



BASIC INFORMATION

DESCRIPTION

Depression is a mood disorder. The symptoms that occur (emotional and physical) interfere with everyday life for an extended period of time. Symptoms may be mild, moderate, or severe. Depression is common and affects children and adults (women more than men).

FREQUENT SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

- Loss of interest in life, feeling bored and listless.
- Fatigue and lack of energy.
- Insomnia, excess sleep, or sleeping problems.
- Lack of pleasure, or withdrawal, from usual activities.
- Change in appetite that leads to weight gain or loss.
- Loss of sex drive.
- Difficulty making decisions; concentration difficulty.
- Unexplained crying bouts.
- Inappropriate guilt feelings, self-hate, lack of self-esteem, and feeling unworthy.
- Irritability, anger, and agitation.
- Headache or other aches and pains.
- Thoughts of suicide or death.

CAUSES

It is not fully known what causes depression. It appears to be a combination of factors. Chemical imbalances in the brain may cause or contribute to depression. Other factors may include biologic, genetic, psychological, environmental, and developmental events.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Women are more at risk than men.
- Personal history or family history of depression.
- Advanced age.
- Compulsive, rigid, perfectionistic, or highly dependent personality.
- Other emotional or personality disorder.
- Substance abuse, such as alcoholism or drugs.
- Failure in job, marriage, or a personal relationship.
- Death or loss of a loved one.
- Recent, stressful life experience.
- Living alone, social isolation.
- Surgery, major illness, or disability.
- Passing from one life stage to another (e.g., retiring).
- Use of some drugs, not taking prescribed drugs, or side effect of drugs.
- Some chronic diseases.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Depression is often not preventable. Reduce your risks where possible. If you have recurring depression, drugs may be prescribed for prevention.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Treatment helps most patients. Depression may sometimes recur or it may be a one-time episode.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Alcohol or substance abuse.
- Problems with physical health.
- Loss of job, failure in school, and family or marital problems.
- Failure to improve with treatment.
- Suicide.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Your health care provider will do a physical exam and ask questions about your symptoms and activities. Screening tests for depression are helpful in diagnosis. Medical tests may be done to rule out other disorders.
- Therapy consists of treating acute symptoms, avoiding a relapse, and preventing recurrence.
- Psychotherapy or counseling along with drug treatment appears to obtain the best results.
- Types of psychotherapy include cognitive therapy, behavioral therapy, and interpersonal therapy. Therapy may involve 12 to 20 sessions over 12 to 16 weeks.
- Hospital care or inpatient at a special treatment center may be required for severe depression.
- Seek support groups. Contact social agencies for help. Contact the National Mental Health Association; (800) 969-6642; website: www.nmha.org.
- Call a suicide-prevention hotline if you feel suicidal.
- Electroconvulsive therapy (use of electric shocks to produce a seizure) may be used in severe cases.

MEDICATION

- Antidepressant drugs will usually be prescribed. Multiple drugs are necessary in some cases. It will take 2 to 4 weeks or longer for improvement.
- Drugs for other symptoms may be prescribed.

ACTIVITY

A regular exercise program can help relieve depression.

DIET

Eat a normal, well-balanced diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member has symptoms of depression.
- Symptoms don't improve with treatment.

Special notes:

More notes on the back of this page ☐