



Defeating Depression

Finding Help, Finding Hope

Defeating Depression

Some people may have one or more distinct episodes of depression in a lifetime. Others may have ongoing, chronic symptoms that do not interfere with functioning but keep them from feeling their best. Depression may take several forms. Among the most common are:

- **major depression**, characterized by symptoms such as fatigue, sadness, guilt, despair, loss of interest in life, sleeping too much or too little, weight gain or loss, irritability, difficulty concentrating, or thoughts of suicide or death
- **dysthymia** or chronic, mild depression
- **bipolar disorder** (also called manic depression), when feeling down and depressed alternates with high-energy activity

Another type of depression is *seasonal affective disorder* (SAD), which tends to strike during the winter months.

Because some medications and viral infections can cause depression-like symptoms, it's important to get a thorough evaluation if you think you have depression.

- Are You Depressed?
- Depression Facts
- Feeling Anxious?
- Who Can Help?
- Getting Through Difficult Times

Beyond the Blues

Depression is not a personal or emotional weakness. It's a condition that millions of people live with, usually in silence. Like many other conditions, it can be treated successfully. First comes awareness, then reaching out for help, including a sound treatment program. **You can feel better.**



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QUIKRISK™ SELF-ASSESSMENT

	Often	Sometimes	Rarely/Never
1. I feel a persistent sad or "empty" mood.	10	5	0
2. I feel hopeless and helpless.	10	5	0
3. I am consumed with feelings of worthlessness or guilt.	10	5	0
4. I have difficulty concentrating and making decisions.	10	5	0
5. I overeat or have no appetite at all.	10	5	0
6. I awaken much too early or oversleep.	10	5	0
	Yes	No	
7. I have gained or lost weight without meaning to.	10	0	
8. I no longer enjoy activities that I used to.	15	0	
9. I am exhausted all the time and have no energy for normal daily activities.	15	0	
10. Others would describe me as very restless or very slow lately.	15	0	
11. I think about death or suicide.	15	0	

The self-assessment in this brochure is meant to raise awareness of feelings that may be related to depression. It is not intended to diagnose clinical depression. We encourage you to talk about depression with a licensed professional counselor, your Employee Assistance Program or your health care provider.

Depression:

- ✓ Often runs in families
- ✓ Can be triggered by stress and major life changes
- ✓ Is often associated with:
 - alcohol and drug abuse
 - major medical illnesses including heart disease
 - eating disorders and anxiety
 - certain personality traits such as dependency and low self-esteem
- ✓ In women, it sometimes follows childbirth (postpartum) or accompanies the years leading up to menopause, known as perimenopause

A good diagnosis involves a complete physical, a

← How Did You Do?

If you scored 0-20 points and you answered "no" to statements 8-11, then you probably do not have a persistent problem with depression.

If you scored 25-50, some form of depression could be a problem for you, and you should pay attention to these symptoms. Consider talking to your health care provider, especially if these feelings persist or get worse.

psychological checkup, and a review of your medical and family history. Treatment (e.g. psychotherapy, medication) can help shorten the duration of depression.

Most people get the blues now and then. But when that down feeling lasts longer than a few weeks or you're having trouble functioning in daily life, reach out for help.



If you scored 55 or higher, you probably have a problem with depression and should call your health care provider without delay.

If you marked "yes" to #11 (thoughts of suicide), seek professional help immediately.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 1-800-273-8255
or call 9-1-1

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Are You Overly Anxious?

Nearly everyone feels anxious sometimes, whether due to a single event such as giving a presentation or an ongoing problem such as trouble with paying bills.

But if you often feel anxious, fearful and overwhelmed to the point of having difficulty getting through the day, you may need professional advice. Anxiety disorders can grow worse if left untreated. These illnesses wear several names, including panic disorder, social phobia and obsessive-compulsive disorder. The good news is that effective treatments are available.

How do you know whether you suffer from an anxiety disorder? Signs may include the following:

- Exaggerated tension and worry
- Trouble concentrating
- Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Fear of death, losing control or going insane
- Fatigue, headaches, muscle tension and muscle aches
- Shortness of breath, choking sensation
- Tremors, twitching or feeling shaky
- Dizziness, dry mouth, sweats or chills, cold/clammy hands
- Nausea, diarrhea or abdominal discomfort
- Frequent need to use the bathroom
- Palpitations, rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco or other drugs

Having one or more of these symptoms doesn't necessarily mean you have an anxiety disorder. But if you have several and they are persistent or accompanied by feelings of excessive, irrational fear and dread — or if you're at all concerned — consult your health care provider right away.



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Who Can Help?

Family doctor; community mental health center; hospital psychiatry department or outpatient clinic; university counseling center; state hospital outpatient clinic; family service, social agency or clergy; private clinic; or local medical or psychiatric society. What's important is that you reach out and get the help you need.

National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov)
1-866-615-6464



Getting Through Difficult Times

Confide in someone you trust rather than bottle up your thoughts and feelings.

Break up difficult tasks into smaller, more manageable chunks.

Keep your goals simple.

Getting better can take time and effort, and usually benefits from professional help.

Postpone major life decisions such as a job change or a divorce. If a decision is absolutely necessary, consult someone who knows you well.



Struggling? Try:



- eating energy-boosting foods such as fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains
- avoiding alcohol, drugs of abuse and unnecessary medications
- treating yourself as kindly as you would a close friend
- engaging in physical activity of 30 minutes or more most days of the week
- joining activities or rediscovering hobbies that make you feel better
- being with positive people as often as you can



Pets offer companionship and love.

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