



PATIENT  
EDUCATION

# Depression

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Disclaimer: People in the picture are models.



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY of BEIRUT MEDICAL CENTER

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# What is depression?

- Depression is a **mood disorder**.
- We all experience **sadness** from time to time, especially when we are passing through **difficult circumstances**. Depression, however, is **more intense** and **long-lasting** than ordinary sadness.
- Depression often interferes with a person's daily activities.
- Depression is one of the **most common psychiatric illnesses**. **It can affect anyone**.
- Women are almost twice as likely as men to have depression.

# What are the causes of depression?

There is no single cause for depression.

- Depression might be caused by a dysfunction in the brain chemicals.
- Environmental factors and stressors put the person at a higher risk of having depression.
- Heredity might play a role as well. Family members are at a higher risk to develop the disorder than others if they are also affected by environmental stressors.

# What are the common symptoms of depression?

At least 5 of the following symptoms should be present for at least 2 weeks and should have a negative impact on your functionality and/or quality of life to be diagnosed with depression.

- Depressed mood during most of the day
- Lack of interest or pleasure in almost all activities
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Impaired concentration, inability to take decisions
- Decreased or increased sleep
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Restlessness or slowness in movement
- Significant weight loss or gain

# Is there a treatment for depression?

Yes.

There are several effective treatments for depression. They depend on the severity of your condition and on your personal needs. These treatments might be used alone or in combination to achieve the best results.

Common treatments for depression include but are not limited to:

## 1. Lifestyle changes

- Exercise
- Improved nutrition
- Sleep regulation
- Increased social support
- Stress reduction

## 2. Medications

Some medications can be helpful in treating depression.

## 3. Psychotherapy

A process in which a mental health professional talks to you about strategies that help you understand and deal with your depression.

- Cognitive-behavioral therapy is a common psychotherapy approach used for depression. It helps you recognize and change thoughts and behaviors that are related to intense feelings of sadness.

## 4. Brain stimulation therapies

- Electroconvulsive therapy
- Transcranial magnetic stimulation
- Vagus nerve stimulation  
(Other technologies are also being tested)

Usually, medications or psychotherapy are the first line treatment for depression. A combination of these therapies will give the best results.

# What happens if depression is not treated?

- If left untreated, depression might last from weeks to years.
- It might cause significant disability in the person's life. It might lead to loss of employment.
- Severe depression might lead to suicide.

This educational material provides general information only. It does not constitute medical advice. Consult your health care provider to determine whether the information applies to you.

