

BRIGGS[®]

UNDERSTANDING
DEPRESSION
PATIENT
EDUCATION
GUIDE

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Understanding Depression

Patient Education Guide

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Purpose: This booklet is for informational purposes only and is not designed to replace your physician's advice or treatments. The information contained in this booklet may vary, depending on the laws in the state you live in.

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Research Resources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Mayo Clinic, Cleveland Clinic, National Institute of Mental Health (NIH), Alzheimer's Association, English Longitudinal Study of Ageing, World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS).

Professional Consultant: Mary Madison, RN, RAC-CT, CDP.

What is Depression?

Depression is a condition that affects your mood (emotions) and your ability to function in daily life and activities. It's not just having the "blues" or the emotions one feels when grieving the loss of a loved one. Depression is a **true medical condition** that can be serious, but it is treatable, like high blood pressure or diabetes. It ranges from mild, temporary episodes of sadness to severe, persistent depression.



Depression is a common mental disorder affecting more than 300 million people worldwide. It is estimated that about 4.4% of the world's adult population has depression. Here in the United States, it is estimated that nearly 7% of adults have depression each year. Also, about 1 in 6 adults (more than 16%) will experience depression in his/her lifetime. Depression can affect individuals of any age, including children.

As mentioned above, ***depression is treatable***. Treatment is effective in improving/relieving the symptoms of depression. Without treatment however, depression can get worse, last much longer or return even after you start to feel better. Lack of treatment also increases your chance of developing other health conditions, such as dementia. Without treatment and in severe cases, depression can lead to self-harm or death.

The sooner you get help/treatment for depression, the sooner you can and will feel better!

Let's start this discussion by taking a brief look at the different types of depression.

Depression is classified according to causes and symptoms.

- **Major depressive disorder (MDD)** – also known as **clinical depression** – has intense/overwhelming symptoms that last more than 2 weeks. Those symptoms disrupt your everyday life, mood and functioning.
- **Bipolar depression** was previously called manic depression because of the extreme mood swings that include emotional highs (mania or hypomania) and lows (depression).

- **Psychotic depression** manifests as severe depression symptoms along with delusions (belief in things that are not real) or hallucinations (seeing, hearing or feeling things that are not physically present).
- **Perinatal and postpartum depression** is experienced by some women around or after the birth of a child. Perinatal depression occurs during pregnancy and continues up to 1 year after the baby is born. Postpartum depression occurs after childbirth and can last for months and years. About 5% of women report high levels of postpartum depression symptoms for three years after giving birth. This type of depression is not the same as “baby blues” which causes minor sadness, stress or worry and is temporary.

- Some people experience **seasonal affective disorder**, often referred to as SAD, during the winter months and change of seasons. Symptoms start in the fall and continue into the winter months, often going away during the spring and summer. Symptoms start out mild and become more severe as the season progresses. Symptoms of SAD include sapping your energy and making you feel moody most of the day, nearly every day. SAD can also cause depression in the spring or early summer, but this is not as common as during the winter months. SAD is more common among people who live far north or south of the equator. This is likely due to decreased sunlight during the winter and longer days during the summer months.



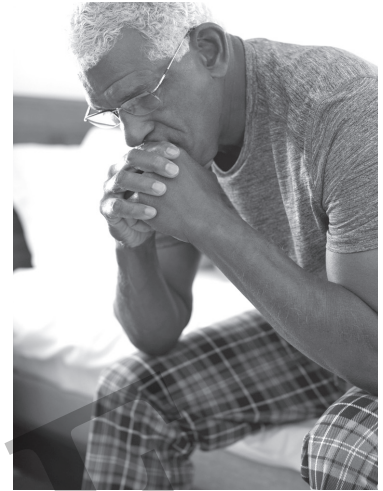
- **Persistent depressive disorder** (PDD) is also called dysthymia. Symptoms of this type of depression are less severe than major/clinical depression. Dysthymia is a milder but long-lasting form of depression. Individuals experiencing PDD often have symptoms for 2 years or longer
- **Premenstrual/dysphoric disorder** (PMDD) is a severe form of PMS (premenstrual syndrome). This type of depression affects women in the days or weeks leading up to their menstrual period.
- **Atypical depression**, also called depression with atypical features, means that a depressed mood can brighten in response to positive events. Symptoms of this type of depression include increased appetite, feeling rejected, sleeping too much yet sleepy during the day, feeling that your arms

or legs are heavy that lasts an hour or more each day as well as sensitivity to rejection or criticism, affecting your job, social life or relationships. This is a common type of depression, despite its name.

Let's talk about the causes of depression.

There are various factors that can cause/lead to depression in any individual:

- **Genetics** is one of those factors. You may be more likely to have depression if you have had a relative with depression. It can run in families.
- Your **personality** is another factor. If you have trouble coping, are easily overwhelmed or you have a great deal of anxiety, you may be prone to depression.



Brain chemistry can lead to depression because of abnormalities in chemical levels in your brain. In short, each of our brains has many chemicals that work inside and outside nerve cells. When these chemicals are “out of whack”, depression may result. Also, there are certain areas of the brain that help regulate our mood. The functioning of nerve cells within those areas has a role in depression.

- **Life events** such as the death of a loved one or friend, loss of independence due to accident or illness, isolation, stress, sexual abuse, violence, trauma and lack of support are significant factors in depression.
- **Medical conditions** can cause depression as well. Dealing with chronic pain and chronic illnesses such as cancer, heart disease/previous heart attack, Alzheimer's Disease/dementia, Parkinson's Disease, diabetes, multiple sclerosis (MS), previous stroke, nutritional deficiencies, arthritis, chronic lung disease, HIV/AIDS, lupus, hepatitis, etc. are all risk factors for depression. A recent study conducted in the United Kingdom (England) showed strong evidence that hearing loss may act as a “substantial” risk/cause of depression in older people. (Provision and use of hearing aids played an important role in alleviating depression.) Medical illnesses or medications may be at the root of up to 10% to 15% of all depressions¹.
- **Medications** can also bring on depression, as a side effect. The use of recreational drugs and alcohol/substance abuse can cause depression or make an existing depression worse.

¹<https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/what-causes-depression>



This file is just a small sample of this booklet

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