

Myths

Mental illness is not:

- Hopeless
- Something to fear
- Untreatable
- Something you have to justify to others
- A personal deficit
- Weakness
- Failure
- Something to be ashamed about
- Something you have to go through alone
- Something to leave untreated
- Something that discriminates against age, race, social status, religion or sex

What is depression?

Most of us have endured depression-like feelings at some time. A major life event like divorce, a sudden trauma like being in a car accident, or a serious illness like cancer, can bring about a loss of energy and concentration, feelings of hopelessness and sadness, or changes in eating or sleeping habits. Symptoms can vary from one person to the next but if you've been feeling down for more than two weeks and this "black cloud" is interfering with your daily life, you may be clinically depressed.

A depressive disorder isn't the same as a passing blue mood, and isn't a sign of personal weakness. It cannot be willed away and it isn't a state of mind. Depression signals chemical changes in the brain. Without treatment, symptoms can last for weeks or years.

Depression is quite common. Approximately 16 percent of Americans will have it during their lifetime. It affects men and women of all ages, from children to elderly adults.

We're here to help

Mercy Options
Behavioral Health Clinic-Janesville
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Janesville, WI 53548
Outpatient Mental Health
(608) 756-5555
(800) 341-1450
Outpatient Addictions
(608) 756-5555
Addictions Day Treatment
(608) 756-6545
WINGS
(608) 756-6530

Mercy Hospital and Trauma Center
1000 Mineral Point Ave.
Janesville, WI 53548
Inpatient Psychiatric and
Detoxification Unit
(608) 756-6508

Mercy Options Behavioral Health Services



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Depression



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Causes

Causes are as different as the individuals who suffer from depression. There is usually no one cause, but often a combination of factors.

Family history – Depression can run in families for generations.

Trauma and stress – The breakup of a relationship, death of a loved one or financial problems can bring on depression. But even seemingly positive life changes like starting a new job or getting married can be followed by depression.

Pessimistic personality – People with low self-esteem, a negative outlook or who are easily overwhelmed by stress are at higher risk for depression. However, these traits may be caused by low-level depression (dysthymia).

Physical conditions – Serious medical conditions like cancer, heart disease or AIDS often bring on stress and physical weakness that can lead to depression. Depression can also be a side effect of medication. Recent research shows that physical changes in the body can be accompanied by mental changes as well.

Other disorders – Depression is often accompanied by anxiety disorders, eating disorders, schizophrenia and substance abuse.

Types of mood disorders

Major depression – This has a combination of symptoms that can hinder your ability to work, eat, sleep, have fun or study. Major depression, while disabling, may occur only once, or more commonly, several times in a lifetime.

Major depression has at least five or more of the following symptoms in a two-week period:

- Depressed mood most of the day, nearly every day
- Little interest, or no pleasure at all, in all or almost all activities
- Significant weight loss or gain
- Increase or decrease in appetite
- Sleep disturbances
- Restlessness or agitation
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness
- Excessive or inappropriate guilt
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating or making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Postpartum depression – Symptoms similar to those of a major depression can appear from a few weeks to almost a year after giving birth, and can interfere with a mother's ability to bond with her baby. Postpartum depression must be addressed immediately. Unlike postpartum depression, the "baby blues" tend to occur within days of birth and resolve spontaneously.

Bipolar disorder – Also known as manic depression, bipolar disorder is characterized by sometimes-dramatic mood changes, from highs (mania) to lows (depression). Mercy Options publishes a separate informational brochure on bipolar disorder.

Dysthymia – Symptoms mimic those of major depression but are much less severe. This long-term, chronic depression doesn't disable but keeps one from truly enjoying life. People with dysthymia often experience an occasional major depression.

General symptoms

If you experience any of these symptoms nearly every day for more than two weeks, you may have depression:

- Constant feelings of downheartedness, sadness or emptiness
- Cry easily
- Little interest or pleasure in daily activities and hobbies
- Everything feels like an effort
- No pleasure or joy in anything
- Loss of energy or tiredness for no reason
- Feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Indecisiveness and trouble concentrating or remembering
- Restless and easily annoyed or irritated
- Persistent negative and/or disturbing thoughts
- Changes in appetite, with significant weight loss or gain

- Changes in sleeping patterns, from insomnia to oversleeping
- Loss of interest in sex
- Persistent physical symptoms that don't respond to treatment; for example, headaches, digestive disorders or chronic pain
- Feelings of isolation
- Thoughts of suicide or death

Steps to help yourself

Do your best to remain active – Choose an activity you enjoy and make it part of your regular routine.

Avoid being alone too much – Seek out family and friends you can talk to and who will listen.

Do not set difficult goals or take on added responsibility – Break larger tasks into smaller ones that you can accomplish.

Avoid making major life decisions – Try taking it one day at a time.

Go easy on yourself – Don't expect too much, too fast. Treat yourself with kindness and respect.

Follow your doctor's orders – Take your medication as prescribed, eat right and keep your appointments.