



## How Can I Tell If I Suffer From Depression?

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Depression is something we all hear about and, even in this day and age, some of us try to hide it. You may have had possible symptoms yourself and wondered if there are ways to tell if you might be depressed. The biggest question, though, is probably, *What can you do about it?*

***Fortunately, there are ways to tell if what you're experiencing is depression, and there are things you can do about it.***

Let's analyze three important depression questions:

### What Is Depression?

Scientists know the least about our most important organ the brain. Until the early 1970's, families would often say, *Oh, Aunt Emma's having a one of her spells*, or *Uncle Fred's going away for a while*. Depression was simply taboo to talk about and to seek help for.

Fast-forward to modern day and you'll notice a lot has changed. No longer is it taboo. People who suffer from depression are encouraged to openly seek help, and even join support groups of others who suffer from depression, so they can heal.

Depression is now considered a serious illness. ***The good news is that it's treatable***, but it does require professional attention.

Depression isn't an occasional sadness, such as after the loss of a loved one or a move to a new home. These types of temporary sadness usually pass.

***Depression is where someone becomes so down that it interferes with daily life.***

**Here are some common symptoms of depression:**

- Extreme fatigue and tiredness, sleeping too much
- Insomnia
- Feeling lethargic and lacking the motivation to do anything
- Loss of appetite or excessive overeating
- Difficulty concentrating on anything
- Feeling sick all the time
- Aching bones and joints
- A feeling of hopelessness
- Suicidal tendencies

**Who Does It Affect?**

Depression can affect just about anyone, at any age. Because the world of science has much to learn about our brain, there's no way to pin down how and why depression occurs. Scientists have learned that ***depression is usually caused by:***

- Genetics. Depression can run in families.
- Environmental and biochemical hazards. A bad situation may trigger an episode.
- Psychological disorders panic attacks, bipolar disorder, and others
- Head injuries, concussions

Surprisingly, when a depressed person is given an MRI, or magnetic resonance image, their brains look different than those who aren't depressed. The differences appear in the parts of the brain that regulate moods, thinking ability, sleep, and appetite.

***Women tend to be more prone to depression than men.*** This can be due to hormonal or biological changes within a woman's body. We've all heard about menstrual conditions, post-partum depression, and how women can change during and after a pregnancy.

Women also face depressive-triggering events more than men, such as abuse, responsibility for child raising, caring for their elderly parents, and financial worries.

***When men become depressed,*** they're more likely to show fatigue, irritability, and loss of interest in previous activities. They tend to become withdrawn. Men tend to hide their feelings more than women and are sometimes afraid or embarrassed to talk about their feelings.

***Depression in children has also become a concern.*** Children can refuse to go to school, become clingy towards one parent, worry that everything is wrong, and have mood swings. Severely depressed children can even have suicidal thoughts.

***Depression in adolescents*** can trigger eating disorders, destructive behavior, and substance abuse.

### **What Can I Do About It?**

If you feel you might be depressed, the first thing to do is talk to your family doctor about it. They can lead you to the right place to get help. Or, if you're familiar with mental health centers in your area, call one of them.

Many mental health centers and hospitals have free or sliding scale payments to make treatment for depression affordable to all. ***Don't ever feel that you're alone!*** The faster you get help, the faster you'll begin to heal.

***If you feel you may suffer from depression, get some help, or trust in a friend who can help you.***

After an evaluation, your health provider can guide you through relaxation techniques, depression medications, talk therapy, or even group therapy. There are many ways to relieve your suffering. Be sure to take advantage of them, for your sake, and for those you love.