

Understanding depression

Life can be full of challenges. School and work stress, relationship issues, and health concerns can all take a toll. While it's normal to have moments of sadness, grief, and anger, if these feelings persist for more than two weeks, it could be a sign of depression.

What is depression?

Depression is a mood disorder that impacts how you think and feel. The symptoms of depression can make it difficult to eat, work, or sleep.

More than 16 million American adults are affected by depression every year. And nearly [30% of U.S. adults age 18 and older report having been diagnosed with depression sometime in their lifetime](#).¹

According to the Cleveland Clinic, there are several [types of depressive disorders](#), including seasonal affective disorder, postpartum depression, and clinical depression. Clinical depression, which is often just called "depression," is the most severe type.² Your doctor and mental health professional can help determine what kind of depression you have and how best to treat it.

What are the symptoms of depression?

[Experts at the Mayo Clinic](#) say that when someone is experiencing depression, the symptoms are persistent or constant.³ This means they occur most of the day, nearly every day, and might include:

- Feeling sad, tearful, or hopeless.
- Being easily irritated or frustrated.



- Eating too much or too little, causing weight gain or loss.
- Having low energy or fatigue.
- Having trouble thinking, concentrating, or making decisions.
- Losing interest in activities that used to bring joy.
- Not sleeping or sleeping too much.
- Pulling away from family and friends.
- Having thoughts of self-harm or suicide.

When should you seek help for depression?

It can be hard to know when negative feelings are simply a natural reaction to a bad situation — or if you need to [connect with mental health support](#). Generally, if your thoughts or emotional reactions are getting in the way of your work and relationships, or you've been feeling down for two weeks or more, it's time to reach out for help.



If you are in crisis or have suicidal thoughts, seek help immediately. Call **988** to reach the 24/7 confidential 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline or go to 988lifeline.org. If your issue is an emergency, call **911** or go to your nearest emergency room.





How is depression treated?

Depression is one of the most treatable mental health conditions. Talking with your primary care doctor is a great first step. They may prescribe medication, suggest lifestyle changes, or recommend you connect with a therapist.

Lifestyle changes that can help improve symptoms of depression include eating a healthy diet, being physically active, going outdoors when possible, getting the right amount of sleep, and spending less time on social media and more time with those we love.

Understanding the condition and talking with others about it is vital. All this helps [break the stigma of mental health](#).⁴



If you need support for your physical or mental health, check your benefits or find care on the **SydneySM Health** app or at [anthem.com/ca](#). You can also call the Member Services number on your health plan ID card.



¹ Gallup: U.S. Depression Rates Reach New Highs (May 17, 2023): news.gallup.com.

² Cleveland Clinic: Depression (January 13, 2023): my.clevelandclinic.org.

³ Mayo Clinic: Depression (major depressive disorder) (October 14, 2022): mayoclinic.org.

⁴ Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield: *Understanding And Talking About Mental Health Stigma And Mental Health Conditions* (December 7, 2023): anthem.com.

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