

Care Gram

Depressive Disorder

What Is Depressive Disorder?

Depressive disorder (or depression) involves the body, mind, and thoughts. It affects:

- Eating and sleeping habits
- Feelings about oneself
- Thoughts about life

A depressive disorder is different from a “blue” mood. A “blue” mood just comes and goes. Depressive disorder does not go away by itself. People cannot just “pull it together.” Treatment will help most people.

Depression can be the result of a chemical imbalance in the brain or stressful life changes. A vascular form of depression can result from small blockages in certain blood vessels in the brain. This type of depression most often occurs later in life. Chronic diseases of the heart and circulation, mini strokes, and diabetes increase your risk for this form of depression.

Symptoms

The primary symptoms of depression are a sad or empty mood and a loss of interest or pleasure in most activities. These symptoms may be combined with other symptoms as listed below. Not everyone has every symptom.

- Restlessness
- Feeling “slowed” down
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Chronic pain or other body symptom (not caused by an illness)
- Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping
- Feeling guilty, worthless, helpless, or hopeless
- Decreased energy
- Problems with memory or making a decision
- Change in appetite (weight gain or loss)

Depression can be difficult to spot in others. Symptoms can be hidden or disguised and may include:

- Anger
- Agitation
- Overeating
- Decreased sex drive
- Alcohol or drug abuse
- Forced smiling
- Chronic physical pains without apparent cause
- Anxiety
- Isolation/social withdrawal



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Treatment

1. Medications such as antidepressants (never stop taking a medication without talking to your doctor first)
2. Psychotherapy (counseling helps in addition to medication)
3. Support groups
4. Develop normal sleep patterns
5. Eat well balanced meals
6. Avoid alcohol and drugs
7. Get regular exercise
8. Find supportive friends

Help Yourself

Here are some ideas to get started. Remember, feeling better takes time.

- Set small goals and take responsibility
- Break large tasks into small ones – do what you can, as you are able
- Try to be with other people and confide in someone
- Do things that make you feel better (going to a movie, ballgame, etc.)
- Postpone big decisions
- Let your family and friends help you

Call Your Doctor

- If you have thoughts of death or suicide (killing yourself)
- If you hear voices that are not there
- If you have crying spells
- If the depression affects work, school, or family life longer than two weeks