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## Depression, Anxiety and Addictive Disorders



# Depression

Also called: Clinical depression, Dysthymic disorder, Major depressive disorder, Unipolar depression  
Depression is a serious medical illness that involves the brain. It's more than just a feeling of being "down in the dumps" or "blue" for a few days. If you are one of the many who have depression, the feelings do not go away. They persist and interfere with your everyday life. Symptoms can include

- Sadness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities you used to enjoy
- Change in weight
- Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping
- Energy loss
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Thoughts of death or suicide

**Causes** -genetic, environmental, psychological, and biochemical factors.

Depression usually starts between the ages of 15 and 30, and is much more common in women. Women can also get postpartum depression after the birth of a baby. Some people get seasonal affective disorder in the winter. Depression is one part of bipolar disorder.

There are effective treatments for depression, including antidepressants and talk therapy. Most people do best by using both.

### ➤ Postpartum Disorders

Many women have the baby blues after childbirth.

**Baby Blues Symptoms:** mood swings, feel sad, anxious or overwhelmed, have crying spells, lose your appetite, or have trouble sleeping.

The baby blues most often go away within a few days or a week. The symptoms are not severe and do not need treatment. The symptoms of postpartum depression last longer and are more severe. You may also feel hopeless and worthless, and lose interest in the baby. You may have thoughts of hurting yourself or the baby. Very rarely, new mothers develop something even more serious. They may have hallucinations or try to hurt themselves or the baby. They need to get treatment right away, often in the hospital.

**Postpartum depression** can begin anytime within the first year after childbirth. The cause is not known. Hormonal and physical changes after birth and the stress of caring for a new baby may play a role. Women who have had depression are at higher risk. If you think you have postpartum depression, tell your health care provider. Medicines, including antidepressants and talk therapy can help you get well.

**Postpartum Psychosis** is a serious psychotic disorder involving delusions and hallucinations in the mother often necessitating hospital admission and emergency management.

### ➤ Seasonal Affective Disorder

Also called: SAD, Seasonal depression, Seasonal mood disorder

Some people experience a serious mood change during the winter months, when there is less natural sunlight. This condition is called seasonal affective disorder, or SAD. SAD is a type of depression. It usually lifts during spring and summer.

Symptoms include:

- Sad, anxious or "empty" feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness or helplessness
- Irritability, restlessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities you used to enjoy
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering details and making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping or oversleeping
- Changes in weight
- Thoughts of death or suicide

SAD may be effectively treated with light therapy. But nearly half of people with SAD do not respond to light therapy alone. Antidepressant medicines and talk therapy can reduce SAD symptoms, either alone or combined with light therapy.

### ➤ **Bipolar Disorder**

Bipolar disorder is a serious mental illness. People who have it go through unusual mood changes. They go from very happy, "up," and active to very sad and hopeless, "down," and inactive, and then back again. They often have normal moods in between. The up feeling is called mania. The down feeling is depression.

The causes of bipolar disorder aren't always clear. It runs in families. Abnormal brain structure and function may also play a role.

Bipolar disorder often starts in a person's late teen or early adult years. But children and adults can have bipolar disorder too. The illness usually lasts a lifetime.

If you think you may have it, tell your health care provider. A medical checkup can rule out other illnesses that might cause your mood changes.

If not treated, bipolar disorder can lead to damaged relationships, poor job or school performance, and even suicide. However, there are effective treatments to control symptoms: medicine and talk therapy. A combination usually works best.

## **Anxiety Disorders**

### ➤ **Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD)**

Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is a type of anxiety disorder. If you have OCD, you have frequent, upsetting thoughts called obsessions. To try to control the thoughts, you feel an overwhelming urge to repeat certain rituals or behaviors. These are called compulsions.

Examples of obsessions are a fear of germs or a fear of being hurt. Compulsions include washing your hands, counting, checking on things, or cleaning. With OCD, the thoughts and rituals cause distress and get in the way of your daily life.

Researchers think brain circuits may not work properly in people who have OCD. It tends to run in families. The symptoms often begin in children or teens. Treatments include therapy, medicines, or both. One type of therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy, is useful for treating OCD.

### ➤ **Panic Disorder**

Panic disorder is a type of anxiety disorder. It causes panic attacks, which are sudden feelings of terror when there is no real danger. You may feel as if you are losing control. You may also have physical symptoms, such as

- Fast heartbeat
- Chest or stomach pain

- Breathing difficulty
- Weakness or dizziness
- Sweating
- Feeling hot or a cold chill
- Tingly or numb hands

Panic attacks can happen anytime, anywhere, and without warning. You may live in fear of another attack and may avoid places where you have had an attack. For some people, fear takes over their lives and they cannot leave their homes.

Panic disorder is more common in women than men. It usually starts when people are young adults. Sometimes it starts when a person is under a lot of stress. Most people get better with treatment. Therapy can show you how to recognize and change your thinking patterns before they lead to panic. Medicines can also help.

### ➤ **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

Also called: PTSD

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a real illness. You can get PTSD after living through or seeing a traumatic event, such as war, a hurricane, sexual assault, physical abuse, or a bad accident. PTSD makes you feel stressed and afraid after the danger is over. It affects your life and the people around you.

PTSD can cause problems like

- Flashbacks, or feeling like the event is happening again
- Trouble sleeping or nightmares
- Feeling alone
- Angry outbursts
- Feeling worried, guilty, or sad

PTSD starts at different times for different people. Signs of PTSD may start soon after a frightening event and then continue. Other people develop new or more severe signs months or even years later. PTSD can happen to anyone, even children.

Treatment may include talk therapy, medicines, or both. Treatment might take 6 to 12 weeks. For some people, it takes longer.

### ➤ **Phobias**

A phobia is a type of anxiety disorder. It is a strong, irrational fear of something that poses little or no real danger.

There are many specific phobias. Acrophobia is a fear of heights. Agoraphobia is a fear of public places, and claustrophobia is a fear of closed-in places. If you become anxious and extremely self-conscious in everyday social situations, you could have a social phobia. Other common phobias involve tunnels, highway driving, water, flying, animals and blood.

People with phobias try to avoid what they are afraid of. If they cannot, they may experience

- Panic and fear
- Rapid heartbeat
- Shortness of breath
- Trembling
- A strong desire to get away

Phobias usually start in children or teens, and continue into adulthood. The causes of specific phobias are known, but they sometimes run in families.

Treatment helps most people with phobias. Options include medicines, therapy or both.

## Conversion Disorders

Conversion disorder is a condition in which you show psychological stress in physical ways. The condition was so named to describe a health problem that starts as a mental or emotional crisis — a scary or stressful incident of some kind — and converts to a physical problem.

In conversion disorder, your leg may become paralyzed after you fall from a horse, even though you weren't physically injured. Conversion disorder signs and symptoms appear with no underlying physical cause, and you can't control them. Signs and symptoms of conversion disorder typically affect your movement or your senses, such as the ability to walk, swallow, see or hear. Conversion disorder symptoms can be severe, but for most people, they get better within a couple of weeks

## Suicide

It is common to have suicidal thoughts if you are experiencing mental health problems – especially if you have a diagnosis of depression, borderline personality disorder or schizophrenia. The deeper your depression, the more likely it is that you will consider killing yourself. However, you can help yourself and you can get help from other people. A great many people think about suicide, but the majority do not go on to kill themselves.

Suicidal thoughts and behavior are common with some mental illnesses. If you think you may hurt yourself or attempt suicide, get help right away:

- Reach out to a close friend or loved one — even though you may be reluctant to talk about your feelings.
- In case of suicidal intent the relatives/friends must seek urgent help so as to bring the patient to a place of safety and arrange necessary treatment.
- Contact your doctor, other health care provider or mental health specialist.
- Suicidal thinking doesn't get better on its own — so get help.

## Addictive Disorders

### Prescription Drug Abuse

Most people take medicines only for the reasons their doctors prescribe them. But many have used prescription drugs for nonmedical reasons. This is prescription drug abuse. It is a serious and growing problem.

Abusing some prescription drugs can lead to addiction. You can develop an addiction to:

- Narcotic painkillers
- Sedatives and tranquilizers
- Stimulants

Experts don't know exactly why this type of drug abuse is increasing. The availability of drugs is probably one reason. Doctors are prescribing more drugs for more health problems than ever before. Online pharmacies make it easy to get prescription drugs without a prescription, even for youngsters.