

Clinical Depression

Most people feel sad or low sometime in their life. Clinical depression is marked by a depressed mood most of the day, particularly in the morning. The feelings of depression may make it difficult to work, study, take care of your home and personal needs, and enjoy friends and activities.

Symptoms of depression include:

- Fatigue or loss of energy – even small tasks seem to require too much energy
- Feelings of worthlessness, guilt, hopelessness, or helplessness
- Problems with focus and concentration; inability to make decisions
- Insomnia or excessive sleeping
- Lack of interest in things that are otherwise fun for you
- Withdrawal from others and social activities
- Psychomotor agitation (pacing, hand wringing, rubbing, inability to sit still) or retardation (slowed or softened speech, slowed thinking, slowed body movements)
- Weight loss or gain
- Sometimes thoughts of death or suicide
- Anger and irritability (this may include violent behavior, particularly in men)
- Tearfulness
- Decreased libido

Depression is often accompanied by anxiety and/or physical pain. Depression can, quite literally, hurt.

Sometimes an event in your life can trigger an episode of major depression. Often, there is no obvious triggering event.

Some events that commonly trigger depression include:

- Grief because of a loss –this can be death of a loved one, loss of employment, loss of financial status, divorce, separation, etc.
- Social isolation and loneliness
- Life changes – moving, job change, graduation, retirement, birth of a child, children leaving the home, etc.
- Personal conflicts in relationships
- Physical, sexual, emotional abuse
- Particular medications have depression listed as a possible side effect.
- Hormonal changes
- Alcohol and drugs

There is no blood test to diagnose depression. The diagnosis of depression is based on the symptoms. However, there are medical disorders and medications that contribute to depression and these should be checked by your primary care physician.

Studies repeated indicate that a combined treatment approach including both psychotherapy and psychopharmacology is the most effective treatment for major depression.