

# Adult Clinical Depression

## What is Clinical Depression?

Depression is a word often used casually to describe the usual sad and upset feelings people have when things go wrong in their everyday lives. However, clinical depression is a serious mental health condition that is characterized by significant and persisting feelings of sadness and despair, and feelings of hopelessness. Depression can also manifest through physical symptoms which interfere with everyday life. We will use the term Clinical Depression when discussing it on this page. When you read about Clinical Depression in other places, it may simply be called Depression. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) it is experienced by almost 7% of adult Americans, typically more so of women than men.

Clinical depression may be characterized by:

- Intense feelings of sadness, despair, hopelessness, and worthlessness
- An inability to experience joy or pleasure
- Problems concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- Feeling tired all of the time
- An increase or decrease in sleeping and/or eating
- Thoughts of death and/or suicide

Some or all of these symptoms occur almost every day over a period of two or more weeks and affect a person's ability to participate in their usual activities such as work, school, household chores, or recreation. Some people experience a single bout of depression, while others experience several. Clinical Depression is a serious condition that may interfere with a person's ability to live their usual life and may increase risk of suicide.

## What causes Clinical Depression?

Researchers have yet to identify the exact cause of clinical depression. However, they have found that factors including life stressors such as loss including loss of a job, divorce, loss of health, a death in the family, and a history of traumatic experience as well as brain chemistry, hormones, and genetics can affect mood.

Individuals who experience clinical depression may feel as though they are not quite their usual selves. However, after a time, this may come to feel familiar and no longer different from one's usual way of being. Depression may make it difficult – even

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seemingly impossible – to do things that used to seem effortless. Depression can also be experienced as a sense of boredom.

Clinical depression affects individuals of all races, age, and gender, but may be experienced differently among groups. For example, it is more common for children than adults with clinical depression to exhibit symptoms of irritability and anger rather than sadness.

## How can Clinical Depression be Treated?

Highly effective treatment is available for clinical depression. In fact, treatment is successful for about 80% of people who are adequately treated according to Mental Health America. Typically, depression is treated with medication, talk therapy, or a combination of both. Some types of therapy assist people learn strategies to recognize and manage typical stressors and their reactions to them. Early treatment is recommended as is attention to meaningful activities and incorporating wellness strategies into regular routines.

### Additional Information About Clinical Depression

#### National Institute of Mental Health

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml>

NIMH is an agency of the United States government. Their website has clear information about various mental health conditions and provides information about how individuals and family members can recognize symptoms of mental illness and obtain help for it.

NIMH's website provides helpful information about clinical depression, including how it may be experienced differently among specific groups of people (i.e., men, women, older adults, children and adolescents). It also explains research and a corresponding warning from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regarding antidepressant medication.

#### Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA)

<http://www.dbsalliance.org>

DBSA is a grass roots organization started in 1986 by people who had Bipolar Disorder. They have a Scientific Advisory Board of leading researchers in the area of Bipolar Disorder and Depression. Among the features of this easy-to-read site are additional information on symptoms of Clinical Depression, descriptions of specific medications

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and treatments and outlines of the available services. The telephone number for this organization is 800-826-3632.

**American Psychiatric Association (APA)**

<http://www.psych.org>

The APA is a professional association for physicians who specialize in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illnesses and substance abuse disorders. This site has technical information about diagnosing and treating Clinical Depression and research on Clinical Depression.