

## Depression

### Overview:

Depression is a mood disorder characterized by **persistent sadness, loss of interest, and low energy** that affects thoughts, behavior, and physical health. Among high school and college students, prevalence has increased significantly due to academic pressure, social media exposure, and lifestyle changes.

### Symptoms:

- **Emotional:** Persistent sadness, hopelessness, irritability, guilt, and emotional numbness.
- **Cognitive:** Difficulty concentrating, indecisiveness, self-criticism, negative thinking patterns.
- **Physical:** Fatigue, significant weight loss or gain, sleep disturbances, frequent aches and pains.
- **Behavioral:** Social withdrawal, decreased participation in hobbies, absenteeism, decline in academic performance.

### Causes:

- **Biological:** Neurochemical imbalances (serotonin, dopamine), genetics.
- **Psychological:** Trauma, bullying, chronic stress, low resilience.
- **Environmental:** Family conflicts, academic pressures, social isolation, financial stress.

### Effects:

- Reduced academic achievement, strained relationships, risk of suicidal thoughts, poor physical health.
- Long-term untreated depression can lead to chronic mental health issues in adulthood.

### Coping Strategies:

- **Behavioral Activation:** Engaging in meaningful activities to break the cycle of inactivity and low mood.
- **Exercise:** Aerobic exercise 3–5 times/week improves endorphin levels and mood regulation.
- **Social Support:** Maintaining connections with supportive peers and family reduces feelings of isolation.

- **Mindfulness & Meditation:** Reduces rumination and improves emotional regulation.
- **Structured Routine:** Planning daily activities, including study, leisure, and self-care.

#### **Professional Support:**

- Psychotherapy (CBT, Interpersonal Therapy), psychiatric consultation for severe cases.
- School and college counselors, online therapy platforms.

#### **Extra Tips:**

- Keep a mood diary to monitor triggers and improvements.
- Limit social media exposure that may trigger negative comparisons.
- Educate peers to recognize warning signs.

#### **Case Example:**

A college student loses interest in hobbies and isolates themselves after poor exam results. Daily journaling, group therapy, and counseling sessions over 8 weeks improved mood, motivation, and social engagement.