember, depression is not caused by personal weakness, laziness, or lack of will power; it is a medical illness that can be treated.

The questionnaire that follows can help you decide if you are depressed.

Resources

Organizations

The American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry

7910 Woodmont Ave., Ste 1050

Bethesda, MD 20814-3004

Phone: (301) 654-7850

Fax: (301) 645-4137

Web site: www.aagppa.org

American Psychological Association

750 First St., NE

Washington, D.C. 20002-4242

Phone: (800) 374-2721

Web site: www.apa.org

National Institute of Mental Health

6001 Executive Blvd. Room 8184, MSC 9663

Bethesda, MD 20892-9663

Phone: (866) 615-6464

TTY: (866) 415-8051

Web site: www.nimh.nih.gov

Web Site

www.medlineplus.gov

Up-to-date, quality health care information. Go to Health Topics, "Depression."