# CAUSES

**It's not known exactly what causes depression.**

As with many mental disorders, a variety of factors may be involved, such as:

**Brain chemistry.**
Neurotransmitters are naturally occurring brain chemicals that likely play a role in depression.

**Hormones.**
Changes in the body's balance of hormones may be involved in causing or triggering depression.

**Inherited traits.**
Depression is more common in people whose blood relatives also have this condition.

# SYMPTOMS IN OLDER ADULTS

Depression is not a normal part of aging, and it should never be taken lightly. Unfortunately, depression often goes undiagnosed and untreated in older adults.

Symptoms include:

- Difficulties with memory or personality changes
- Physical aches or pain
- Fatigue, loss of appetite, sleep problems or loss of interest in sex
- Suicidal thinking or feelings, especially in older men

# COMPLICATIONS

**Depression often gets worse if it isn't treated,** resulting in emotional, behavioral and health problems that affect every area of your life, including:

- **Pain or physical illness**
- **Alcohol or drug misuse**
- **Anxiety, panic disorders or social phobia**
- **Family conflicts, relationship difficulties, and work or school problems**
- **Social isolation**
- **Suicidal feelings, suicide attempts or suicide**
- **Self-injury, such as cutting**

# COMMON SYMPTOMS

- Feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness, or hopelessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in most or all normal activities
- Sleep disturbances, including insomnia or sleeping too much
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Changes in appetite
- Frequent or recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal thoughts, or suicide attempts

# MORE THAN JUST THE BLUES

**Depression isn't a weakness** and you can't simply "snap out of it."

It may require long-term treatment, but don't get discouraged. Most people with depression feel better with **medication, psychotherapy** or **both.**

If you feel depressed, make an appointment to see your doctor or mental health professional as soon as you can.

# GETTING HELP

If you think you may hurt yourself or attempt suicide, **call 9-1-1 immediately.**

If you're having suicidal thoughts:

- Call your doctor or mental health professional.
- **Call or text 9-8-8** to reach the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. Spanish: **1-888-628-9454**
- U.S. veterans or service members: **call 9-8-8 and then press "1"** for the Veterans Crisis Line. Or **text 838255.**
- Reach out to a close friend or loved one.
- Contact a minister, spiritual leader or someone else in your faith community.

# WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

**Depression** is a **mood disorder** that causes a persistent feeling of sadness and loss.

Also called **major depressive disorder** or **clinical depression**, it affects how you feel, think and behave and can lead to a variety of emotional and physical problems.

You may have trouble doing normal day-to-day activities, and sometimes you may feel as if life isn't worth living.

# PREVENTION

There's no sure way to prevent depression. However, these strategies may help.

- **Take steps** to control stress, to increase your resilience and boost your self-esteem.
- **Reach out** to family and friends, especially in times of crisis.
- **Get treatment** at the earliest sign of a problem to help prevent depression from worsening.
- **Consider** getting long-term maintenance treatment to help prevent a relapse.