

Depression: What is it?

What Is Depression?

Feeling sad at times is a normal part of life. But when these feelings last for more than a few weeks, and even small things become hard to do, you may be depressed.

Depression is an illness that changes the way you think and feel. It can affect how you perform at work and in all other parts of your daily life. You may be depressed for months and even years. Being depressed is not a weakness, and it is not your fault. It is an illness, and it can be treated. Some people have depression only once in their life, while others may have it again and again. Without treatment, there is a chance that you may suffer from repeat bouts of depression.

What Causes Depression?

Anyone can be depressed, and it tends to run in families. Stressful events may bring on depression or prevent a full recovery. These events may include marriage problems, divorce, death of a loved one, loss of a job, an injury, stress or a long-term illness. Sometimes, you may even be depressed when life is going well.

What Are the Symptoms?

Having 5 or more symptoms listed below every day for at least 2 weeks may mean that you are depressed:

- Feeling sad or “down”
- Feeling tired all of the time
- Thinking about death or suicide
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Losing or gaining weight or having a change in appetite
- Feeling slowed down, or lacking energy
- Thinking that life is not worth living
- Having trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Having problems thinking, remembering or making decisions
- Losing interest in things you used to enjoy such as work, hobbies, sports or visiting friends

Get Help

- If you think you are depressed, you should see your doctor.
- Your doctor can see if you are depressed and start you on a treatment plan, if needed.
- Your doctor can also connect you to support groups, counselors or other kinds of help.

The sooner you get help, the sooner you will start to feel better. Depending on how severe your depression is, treatment may include counseling, a fitness program, upbeat self-talk, dietary supplements and medicine.

