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URL of this page: <https://medlineplus.gov/depression.html>

Depression

Also called: Clinical depression, Dysthymic disorder, Major depressive disorder, Unipolar depression

What is depression?

Depression is more than a feeling of being sad or irritable for a few days. It's a serious mood disorder [<https://medlineplus.gov/mooddisorders.html>]. As one of the most common mental disorders in the United States, depression can affect how you think, feel, and your everyday life. You may not know why you feel this way, but even basic daily activities such as sleeping, eating, or working may become difficult. Depression often needs long-term treatment but getting help at the earliest sign of a problem can help manage your symptoms.

What are the different types of depression?

The most common types of depression are major depression and persistent depressive disorder.

- **Major depression** symptoms include a depressed mood or a loss of interest. Symptoms affect your daily activities and last for at least two weeks.
- **Persistent depressive disorder** (also called dysthymia or dysthymic disorder) has less severe depressive symptoms, but they last longer, usually for at least two years.

Other types of depression can include:

- **Seasonal affective disorder** [<https://medlineplus.gov/seasonalaffectiondisorder.html>] comes and goes with the seasons. It usually starts in late fall and early winter and goes away during the spring and summer.
- **Bipolar disorder** [<https://medlineplus.gov/bipolardisorder.html>] is sometimes called manic depression. This mood disorder can cause intense mood swings.
- **Depression with symptoms of psychosis** is a severe form of depression that also has delusions (false beliefs) or hallucinations (seeing, hearing, or feeling something that isn't there).

What causes depression?

There are a variety of things that may cause depression, including genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors. Depression can happen at any age and can affect anyone, but it's more common in women. This is often due to the physical and hormonal changes that women have during menstruation, pregnancy, the postpartum period [<https://medlineplus.gov/postpartumdepression.html>], and menopause. Other mental disorders or chronic medical conditions such as diabetes [<https://medlineplus.gov/diabetes.html>], cancer [<https://medlineplus.gov/cancer.html>], or heart disease [<https://medlineplus.gov/heartdiseases.html>] may occur with depression. This may make the chronic condition or depression worse.

In some cases, there is no clear cause for depression.

Who is at risk of depression?

You may be at a higher risk of depression if you have a close relative who has it or another mental health disorder. Going through trauma or stressful life events may raise your risk even more.

What are the symptoms of depression?

Depression doesn't look the same on everyone. The type and number of symptoms of depression can vary and don't always appear like sadness. Depression may affect you differently based on your:

- **Age.** The symptoms of depression may be different in a child, who may appear more irritable than sad. Teens [<https://medlineplus.gov/teendepression.html>] may act out or have excessive sleepiness. The symptoms for an older adult may not be as obvious as other age groups.
- **Sex.** Men often show symptoms and coping behaviors differently than women. Rather than sad, men may appear angry or irritable.
- **Medical conditions.** Some medicines and medical conditions may cause symptoms that look like depression. Chronic conditions may make depression worse.

Symptoms of depression are ongoing and affect your day-to-day life. They can include:

- Feeling sad or "empty"
- Losing interest in favorite activities
- Overeating, or not wanting to eat at all
- Sleeping too much, or not enough
- Feeling very tired
- Feeling hopeless, irritable, anxious, or guilty
- Having aches and pains, headaches, cramps, or digestive problems
- Having thoughts of death or suicide [<https://medlineplus.gov/suicide.html>]
- Changing moods or behaviors
- Increasing use of alcohol or drugs
- Isolating from family and friends

How is depression diagnosed?

If you think you have depression, talk to your health care provider or a mental health provider. To be diagnosed with depression, your provider may use many tools:

- **A medical history** will include asking about your symptoms and family history. To be diagnosed with depression, your symptoms must occur most of the day, nearly every day, for at least two weeks. One of the symptoms must be a depressed mood or a loss of interest in most activities.
- **Medical tests** may be done to rule out other medical conditions. Certain medicines and medical conditions (such as viruses or thyroid disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/hypothyroidism.html>]) may cause symptoms like depression.
- **A physical exam** to make sure another issue isn't causing your symptoms.
- **A mental health evaluation** [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/mental-health-screening/>] by your provider or a mental health provider.

What are the treatments for depression?

Depression may need long-term treatment. Most treatments include medicines and/or psychotherapy (talk therapy):

- **Medicines** such as antidepressants [<https://medlineplus.gov/antidepressants.html>] may help control your symptoms. You may need to try several medicines to find which works best for you. Medicine may take time to work and can have side effects. Don't stop taking your medicine without first talking with your provider. Contact your provider if you have any concerns about side effects from the medicine.
- **Psychotherapy** (talk therapy) under the care of a mental health provider can help you recognize and change troubling emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. This may be done one-on-one or in a group setting. It can give you and your family support, education, skills, and coping strategies.
- **Light therapy** has been shown to be effective for seasonal affective disorder (SAD).
- **Other treatments options** may be considered if treatment isn't working or if depression is severe. These may include:
 - **Electroconvulsive therapy (ECT)** is a brain stimulation procedure that uses a mild electric current when you are under general anesthesia. ECT is most often used for severe depression that is not getting better with other treatments.

- **Repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS)** is a brain stimulation procedure that uses magnetic waves to relieve depression. It's not as powerful as ECT, but with rTMS, you don't need anesthesia. It also has a low risk of negative effects on your memory and thinking.

Can depression be prevented?

Most cases of depression can't be prevented, but healthy lifestyle changes can have long-term benefits for your mental health. These can include:

- Getting regular exercise [<https://medlineplus.gov/benefitsofexercise.html>]
- Having a consistent sleep schedule [<https://medlineplus.gov/healthysleep.html>]
- Controlling stress [<https://medlineplus.gov/stress.html>]

If you, or someone you love is depressed, see your provider or a mental health provider. It's important to get treatment at the earliest sign of a problem.

If you or someone you know has thoughts of hurting themselves or attempting suicide, get help right away. If it is an emergency, dial 911.

NIH: National Institute of Mental Health

Start Here

- Depression [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression>]  (National Institute of Mental Health)
- Depression (Expert Q&A) [<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/depression>] (American Psychiatric Association)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/la-salud-mental/depresion>]
- Depression (Major Depressive Disorder) [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/symptoms-causes/syc-20356007?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)

Diagnosis and Tests

- Depression Screening [<https://medlineplus.gov/lab-tests/depression-screening/>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/pruebas-de-laboratorio/evaluacion-de-depresion/>]

Prevention and Risk Factors

- Preventing Relapse and Managing Setbacks [<https://depressioncenter.org/outreach-education/community-education/depression-toolkit/want-stay-mentally-healthy/preventing>] (University of Michigan Depression Center)

Treatments and Therapies

- 8 Things To Know about Depression and Complementary Health Approaches [<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/tips/things-to-know-about-depression-and-complementary-health-approaches>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)
- Antidepressants: MedlinePlus Health Topic [<https://medlineplus.gov/antidepressants.html>]  (National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/antidepressants.html>]
- Brain Stimulation Therapies [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/brain-stimulation-therapies/brain-stimulation-therapies>]  (National Institute of Mental Health)
- Depression Treatment [<https://www.cdc.gov/reproductive-health/depression/treatment.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Know Your Treatment Options [<https://depressioncenter.org/outreach-education/community-education/depression-toolkit/not-feeling-well/know-your-treatment>] (University of Michigan Depression Center)
- Psychedelic and Dissociative Drugs as Medicines [<https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/psychedelic-dissociative-drugs-medicines>]  (National Institute on Drug Abuse)
Also in Spanish [<https://nida.nih.gov/es/areas-de-investigacion/el-uso-de-las-drogas-psicodelicas-y-disociativas-como-medicamentos>]

- Psychotherapies [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies>]  (National Institute of Mental Health)
- St. John's Wort and Depression [<https://www.nccih.nih.gov/health/st-johns-wort-and-depression-in-depth>]  (National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health)
- Therapy and Counseling [<https://familydoctor.org/therapy-and-counseling/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)

Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/psicoterapia-cognitiva/?adfree=true>]
- When Sadness Lingers: Understanding and Treating Depression [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2022/11/when-sadness-lingers>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Also in Spanish [<https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/cuando-la-tristeza-persiste>]

Living With

- Coping at Work [<https://depressioncenter.org/outreach-education/depression-toolkit/want-stay-mentally-healthy/coping-work>] (University of Michigan Depression Center)
- Depression and Anxiety: Exercise Eases Symptoms [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression-and-exercise/ART-20046495?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression-and-exercise/art-20046495?p=1>]
- Depression: Coping with Suicidal Thoughts [<https://familydoctor.org/depression-coping-with-suicidal-thoughts/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)

Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/depresion-como-tratar-los-pensamientos-suicidas/?adfree=true>]
- Depression: Supporting a Family Member or Friend [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression/ART-20045943?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression/art-20045943?p=1>]
- Metabolic Side Effects of Psychiatric Medications [<https://aapp.org/ed/presentation/patients?view=link-8-1533575726&.pdf>] (American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists) - **PDF**
- What to Know Before Stopping Medications [<https://aapp.org/ed/presentation/patients?view=link-19-1580418376&.pdf>] (American Association of Psychiatric Pharmacists) - **PDF**

Related Issues

- Depression in Black Americans [<https://mhanational.org/resources/depression-in-black-americans/>] (Mental Health America)
- Depression in the Workplace [<https://mhanational.org/learning-hub/depression-in-the-workplace/>] (Mental Health America)
- Link Between Migraine, Depression and Anxiety [<https://americanmigrainefoundation.org/resource-library/link-between-migraine-depression-anxiety/>]  (American Migraine Foundation)
- Understanding the Link Between Chronic Disease and Depression [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/chronic-illness-mental-health>]  (National Institute of Mental Health)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/espanol/las-enfermedades-cronicas-y-la-salud-mental-como-reconocer-y-tratar-la-depresion>]

Specifics

- Clinical Depression: What Does That Mean? [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/expert-answers/clinical-depression/FAQ-20057770?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/depression/expert-answers/clinical-depression/FAQ-20057770?p=1>]
- Depression [<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coping/feelings/depression-pdq>]  (National Cancer Institute)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.cancer.gov/espanol/cancer/sobrellevar/sentimientos/depresion-pdq#section/all>]
- Depression and Alzheimer's Disease [<https://familydoctor.org/depression-and-alzheimers-disease/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)

Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/depresion-y-enfermedad-de-alzheimer/?adfree=true>]
- Depression and Caregiving [<https://www.caregiver.org/resource/depression-and-caregiving/>] (Family Caregiver Alliance)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.caregiver.org/es/resource/el-cuidado-y-la-depresion-depression-and-caregiving/>]

- Managing Your Mental Health with Lupus [<https://www.lupus.org/resources/lupus-and-depression-know-the-signs-and-how-to-get-help>] (Lupus Foundation of America)
- Persistent Depressive Disorder (PDD) [<https://familydoctor.org/condition/persistent-depressive-disorder/?adfree=true>] (American Academy of Family Physicians)
Also in Spanish [<https://es.familydoctor.org/condicion/trastorno-depresivo-persistente-es/?adfree=true>]
- Treatment-Resistant Depression [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/treatment-resistant-depression/ART-20044324?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/treatment-resistant-depression/art-20044324?p=1>]

Genetics

- Depression: MedlinePlus Genetics [<https://medlineplus.gov/genetics/condition/depression>]  (National Library of Medicine)

Test Your Knowledge

- Depression Myths & Facts Quiz [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/quiz/003213_30.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/quiz/003213_119.htm]
- Test Your Knowledge about Depression Treatment [https://medlineplus.gov/ency/quiz/000945_58.htm] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/quiz/000945_105.htm]

Statistics and Research

- Depression Prevalence in Adolescents and Adults: United States [<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db527.htm>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)
- Major Depression [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/major-depression>]  (National Institute of Mental Health)

Clinical Trials

- ClinicalTrials.gov: Depression [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Depression%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)
- ClinicalTrials.gov: Dysthymic Disorder [<https://clinicaltrials.gov/search?cond=%22Dysthymic+Disorder%22&aggFilters=status:not%20rec>]  (National Institutes of Health)

Journal Articles

References and abstracts from MEDLINE/PubMed (National Library of Medicine)

- Article: Treatment Without Cost? Effects and Side Effects of an Internet-Based Intervention... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40729770>]
- Article: Exploratory Impact of iCARE Nigeria, a Combined mHealth and Peer Navigation... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40729632>]
- Article: Investigating the effects of watson-based education on depressive symptoms, hope, and... [<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/40713929>]
- Depression -- see more articles [<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/?term=%22Depression%22%5Bmajr%3Aexp%5D+AND+humans%5Bmh%5D+AND+english%5Bla%5D+AND+%22last+1+Year%22+%5Bdat%5D+AND+%28patient+education+handout%5Bpt%5D+OR+guideline%5Bpt%5D+OR+clinical+trial%5Bpt%5D%29++NOT+%28letter%5Bpt%5D+OR+case+reports%5Bpt%5D+OR+editorial%5Bpt%5D+OR+comment%5Bpt%5D%29+AND+full+text%5Bsb%5D+>]

Find an Expert

- American Psychiatric Association [<https://www.psychiatry.org/>]
- Find Your Local NAMI [<https://www.nami.org/findsupport/>] (NAMI)
- FindTreatment.gov [<https://findtreatment.gov/>] (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
Also in Spanish [<https://findtreatment.gov/es>]

• Help for Mental Illnesses [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/find-help>]  (National Institute of Mental Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/find-help/ayuda-para-la-salud-mental>]

• National Institute of Mental Health [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/espanol>]

• Psychologist Locator [<https://locator.apa.org/?partner=nlm>] (American Psychological Association)

Children

• Anxiety and Depression in Children [<https://www.cdc.gov/children-mental-health/about/about-anxiety-and-depression-in-children.html>] (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

• Depression in Children and Teens [<https://familydoctor.org/depression-in-children-and-teens/?adfree=true>] 
(American Academy of Family Physicians)

• Taking Your Child to a Therapist [<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/finding-therapist.html>] 
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/parents/finding-therapist.html>]

• What to Do When You Feel Sad [<https://kidshealth.org/en/kids/depression.html>] (Nemours Foundation)
Also in Spanish [<https://kidshealth.org/es/kids/depression.html>]

Teenagers

• Teen Depression: MedlinePlus Health Topic [<https://medlineplus.gov/teendepression.html>] 
(National Library of Medicine)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/teendepression.html>]

Men

• Male Depression: Understanding the Issues [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/male-depression/ART-20046216?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/male-depression/art-20046216?p=1>]

Women

• Depression [<https://womenshealth.gov/mental-health/mental-health-conditions/depression>]
(Department of Health and Human Services, Office on Women's Health)

Also in Spanish [<https://espanol.womenshealth.gov/mental-health/mental-health-conditions/depression>]

• Depression and Pregnancy [<https://mothertobaby.org/fact-sheets/depression-pregnancy/>]
(Organization of Teratology Information Specialists)
Also in Spanish [<https://mothertobaby.org/es/hojas-informativas/la-depresion/>]

• Depression in Women: 4 Things to Know [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/depression-in-women>] 
(National Institute of Mental Health)

Also in Spanish [<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/espanol/la-depresion-en-las-mujeres>]

• Depression in Women: Understanding the Gender Gap [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression/ART-20047725?p=1>] (Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.mayoclinic.org/es/diseases-conditions/depression/in-depth/depression/art-20047725?p=1>]

Older Adults

• Depression and Aging [<https://www.cdc.gov/healthy-aging/about/depression-aging.html>]
(Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

• Depression and Older Adults [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/mental-and-emotional-health/depression-and-older-adults>] 

(National Institute on Aging)
Also in Spanish [<https://www.nia.nih.gov/espanol/depresion/personas-mayores-depresion>]

• Easing Depression in Older Adults [<https://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2023/06/easing-depression-older-adults>] 
(National Institutes of Health)
Also in Spanish [<https://salud.nih.gov/recursos-de-salud/nih-noticias-de-salud/aliviar-la-depresion-en-adultos-mayores>]

Patient Handouts

- Depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003213.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/003213.htm>]
- Depression - stopping your medicines [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000570.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000570.htm>]
- Depression in older adults [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001521.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/001521.htm>]
- Dysthymia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000918.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000918.htm>]
- Heart disease and depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000790.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000790.htm>]
- Learning about depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000325.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/patientinstructions/000325.htm>]
- Major depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000945.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000945.htm>]
- Major depression with psychotic features [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000933.htm>] (Medical Encyclopedia)
Also in Spanish [<https://medlineplus.gov/spanish/ency/article/000933.htm>]



MEDICAL ENCYCLOPEDIA

- Depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/003213.htm>]
- Depression - stopping your medicines [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000570.htm>]
- Depression in older adults [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/001521.htm>]
- Dysthymia [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000918.htm>]
- Electroconvulsive therapy [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/007474.htm>]
- Heart disease and depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000790.htm>]
- Learning about depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000325.htm>]
- Major depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000945.htm>]
- Major depression with psychotic features [<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000933.htm>]

Related Health Topics

- Antidepressants [<https://medlineplus.gov/antidepressants.html>]

Bipolar Disorder [<https://medlineplus.gov/bipolardisorder.html>]

Mental Disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/mentaldisorders.html>]

Mood Disorders [<https://medlineplus.gov/mooddisorders.html>]

Postpartum Depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/postpartumdepression.html>]

Seasonal Affective Disorder [<https://medlineplus.gov/seasonalaffectiondisorder.html>]

Suicide [<https://medlineplus.gov/suicide.html>]

Teen Depression [<https://medlineplus.gov/teendepression.html>]

National Institutes of Health

The primary NIH organization for research on *Depression* is the National Institute of Mental Health [<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>]

Other Languages

Find health information in languages other than English [<https://medlineplus.gov/languages/depression.html>] on *Depression*

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