



What is Depression?

Depressive disorder, often simply called depression, is more than just feeling sad or going through a rough patch. It's a serious mental health condition that requires understanding and medical care. Left untreated, depression can be devastating for those who have it and their families. Fortunately, with treatment, many people can and do get better.

Some will only experience one depressive episode in a lifetime, but for most, depressive disorder recurs. Without treatment, episodes may last a few months to several years.

Symptoms

Depression can have different symptoms. But for most people, depressive disorder changes how people function day-to-day, and typically for more than two weeks.

Common symptoms include:

- Changes in sleep
- Changes in appetite
- Lack of concentration
- Loss of energy
- Lack of interest in activities
- Hopelessness or guilty thoughts
- Changes in movement (less activity or agitation)
- Physical aches and pains
- Suicidal thoughts

Treatments

Depressive disorder often responds to treatment. The key is to get a specific evaluation and treatment plan. Safety planning is important for individuals who have suicidal thoughts. Patient-centered treatment plans can include any or a combination of the following:

- **Psychotherapy** including cognitive behavioral therapy, family-focused therapy and interpersonal therapy.
- **Medications** including antidepressants, mood stabilizers and antipsychotic medications.
- **Exercise** can help with prevention and mild-to-moderate symptoms.
- **Brain stimulation therapies** can be tried if psychotherapy and/or medication are not effective.
- **Light therapy**, which uses a light box to expose a person to full spectrum light to help regulate the hormone melatonin.
- **Alternative approaches** including acupuncture, meditation, faith and nutrition can be part of a comprehensive treatment plan.

You are not alone. We can help you or someone you love overcome depression.

Visit www.centermh.org/help to take a fast, confidential online screening test.

Information provided by the National Alliance on Mental Illness.



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