

Research shows that one in five people will experience depression in their lifetime. There is also evidence that depression is a significant risk factor in suicide; especially in males.

Less than half of those experiencing depression seek professional help.



This fact sheet provides information about depression and its link to suicide. It will also look at the symptoms of depression and some ways through which it can be treated.

## What is depression?

Depression is a "whole-body" illness, involving the body, mood, and thoughts. It is caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain, and can affect the way you eat and sleep, the way you feel about yourself, and the way you think about things. As depression deepens and takes over the body and mind, the pain of depression often becomes overwhelming. Depressive illnesses can distort thinking such that a person can't think clearly or rationally. The illness can cause thoughts of hopelessness and helplessness, which can, in some cases, lead to suicidal thoughts. Research has consistently shown a strong link between suicide and depression, with 90% of the people who die by suicide having an existing mental illness or substance abuse problem at the time of their death ([www.save.org](http://www.save.org)).

## What are symptoms of depression?

Everyone has 'bad days' or goes through 'rough patches'; however people with depression are suffering from a mental illness and cannot just 'get over it' or 'pull themselves together'. Below are some of the symptoms of depression ([www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)):

### Mood

- feeling sad or moody
- feeling hopeless or helpless
- feeling numb or empty
- feelings of anxiousness
- increased feelings of guilt about things out of your control
- an inability to feel good or enjoy things that you do normally.

### Thinking

- being overly self-critical
- believing you can't cope and that things are out of your control
- difficulty making decisions and thinking clearly
- poor concentration and memory
- the presence of thoughts of suicide or ending your life.

### Behaviour

- lack of motivation and energy
- crying more than usual
- loss of interest in activities you usually enjoy
- withdrawal from your friends and family or, alternatively, being overly dependent on them
- increased use of alcohol or other drugs
- losing your temper more than usual.

### Physical

- loss of appetite or over-eating
- changes in sleep patterns - difficulty getting to sleep, waking up in the middle of the night or sleeping for longer than usual
- feeling physically sick and/or lethargic
- decreased sexual drive

## Are there different kinds of depression?

There are a number of different kinds of depression. Some of the more common types are:

**Major Depressive Disorder:** (also known as Major Depression, Clinical Depression) – A major depressive episode occurs with symptoms that last for most of the day, nearly every day for at least two weeks. A symptom must either be 1) depressed mood or 2) a noticeable decrease in interest or pleasure in all or most activities.

**Dysthymic Disorder** (or also referred to as Dysthymia) – Generally, this type of depression is described as having persistent but less severe depressive symptoms than Major Depression.

**Manic Depression** (now known as Bipolar Disorder) – This kind of depression includes periods of mania and depression. Cycling between these two states can be rapid or only mania can be present without any depressive episodes.

**Post-Partum Depression** - Major depressive episode that occurs after having a baby.

**Chronic Depression** – Major depressive episode that lasts for at least two years.

**Double Depression** – Someone who has Dysthymia (chronic mild depression) and also experiences a major depressive episode.

## Causes of Depression

The causes of depression are complex and researchers are still trying to fully understand how different risk factors work together to create different kinds of depression. It is generally recognised that depression is a result of 'mental or emotional pressure' in conjunction with a vulnerability to depression. According to the Black Dog Institute, potential causal factors include:

- Genetics
- Biochemical factors
- Effects of illness
- Ageing brain
- Gender issues
- The role of stress and personality

## What are the treatment options for depression?

Successful treatment of depression depends on accurate diagnoses as well as the implementation of appropriate management strategies. These strategies may be physical (e.g. anti-depressive medication) and/or psychological (e.g. clinical counselling/therapy).



### Useful resources and websites

- [www.save.org](http://www.save.org)
- [www.samhsa.gov/suicide.cfm](http://www.samhsa.gov/suicide.cfm)
- [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfoforall/problems/depression.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinfoforall/problems/depression.aspx)
- [www.depressioncell.com/article.asp?articleid=52308&Types-of-depression](http://www.depressioncell.com/article.asp?articleid=52308&Types-of-depression)
- [www.reachout.com/find/articles/depression](http://www.reachout.com/find/articles/depression)
- [www.blackdoginstitute.org.au](http://www.blackdoginstitute.org.au)

## Contact Us:

W [www.suicideprevention.salvos.org.au](http://www.suicideprevention.salvos.org.au)

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