

Major Depression: An Overview

What is it?



Major depression, also known as clinical depression or unipolar depression, is one of the most common mental disorders. Depression negatively affects how a person thinks, feels, and behaves. This condition is more than a temporary state of feeling sad, rather it is persistent and can significantly impair an individual's functioning in daily life.

How common is depression?

Depression can happen at any age, in any person, and at any time. In the US, about 17.3 million adults (1 in 15) have experienced a major depressive episode in a year. 1 in 6 adults will have depression in a lifetime. Women are twice as likely as men to experience depression. Some studies show that one-third of women will experience an episode at some point in their life.



What are the causes for developing depression?

- Personal or family history of depression
- Experience with major life changes, trauma, or stressful events
- Diagnosis of medical illness/problem
- Taking certain medications
- Use of alcohol and drug use

What are the signs and symptoms?

5 or more of the following must have been present nearly every day during the same 2-week period, and one of them must be depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure. Symptoms can vary from mild to severe and can include:

- Feeling sad or depressed mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- Changes in appetite unrelated to dieting
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Increase in purposeless physical activity
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating or making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide

How is depression diagnosed and treated?

A healthcare professional will perform a thorough interview, mental status evaluation and medical evaluation. Individuals may have to complete a depression-screening test as part of the diagnostic process. Treatment varies on severity and duration of symptoms.

Basic treatment include:

- Antidepressant medication
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBY) and Interpersonal Therapy
- Electroconvulsive Therapy (ECT)



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