

# Health Bulletin

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

#87 in a series of Health Bulletins on issues of pressing interest to all New Yorkers



## FEELING BETTER DEPRESSION

- Available in Spanish and Chinese: call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)
- Disponible en español: llame al 311 o visite [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)
- 需要中文服務 - 可電 311 或造訪網址 [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)

**NYC**  
Health

## What Is Depression?

### It is more than just a mood.

- Everyone feels down once in a while. But depression is more than a mood. It is an illness that affects both mind and body.
- Depression can change the way you think. It can make normal, everyday activities difficult. It can take the joy out of life.
- Depression is also hard on the body. It can cause headache, joint pain and stomach problems, and make many illnesses more difficult to manage, such as arthritis, diabetes and heart disease.

### You don't have to live with it.

- Depression can be treated! Most people – even those with severe depression – can be helped with counseling, medication or both.
- **If you feel sad for more than 2 weeks**, or if you lose interest or pleasure in things, make an appointment with your doctor.
- You may find it helpful to fill out the **Depression Checklist** in this issue, and take it with you to the doctor.
- If you don't have a regular doctor, call 311 or call LifeNet (see **More Information and Help**).

## Handling Depression

### Things you can do for yourself:

- **Keep clinical appointments**, and take medications as prescribed.
- **Spend more time with people** who support you – and less with people who don't.
- **Make time** for enjoyable, relaxing activities.
- **Be gentle with yourself.** Set realistic goals and take small steps to reach them.
- **Delay big decisions**, such as quitting your job or dropping out of school, until your depression improves.
- **Avoid alcohol and drugs.** They can trigger and worsen depression and make recovery more difficult.

### Physical activity is powerful!

- Regular physical activity helps prevent and even treat depression. Exercise boosts mood and helps you sleep better.
- Adults should get at least 30 minutes of physical activity (such as brisk walking or biking) at least 5 days a week.
- Children and adolescents need at least 60 minutes of physical activity every day.
- Any amount of exercise is better than none! Just *walking* for 10 minutes a day can help you feel better.



# Symptoms of Depression Can Vary

## New Mothers

### *Postpartum depression – more than ‘baby blues’*

- Many new mothers get the “baby blues,” mood swings that usually go away in a couple of weeks.
- Some women, however, develop “postpartum depression,” a serious problem that requires treatment and emotional support.
- See the section for new mothers on the **Depression Checklist**. If you feel guilty, hopeless or sad much of the time – or sometimes think about hurting yourself or your baby – help is available.
- Talk to your doctor or a mental health professional, or call LifeNet (see **More Information**).



## Children and Teens

### *A little different than adults*

- **Younger children** may be irritable or angry, as well as sad. They may worry a lot, get scared and cry easily or try to hurt themselves.
- **Older children and teens** may have behavior problems and falling grades. They may become isolated and withdrawn, overly irritable, aggressive or angry, or use alcohol, drugs or tobacco.

## Older Adults

### *Not a normal part of aging*

- Many older people with unexplained physical problems – such as headache, fatigue, loss of appetite – actually have depression. When their depression is treated, they feel better physically.
- Older people who are depressed may feel bored, helpless or worthless. They may want to stay home all the time instead of going out and doing things.



## Men

### *Often unrecognized*

- Like women, men with depression may feel sad and hopeless. But male depression often goes unrecognized – even by the man who has it.
- Men who have been taught that “men don’t cry” may express depression in other ways.

*For example:*

- **Escapism** – spending too much time at work, on sports or online.
- **Alcohol** or substance misuse.
- **Controlling**, violent or abusive behavior.
- **Irritability**, or inappropriate anger.
- **Risky** behavior, such as reckless driving.
- **Unsafe** sexual activity.



## More Information and Help

**New York City Health Department:** [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health) or call 311

• **Health Bulletins:**

- #85 Make NYC Your Gym!
  - #83 Excessive Drinking Is Dangerous
  - #59 Stress: How to Cope
  - #53 Healthy Parenting
- **LifeNet offers 24-hour confidential help for depression, substance abuse and many other problems:**
- English: 800-LifeNet (800-543-3638)
  - Spanish: 877-AYUDESE (877-298-3373)
  - Asian (Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean): 877-990-8585

## Other Resources

- **[nyc.gov/9-11healthinfo](http://nyc.gov/9-11healthinfo):** NYC’s full-service information resource on the health effects of 9/11
- **Domestic Violence Hotline:** 311 or 800-621-HOPE (800-621-4673)  
TDD (Hearing Impaired): 866-604-5350
- **Parent Helpline:** 800-CHILDREN (800-244-5373)
- **Mayo Clinic:** [www.mayoclinic.com/health/depression/DS00175](http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/depression/DS00175)
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness, NYC METRO:**  
[www.namyncmetro.org](http://www.namyncmetro.org) or 212-684-3264 (helpline)



### For copies of any Health Bulletin

All Health Bulletins are also available at [nyc.gov/health](http://nyc.gov/health)

Visit [nyc.gov/health/email](http://nyc.gov/health/email) for a free e-mail subscription

# Depression Checklist

Check the boxes that best describe how often over the last 2 weeks you have been bothered by any of the following problems.

Take the checklist with you to your next doctor's visit.

| In the last 14 days (2 weeks), how often have you:  | Not at all | Several days | More than half the days | Nearly every day |
|---|------------|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| 1. Lost interest or pleasure in things you used to enjoy?   |            |              |                         |                  |
| 2. Felt sad, down or hopeless?  |            |              |                         |                  |
| 3. Had trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much?                                     |            |              |                         |                  |
| 4. Felt tired, or had less energy than usual?   |            |              |                         |                  |
| 5. Had a poor appetite (or eaten too much)?   |            |              |                         |                  |
| 6. Felt bad about yourself – that you are a failure or letting people down?                         |            |              |                         |                  |
| 7. Had trouble thinking, concentrating or making decisions?   |            |              |                         |                  |
| 8. Felt you were moving or speaking too slowly? Or the opposite – felt speedy, fidgety or restless? |            |              |                         |                  |
| 9. Thought about hurting yourself, or that you'd be better off dead?                                |            |              |                         |                  |

**If you are a woman who has had a baby in the past 12 months, please answer the following questions, too.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| 10. Felt disconnected from your baby?                    |  |  |  |  |
| 11. Felt you can't care for your baby?                   |  |  |  |  |
| 12. Had scary thoughts about your baby?                  |  |  |  |  |
| 13. Thought about harming yourself, your baby or others? |  |  |  |  |
| 14. Saw things or heard voices that aren't there?        |  |  |  |  |
| 15. Thought you were a bad mother?                       |  |  |  |  |

## You Are Not Alone!

Are you, or someone you know, thinking about suicide?  
Or are you afraid you might hurt your child or someone else?

• **CALL 911 in an emergency. Or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.**

• Call 311 or 800-LifeNet (800-543-3638)

• Spanish: 877-AYUDESE (877-298-3373)

• Asian: 877-990-8585 (Mandarin, Cantonese, Korean)

• **New York Foundling Crisis Nursery: Call 311 or 212-886-4000**

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## New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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**FEELING BETTER**  
DEPRESSION

**DIAL**  
**311**

For Non-Emergency NYC Services  
Telephone Interpretation in 170 Languages