

## Co-occurring Disorders

Depression often goes hand in hand with other illnesses, both physical and emotional. Diagnosis of depression is often complicated by the fact that depression itself can be a symptom or a side effect of another disorder. Many physical illnesses trigger depression symptoms due to grief over decreased functioning or changes in brain chemistry related to illness itself.

In addition, depression also co-occurs with many emotional or mental illnesses including anxiety and substance abuse. Clinical depression can be an outcome of excessive substance use. For many substance abusers, alcohol/drug use began as an effort to “self-medicate” symptoms of depression.

## When To See A Professional

Depression is a potentially fatal illness due to suicide. It's very important for a person who shows symptoms to seek professional help as early as possible. If you experiences a depressed or sad mood most of the day, nearly every day or a significantly diminished loss of interest or pleasure in activities for more than two weeks, it is important to contact a medical or mental health provider.

Depression is a very treatable illness. Many people suffer needlessly when help is available. With treatment, people often longer experience symptoms while others may still experience symptoms that are lessened and more manageable.



## Sunshine Community Health Center

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(907) 733-2273 or (907) 495-4100

To find information online,  
scan the QR code below or  
visit this webpage:

[www.sunshineclinic.org/behavioral-health/depression/](http://www.sunshineclinic.org/behavioral-health/depression/)



## Sources:

- <http://www.webmd.com/depression/default.htm>
- <http://www.apa.org/topics/topicdepress.html>

# Depression

## Learn:

- What it is and the different types
- What are common symptoms
- When you need professional help
- Types of treatment



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## What is Depression?

Depression is both a normal emotional state that is experienced occasionally by everyone and a serious mood disorder that is caused by an imbalance in one's brain chemistry affecting all aspects of a person's life. Normal depression is experienced following an event that triggers feeling of sadness, anger, guilt, grief, loss, etc. The symptoms of normal depression are similar to those in the early stages of clinical depression, however normal depressive symptoms go away after a limited period of time. If these symptoms persist for more than two weeks, this may be an indication of clinical depression.

## Types of Depression

There are a number of different types of depression. They vary in the severity of the symptoms, the impact on a person's life, and the particular brain chemistry imbalance.

- Chronic Depression (Dysthymic Disorder)
- Major Depression (Clinical Depression)
- Bipolar Disorder (Manic Depressive Disorder)
- Seasonal Depression (Seasonal Affective Disorder—SAD)
- Postpartum Depression (PPD)
- Psychotic Depression

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## Symptoms (Physical)

- Headaches
- Back pain
- Muscle aches and joint pain
- Chest pain
- Digestive problems
- Exhaustion and fatigue
- Sleeping problems
- Change in appetite or weight
- Dizziness or lightheadedness

## Symptoms (Emotional)

- Difficulty with concentration, memory, and decision-making
- Fatigue and decreased energy
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and/or helplessness
- Feelings of hopelessness and/or pessimism
- Irritability, restlessness, increased anger
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies once pleasurable, including sex
- Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" feelings
- Thoughts of suicide, suicide attempts

## Adolescent Depression

Depression in young people is different than the normal mood changes one sees all the time. Kids tend to be more irritable or angry and often show symptoms by behavior rather than feelings. In addition they show many of the same symptoms listed above for adults.

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## Suicide

Depression carries a high risk of suicide. Anybody who expresses suicidal thoughts or intentions should be taken very seriously. Help should be gotten immediately whether or not the person who is expressing thoughts of suicide wants help.

Warning signs of suicide with depression include:

- A sudden switch from being very sad to being very calm or appearing to be happy
- Always talking or thinking about death
- Clinical depression that gets worse
- Tempting fate by taking risks that could lead to death, like driving through red lights
- Losing interest in things one used to care about
- Making comments about being hopeless, helpless, or worthless
- Putting affairs in order, tying up loose ends, changing a will
- Saying things like "It would be better if I wasn't here" or "I want out"
- Talking about suicide (killing one's self)  
Visiting or calling people one cares about

Some people who are in immediate danger of hurting themselves reach out for help and would like to be stopped; others truly want to die in that moment and will resist efforts to help. Frequently the suicidal person will need to be hospitalized to keep him/her safe. The earlier the signs of suicide are recognized, the more likely the suicidal person is to accept the help that is offered.