

What Is Depression?

Depression is more than just feeling down or having a bad day. When a sad mood lasts for a long time and interferes with normal, everyday functioning, you may be depressed. Symptoms of depression include:¹

- Feeling sad or anxious often or all the time
- Not wanting to do activities that used to be fun
- Feeling irritable, easily frustrated, or restless
- Having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Waking up too early or sleeping too much
- Eating more or less than usual or having no appetite
- Experiencing aches, pains, headaches, or stomach problems that do not improve with treatment
- Having trouble concentrating, remembering details, or making decisions
- Feeling tired, even after sleeping well
- Feeling guilty, worthless, or helpless
- Thinking about suicide or hurting yourself

The following information is not intended to provide a medical diagnosis of major depression and cannot take the place of seeing a mental health professional. If you think you are depressed, talk with your doctor or a mental health professional immediately. This is especially important if your symptoms are getting worse or affecting your daily activities.

[Top of Page](#)

What Causes Depression?

The exact cause of depression is unknown. It may be caused by a combination of genetic, biological, environmental, and psychological factors.² Everyone is different, but the following factors may increase a person's chances of becoming depressed:¹

- Having blood relatives who have had depression
- Experiencing traumatic or stressful events, such as physical or sexual abuse, the death of a loved one, or financial problems
- Going through a major life change, even if it was planned
- Having a medical problem, such as cancer, stroke, or chronic pain
- Taking certain medications. Talk to your doctor if you have questions about whether your medications might be making you feel depressed.
- Using alcohol or drugs

[Top of Page](#)

Who Gets Depression?

In general, about 1 out of every 6 adults will have depression at some time in their life.³ Depression affects about 16 million American adults every year.⁴ Anyone can get depressed, and depression can happen at any age and in any type of person.

Many people who experience depression also have other mental health conditions.^{1,5} Anxiety disorders often go hand in hand with depression. People who have anxiety disorders struggle with intense and uncontrollable feelings of anxiety, fear, worry, and/or panic.¹ These feelings can interfere with daily activities and may last for a long time.



Meet Rebecca

Rebecca, age 57, struggled with depression and had a few wake-up calls as a smoker. She felt depressed and smoked cigarettes to help her cope with her feelings. The more Rebecca smoked, the harder it seemed to quit. Rebecca finally quit smoking after getting care for her depression and realizing that she had to take care of her own health. She now leads a new, smokefree life.

"I quit smoking and I got care for my depression."

