

# Depression

Depression is a mood disorder. It causes a lasting feeling of sadness. It can also cause a loss of interest. It may be called major depressive disorder. It can also be called clinical depression. It changes how you feel, think and act. It can lead to different emotional and physical problems. You may have trouble doing normal day-to-day acts. Sometimes, you may feel as if life isn't worth living.

## Symptoms

Depression may happen only once during your life. While this is the case, people often have many episodes. During these episodes, symptoms happen most of the day. They may happen nearly every day. Such as:

- Feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness or hopelessness
- Angry outbursts, irritability or frustration, even over small matters
- Loss of interest in most or all normal activities, such as sex, hobbies or sports
- Sleep disturbances, including insomnia or sleeping too much
- Tiredness and lack of energy, so even small tasks take extra effort
- Reduced appetite and weight loss or increased cravings for food and weight gain
- Anxiety, agitation or restlessness
- Slowed thinking, speaking or body movements
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt, fixating on past failures or self-blame
- Trouble thinking, concentrating, making decisions and remembering things
- Frequent or recurrent thoughts of death, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts or suicide
- Unexplained physical problems, such as back pain or headaches

## Causes

It's not known exactly what causes depression. As with many mental issues, different factors may be involved. Such as:

- Biological differences
- Brain chemistry
- Hormones
- Inherited traits

## When to get Emergency Help

If you think you may hurt yourself or attempt suicide, call 911 or your local emergency number immediately.

Also consider these options if you're having suicidal thoughts:

- Call your doctor or mental health professional.
- Call a suicide hotline number. In the U.S., call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255). Use that same number and press "1" to reach the Veterans Crisis Line.
- Reach out to a close friend or loved one.
- Contact a minister, spiritual leader or someone else in your faith community.