

CULPEPER MEDICAL CLINIC
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Depression

Depression affects one in four people in the United States and has many different causes. Depression is not caused by personal weakness, laziness, or lack of willpower.

Causes of Depression

Common causes of depression are:

- A chemical imbalance in the brain
- Genetics - depression can run in families
- Events in your life, such as a death or job loss
- Side effects from certain medications, drugs, alcohol, or having an illness
- PMS - women who experience PMS are more likely to be depressed

Symptoms of Depression

If you have some of these symptoms every day, all day, for 2 weeks or longer, you may have depression:

- No interest or pleasure in things you used to enjoy
- Feeling sad or empty
- Crying easily or crying for no reason
- Feeling slowed down or feeling unable to sit still
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Weight gain or loss
- Thoughts about death or suicide
- Trouble thinking, remembering things, or focusing on what you're doing
- Trouble making everyday decisions
- Problems sleeping, or wanting to sleep all of the time
- Feeling tired all of the time
- Not caring about things you used to care about

Treating Depression

Depression is treated by counseling, medication, and lifestyle changes. Medication, called antidepressants, may be prescribed in some cases but not in all cases. There are many kinds of antidepressants. They all work differently and have different side effects. The best kind of treatment may depend on what is causing your depression. Your health care provider can work with you to find the best way to treat your depression.

Things You Can Do to Ease Your Depression

Stay Connected

When you are not engaged in your life or feel alone you are more likely to get depressed. Avoid this by staying connected to people, your body, and your goals.

- **Stay connected to people**
 - Keep in touch with friends and family
 - Call someone if you are feeling sad or thinking about suicide
 - When you feel depressed don't be alone
- **Stay connected to your body**
 - Exercise most days
 - Eat a healthy diet
 - Sleep 7-9 hours a night (adults)
 - Do not use drugs or alcohol to escape or feel numb
- **Stay connected to your goals**
 - Set small goals and encourage yourself to reach them

Keep Going

If you do not feel better after starting treatment or slip back into depression after doing well you may feel like giving up. Keep going even when you feel frustrated. Keep going to counseling, keep taking your medications, and keep learning about depression. This will help you decrease your depression.

- **Keep going to counseling**
- **Keep taking your prescribed medications**
 - Medications take a couple weeks to take affect. If you stop your medication you may never feel the full benefit of them. If you want to stop taking your antidepressants because you do not feel like they are working or you don't like the side affects talk to your health care provider. Together you can come up with a treatment plan that works better for you.
- **Keep learning about depression**
 - Learning about depression will remind you depression is not something you caused. It will also remind you that many people experience depression. It is not your fault and you are not alone.
 - Learning about depression will educate you of the latest treatment options.

If you or someone you know is going to **commit suicide call 911**.

If there is no immediate danger, there are several suicide hotlines you can call to connect to resources and get help.

Call these two hotlines 7 days a week 24 hours a day anywhere in the United States:

1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433)

1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)

