



FAR MORE THAN 'THE BLUES'

Let's face it: being a young person isn't easy. Young people are under a lot of new pressures - at school, from their families, friends or from their jobs. Others have added stress from their neighborhoods. Or maybe their parents are getting divorced. Maybe there was a death in the family, or a bad break-up with a boyfriend or girlfriend.

Most people can cope with new stress and bounce back from difficult life events. It's normal to feel sad for a while and then move on. Sometimes, however, those feelings of sadness, isolation or emptiness don't go away on their own. They stick around, maybe even making it hard to do everyday activities. Things that used to be enjoyable don't seem worth doing anymore.

Other times a person may feel down for no reason in particular. Gradually, they realize they've lost interest in activities and are pulling away from friends. Life just doesn't excite them the way it did a few months ago.

Experts estimate that as many as 1 in 5 young people will experience symptoms of depression. Whether it's triggered by a traumatic event or seems to come out of nowhere, depression is a serious

mental health problem characterized by profound feelings of sadness, hopelessness, worthlessness and immobilizing fatigue. The brains of most depressed people have low levels of one or more neurotransmitters - the chemicals that brain cells use to relay messages. If left untreated, an episode of depression can last for six months or more.

What causes depression is still not fully understood. But its impact is immense. Depression in all its forms is the leading cause of disability in the industrialized world. In the U.S. more than 15 million people fall victim to it every year, costing the economy an estimated \$236 billion in medical costs and economic losses.

In many cases, people who are depressed can't imagine ever feeling happy again - But whether the victim is yourself, a friend, or a family member, depression is treatable. With the proper care, it will go away. The most important thing is to get help from a qualified mental health professional.



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

SUICIDE HELPLINE: 9-8-8

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH

www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention

in the know

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DEPRESSION

Buried Alive





SYMPTOMS OF DEPRESSION

- Noticeable and lasting sadness, anxiety or “emptiness” (sometimes with no apparent reason)
- Feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, undeserved guilt and worthlessness
- Difficulty in concentrating, remembering and making decisions
- Having no energy
- Restlessness, irritability
- Pulling away from friends and family
- Not caring about life or the future
- Weight loss or weight gain
- Change in sleep patterns (sleeping too much, or being unable to sleep)
- Loss of interest in work, school, activities and personal appearance
- Not getting any enjoyment from things that used to be pleasurable
- Reckless, impulsive or risky behavior
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Thoughts of death and suicide
- Aches and pains with no apparent cause

If someone has five or more of these symptoms for two weeks or longer, depression may be the cause. Tragic events, genetics, stress, hormonal changes and physical illness can all make someone more prone to depression. But people also become depressed without experiencing any of these factors.

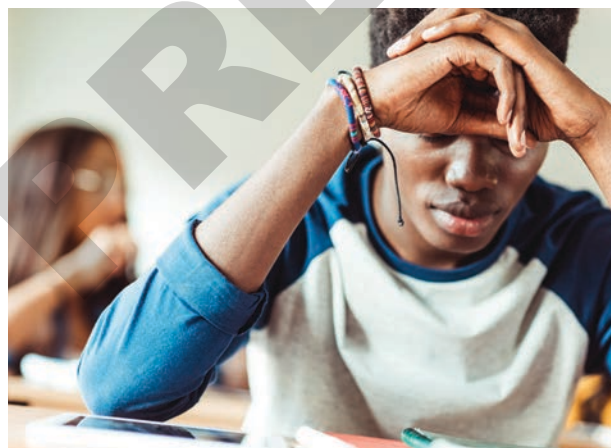
FORMS OF DEPRESSION

Most depression is unipolar—a persistent depressed state, interrupted (if at all) by periods of normal feelings. There are two general categories. Major depressive disorder affects about five percent of the adult population and generally makes its victims incapable of normal functioning. Dysthymia is a lower-level depression during which people can still function, but without feeling any enjoyment from life.

In bipolar disorder, the patient’s mood swings between major depression and an intense manic state—great energy and extreme joy or intense irritability.

WHO SUFFERS FROM DEPRESSION?

Because depression is so widespread, it’s helpful to know whom it affects, and how. A family member or friend who is depressed may need your assistance to get the help they need.



Females are twice as likely to experience depression. Depression in men frequently manifests itself through alcohol and drug abuse, anger and aggression. Men may also become job-obsessed “workaholics.”

Children can become depressed at any age. Unlike adults, they may recover spontaneously, but the depression is likely to return.

Young adults often go untreated because their depression is attributed to normal adolescent moodiness. But depression is the main reason suicide is a leading cause of death in teens.

The elderly experience depression at somewhat higher rates, although depression is not a normal part of aging.

TREATING DEPRESSION

Improvements in antidepressant medications have revolutionized the treatment of depression. Drugs like Prozac, Zoloft and Paxil are the most widely prescribed antidepressants. They increase the available levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin, improving the patient’s mood and energy.

Medication is often accompanied by some form of psychotherapy, sometimes referred to as “talk therapy.” It involves talking with

a qualified mental health professional. Some patients are successfully treated through talk therapy alone.

HELPING A DEPRESSED PERSON

The most important thing is to see that the person receives proper care. Since depression robs people of hope and energy, be prepared to provide encouragement at every step.

- Become informed about depression and its treatment.
- Go through the list of symptoms with the depressed person, to help you understand how he or she is feeling.
- Offer to accompany the person to doctor’s appointments.
- Encourage the person to take medication as directed.
- Monitor progress and tell a parent, guardian or doctor if you see no improvement after several weeks.
- Do not ignore comments about suicide. Report them to a trusted adult or the person’s doctor.



If you think you may be depressed, talk to someone you trust who can help you get the treatment you need to feel better.