

# Symptoms of Depression in Women



While everyone feels sad at times, many times the feeling will pass within a few days. When these feelings persist for at least two weeks, a person may be suffering from depression. Women tend to experience depression more often than men do and are more likely to be diagnosed with depression. And while people often think of sadness as a sign of depression, feelings of worthlessness or guilt also can be symptoms of depression, especially in women.

## What is depression?

Depression is a common but serious condition that affects how a person thinks and feels. Some causes of depression include genetics, chemical imbalances, hormonal factors, trauma, stress and drug or alcohol abuse. At times, depression can happen without a specific cause. Depression, especially later in life, can occur along with a chronic medical condition such as diabetes or heart disease.

Several factors unique to women may also contribute to depression. These include societal/gender stresses such as balancing work and family responsibilities, post-partum depression (a major depressive episode that occurs after childbirth), and natural hormonal changes associated with premenstrual fluctuations, pregnancy, perimenopause and menopause.

While some symptoms of depression can be the same for both men and women, women may be more likely to:

- ▶ Avoid conflict
- ▶ Feel sad or worthless
- ▶ Use food, alcohol, compulsive shopping, friends or "love" to self-treat their depression
- ▶ Blame themselves and feel guilty
- ▶ Talk about their despair



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## Symptoms of depression

Symptoms of depression can range from mild to severe, and while depression varies from person to person, women may experience symptoms differently than men.

### Classic symptoms of depression may include:

- Feeling sad or “empty”
- Not being able to sleep or sleeping too much
- Not being able to eat, having no appetite or overeating
- Feeling hopeless, irritable, anxious, angry or guilty
- Loss of interest in work, family or once pleasurable activities, including sex
- Feeling very tired
- Not being able to concentrate or remember details
- Aches, pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems
- Inability to meet responsibilities at home or work
- Thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts\*

## Getting help

Depression is a serious medical illness and not a sign of emotional weakness. With the right treatment, most women can get better and overcome the physical and emotional symptoms of depression.

If you or a loved one is experiencing symptoms of depression, it is important to begin with a visit to a primary care doctor to look for any medical reasons behind the depression. Realize that once diagnosed, it can take time to find the right treatment, and it can take time for the right treatment to work. Also, remember that treating depression involves more than medication alone. Talk therapy may be effective either alone or combined with medication. Exercise, healthy eating and social support from trusted friends and family members are also important.

If you suspect that you or a loved one is experiencing symptoms of depression, call for an appointment with your primary care provider and talk with your Care Management nurse.

## HELP

**\* If you or someone you know is thinking about hurting themselves or others, seek help right away. To reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, call 800-273-8255. If someone is in immediate danger, call 911 – or go to the closest emergency room.**

