

# Depression: Define It. Defeat It.

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Depression is an illness that can affect the minds and bodies of anyone regardless of age, ethnic background, socioeconomic status, or gender. National Institute of Mental Health studies show it is about twice as common in women as in men. Depressive illnesses affect 12 percent of women and nearly 7 percent of men annually. It can be mild or severe and may happen once or many times during a person's life.

A depressed person usually experiences some or all of the following symptoms for more than 2 weeks:

- Changes in sleep patterns—either too much or too little sleep
- Changes in appetite and sudden weight gain or loss
- Loss of interest in favorite activities or people
- Feeling hopeless, helpless, guilty, or useless
- Lack of energy or feeling tired
- Thinking often of death or suicide
- Sad, anxious, or “empty” mood
- Poor concentration

If you feel that you may be depressed, get help from your medical doctor or a mental health professional.

A qualified mental health-care provider can often be located through a hospital psychiatric department, a university psychology department, a community counseling center, or a family physician. Whomever you choose, remember to ask questions about any medicines or treatments that are prescribed.

The National Institute of Mental Health says you should be thoroughly checked for related medical and family history, other medical conditions, and any problems with speaking, thought processes, or memory before treatment is suggested.

Remember, depression is a treatable illness!



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