

TOOLBOX TALK

# DEPRESSION

## WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

Everyone experiences sadness at times. It is a normal part of the human experience. We are sad when we lose a job, end a relationship, or a loved one passes. Sometimes we are sad when we don't get what we want or when people mistreat us. Feelings of sadness are natural, common, and always pass. But depression is something more. Depression is extreme sadness or despair activated by a mood disorder that can last weeks or months. Depression can make the day-to-day activities of life seem impossible to accomplish. Also called major depressive disorder or clinical depression, it can affect how you think, feel, and behave. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, about 6 million men suffer from depression each year. Yet men are far less likely than women to seek help for mental-health issues, especially depression. Maybe that's because of our macho attitude, our work culture or maybe it is because we don't know what signs to look for.

## SYMPTOMS

Although depression may occur only once during your life, people typically have multiple episodes. During these episodes, symptoms occur most of the day, nearly every day and may include:

- Feelings of sadness, tearfulness, emptiness, or hopelessness
- Angry outbursts, irritability or frustration, even over small matters
- Loss of interest or pleasure 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
  - Difficulty 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

For many people with depression, symptoms usually are severe enough to cause noticeable problems in day-to-day activities, such as work, school, social activities or relationships with others. Some people may feel generally miserable or unhappy without really knowing why.

## RESOURCES

- [Depression \(major depressive disorder\) - Symptoms and causes - Mayo Clinic](#)
- [Depression: What It Is, Symptoms, Causes, Treatment, and More \(healthline.com\)](#)
- [Health Advocate | We Make Healthcare Easier](#)

If you see this 393 Peer Supporter hard hat sticker it means the individual has received training and is a safe person to confide in.

For more information visit  
[pttc.edu/mental-health-and-wellness](http://pttc.edu/mental-health-and-wellness)



## CAUSES

It's not known exactly what causes depression. As with many mental disorders, a variety of factors may be involved, such as:

- **Biological Differences:** people with depression appear to have physical changes in their brains. The significance of these changes is still uncertain but may eventually help pinpoint causes.
- **Brain Chemistry :** neurotransmitters are naturally occurring brain chemicals that likely play a role in depression. Recent research indicates that changes in the function and effect of these neurotransmitters and how they interact with neurocircuits involved in maintaining mood stability may play a significant role in depression and its treatment.
- **Hormones:** changes in the body's balance of hormones may be involved in causing or triggering depression. Hormone changes can be related to several conditions.
- **Inherited Traits :** depression is more common in people whose blood relatives also have this condition. Researchers are trying to find genes that may be involved in causing depression.

If you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms like these there is a way out, depression is the most common mental disorder, which means that there are treatments readily available. Depression may require long-term treatment but often a combination of therapy and antidepressant medication can help ensure recovery.

## PREVENTION

There's no sure way to prevent depression. However, these strategies may help.

- Take steps to control stress, to increase your resilience and boost your self-esteem.
- Reach out to family and friends, especially in times of crisis, to help you weather rough spells.
- Get treatment at the earliest sign of a problem to help prevent depression from worsening.
- Consider getting long-term maintenance treatment to help prevent a relapse of symptoms.

## WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

If you feel depressed, make an appointment to see your doctor or mental health professional as soon as you can. If you're reluctant to seek treatment, talk to a friend, loved one, health care professional, a faith leader, or someone else you trust.

## WHEN TO GET EMERGENCY HELP

If you think you may hurt yourself or attempt suicide, call 911 in the U.S. or your local emergency number immediately. Also consider these options if you're having suicidal thoughts:

- Call your doctor, mental health professional, or contact a suicide hotline. In the U.S., call or text 988 to reach the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](https://www.988lifeline.org/), available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- U.S. veterans or service members who are in crisis can call 988 and then press "1" for the [Veterans Crisis Line](https://www.veteranscrisisline.com/), text 838255 or chat online.
- Use the [Lifeline Chat](https://www.988lifeline.org/lifelinechat/). Services are free and confidential.
- Reach out to a close friend or loved one. Contact a minister, spiritual leader or someone else in your faith community.

