

Depression

**Southeast Kansas
Mental Health
Center**



Depression is more than feeling sad. It's a serious illness that affects a person's thoughts, feelings, behavior, and physical health. Untreated depression can disrupt relationships with family and friends, and seriously interfere with work, school, and other daily activities.

Symptoms

- Loss of interest in things you like to do
- Sadness and irritability that continues for several weeks
- Neglecting daily responsibilities and appearance
- Inability to concentrate and/or difficulty remembering
- Physical complaints such as sleep disturbances, lack of energy, weight loss or gain, headaches or backaches, and intestinal disorders
- Self-injury
- Suicidal thoughts or actions

Potential Causes

- Emotional problems and/or stress
- A specific life crisis such as the loss of a loved one
- Family history and/or genetics
- Imbalances of certain brain chemicals
- Major illness such as cancer, stroke, or heart attack
- Side effects of some prescribed medications
- Alcohol or other drug use
- Psychiatric disorders



Who Can Be Affected

Women Women are twice as likely to experience depression as men. Hormonal changes brought on by puberty, menstruation, menopause, or pregnancy may increase depression risks and magnify symptoms.

Men Although their risk for depression is lower, men are more likely to go undiagnosed and less likely to seek help. They may show the typical symptoms of depression, but they are more likely to be angry and hostile or to mask their condition with alcohol or drug abuse.

Elderly Older people experience many life changes. Changes include: losing loved ones, adjustments to living alone or other unfamiliar living arrangements, and reduced activity from physical illness. These transitions can contribute to the onset of depression. Older people are often reluctant to talk about their emotions. Family members may associate the symptoms of depression as normal results of aging. Depression often goes undiagnosed and untreated in the elderly.

Long-term, unrecognized, or untreated depression can contribute to heart disease, disorders of the digestive system, headaches, irritability, anger, stress, and thoughts of suicide.

Depression affects millions of people each year, yet it's widely misunderstood. Depression can be treated successfully; most people will start feeling better again in a few weeks.

Depression is often ignored or untreated. People may not recognize the symptoms, be too depressed to seek treatment, or be afraid to talk with family or friends. Depression does not go away on its own. You don't "just get over it." Without treatment, depression can last for months or years.

Other Facts

- Children can become depressed. Risk factors include: family conflicts, traumatic events, health conditions, and family history.
- Adolescents may experience depression from peer pressure, challenging academic expectations, and their changing bodies.
- Young adults can become depressed as they struggle with the new responsibilities of increased independence, careers, and family.
- Middle-aged adults may become depressed when life expectations are not met and goals appear out of reach.
- Older people experience depression resulting from life changes and losses, physical health problems, or retirement.

Depression-Related Mood Disorders

Major depressive disorder is commonly referred to as "depression."

Dysthymia is when people feel mildly depressed on most days over a period of at least two years. Symptoms resemble major depression, but the experience is less severe.

Seasonal Affective Disorder includes symptoms that are experienced with any major depressive episode and is associated with certain seasons.

Postpartum Depression occurs in women who have recently given birth. It's a severe, long-lasting form of depression that may interfere with the mother's ability to care for her infant and handle other daily tasks.

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