



DEPRESSION FACTS

Depression is a mood state that goes well beyond temporarily feeling sad or blue. It is a serious medical illness that affects one's thoughts, feelings, behavior, mood and physical health. Psychological, biological, environmental and genetic factors contribute to its development.

For many years people living with depression and their families were blamed and experienced societal prejudice as a result of their illness, partly because depression was so misunderstood. Scientific research during the past few decades have firmly established that depression is a medical illness and that it is not a sign of personal weakness or a medical illness that can be willed or wished away.

Depression affects eight percent of American adults, and will be the 2nd leading illness throughout the world by 2020. It occurs twice as frequently in women as in men. Without treatment, the frequency as well as the severity of symptoms tends to increase over time. Left untreated, depression can lead to serious impairment in one's ability to function in relationships and at work. It can even lead to suicide, the eleventh leading cause of death in the U.S.

Major Types of Depressive Illnesses

- Major Depression – people experience persistent symptoms that affect their thoughts, behavior, mood, activity and physical health.
- Dysthymia – people experience less severe depression, but it is chronic and can negatively affect one's quality of life.
- Bipolar disorder – people experience alternating episodes of mania (severe highs), depression (severe lows) and mixed states which contain elements of both high and low experiences.
- Postpartum Depression – women can experience postpartum depression any time within the first year after childbirth and the symptoms are similar to major depression.

Symptoms of Depression:

- Persistently sad or irritable mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in nearly all activities
- Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, hopelessness and emptiness
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating, or making decisions
- Decreased energy, fatigue, and feeling "slowed down"
- Changes in appetite and/or weight
- Changes in sleep
- Thoughts of death, suicide, plans or attempts

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Causes of Depression: There are multiple causes of depression in any combination.

Some common causes of depression are:

- Genetic (family history of the disease)
- Biochemical (changes in hormones, chemical imbalance, etc.)
- Psychological (social, anxiety, stress, etc.)
- Trauma

Treatment of Depression: Many experts suggest using both psychotherapy and medications to treat depression:

- Psychotherapy – There are many types of therapy available today including cognitive-behavior therapy, interpersonal therapy and psychodynamic psychotherapy.
- Medications – There are a variety of antidepressant medications available today including selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs), bupropion, Mirtazapine, tricyclic antidepressants and monoamine oxidase inhibitors (MAOIs).
- Psychosocial treatments – Things like psychoeducation, family psychoeducation and support groups can be very helpful.
- Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) – For very severe depression that does not respond to treatment, ECT can be very successful.
- Self Care – Paying attention to one's lifestyle such as diet and exercise, can help recovery.

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