

Symptoms

Clinical depression

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Clinical depression is more than feeling unhappy or fed up for a few days.

Most people go through periods of feeling down. When you have clinical depression you feel sad for weeks or months, not just a few days.

Clinical depression can be a serious condition. It is not a sign of weakness. It is not something you can 'snap out of' by 'pulling yourself together'.

With the right treatment and support, most people with clinical depression can make a full recovery.

How to tell if you have clinical depression

Clinical depression affects people in different ways.

The symptoms of clinical depression can be complex and vary from person to person.

Generally, if you have clinical depression:

- you feel sad, hopeless and lose interest in things you used to enjoy
- you have these symptoms for at least 2 weeks
- the symptoms are serious enough to interfere with work, social life or family

There are many other symptoms of clinical depression and you're unlikely to have them all.

Psychological symptoms

The psychological symptoms of clinical depression include:

- continuous low mood or sadness
- feeling hopeless and helpless
- having low self-esteem
- feeling tearful
- feeling worthless or guilty
- feeling irritable and intolerant of others
- having no motivation or interest in things
- finding it difficult to make decisions
- not getting any enjoyment out of life
- irritable mood
- feeling anxious or worried
- having suicidal thoughts or thoughts of harming yourself

Call 999 or 112 if:

- you or someone you know is about to harm themselves or someone else

[Self-harm](#)

[Anxiety](#)

Physical symptoms

The physical symptoms of clinical depression include:

- moving or speaking slower than usual
- changes in appetite or weight (usually decreased, but sometimes increased)
- constipation
- unexplained aches and pains
- lack of energy
- low sex drive (loss of libido)
- changes to your menstrual cycle
- disturbed sleep – difficulty falling asleep, waking up early or sleeping more than usual

Social symptoms

The social symptoms of clinical depression include:

- not doing well at work
- avoiding contact with friends and taking part in fewer social activities
- neglecting your hobbies and interests

- having difficulties in your home and family life

Severity of clinical depression

Clinical depression often develops gradually. So it can be difficult to notice when something is wrong. You might try to cope with the symptoms without realising you're unwell. It can sometimes take a friend or family member to notice something is wrong.

The severity of clinical depression depends on how much impact it has on your daily life:

- mild clinical depression – has some impact
- moderate clinical depression – has a significant impact
- severe clinical depression – almost impossible to get through daily life

You can have clinical depression and other mental health disorders. For example, anxiety, psychosis or other difficulties.

Grief and depression

It can be difficult to know the difference between grief and clinical depression. Both are similar, but there are differences.

Grief is a natural response to a loss. Clinical depression is an illness.

When you are grieving, you find feelings of sadness and loss come and go. But you are still able to enjoy things and look forward to the future.

If you have clinical depression, you always feel sad. You don't enjoy anything and find it difficult to be positive about the future.

[Coping with bereavement](#)

Other types of depression

There are different types of depression. Some conditions may also include depression as a symptom.

Postnatal depression

Some women develop depression after they have a baby. This is postnatal depression. It's treated in a similar way to other types of depression. This includes talking therapies and antidepressant medicines.

[Postnatal depression](#)

Bipolar disorder

Bipolar disorder is also called 'manic depression'. In bipolar disorder there are spells of both depression and high mood (mania). If you have bipolar disorder, you will move between depression and mania.

The depression symptoms are like clinical depression.

Mania can include harmful behaviour, such as:

- gambling
- going on spending sprees
- having unsafe sex

[Bipolar disorder](#)

Seasonal affective disorder

Seasonal affective disorder (SAD) is also called 'winter depression'. SAD is a type of depression that happens in winter.

[Seasonal affective disorder \(SAD\)](#)

When to get help

See your GP if you have symptoms of depression for most of the day, every day, for more than 2 weeks.

A [low mood](#) may improve after a short time.

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