

Health Bulletin

NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

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

Depression It's treatable.



appetite
problems



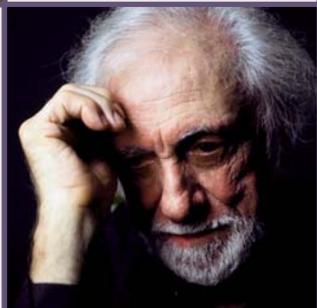
can't
concentrate



no energy



hopeless



feeling
sad

Everyone feels sad sometimes. But if you feel sad for more than 2 weeks – or lose interest or pleasure in things – it may be depression.

Talk to your doctor.



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Depression Is an Illness

Depression is more than being 'down in the dumps.'

- It is a medical illness that affects mood and physical health.
- Depression can make some illnesses harder to manage, such as arthritis, diabetes, and heart disease.
- Some people think depression is normal in older people. That's not true. It doesn't matter how old you are — no one has to live with depression.



It's Treatable

- Regular physical activity (such as a brisk daily walk) can improve mild-to-moderate depression — and even help prevent depression.
- Treatment may include medication, counseling, or both.
 - People with moderate-to-severe depression may need medication.
 - Many safe and effective medications are available. It may take 4 to 8 weeks for medication to work fully.
 - Counseling can also help. Talk to your family doctor or nurse practitioner. Or ask to see a social worker, psychologist, or psychiatrist.



How to Help a Depressed Person

- Offer emotional support and encouragement, and be patient.
- Encourage the person to find and stick with treatment.
- Don't dismiss negative feelings or blame the person for the depression.
- Invite the person to take part in simple activities — but don't take it personally if they turn you down.

Take care of yourself. Being around a depressed person can be very difficult — you may need support as well.

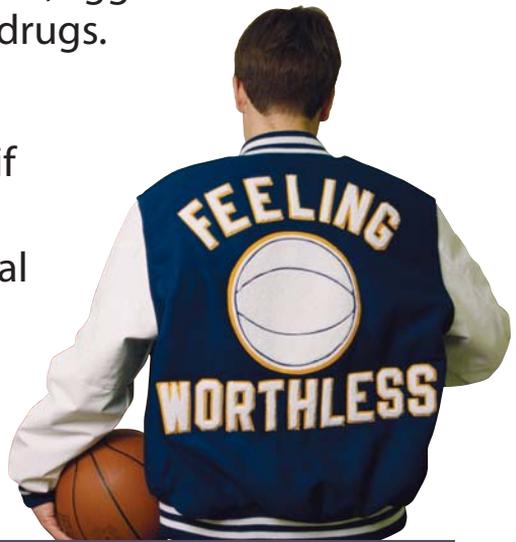
If Only the Signs Were This Easy to Read

Symptoms of depression may be different in children and adolescents.

- A younger child who is depressed may get irritable or angry instead of sad, be fearful and cry for little reason, or be self-destructive.
- An older child or teen may develop problems with behavior or school performance, be isolated and withdrawn, be overly irritable, aggressive or angry, or use alcohol or drugs.

Help is available.

- Talk to your child's doctor if you are concerned.
- Ask for a referral to a mental health professional who can diagnose and treat - depression in children and teens.



Take talk about suicide seriously.

Encourage the person to get help.

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 911

Tips for Handling Depression

Taking even one of these steps can help you feel better:

- Get physical activity every day to improve mood and manage stress.
- Keep it simple. Set simple goals and take small steps to reach them. (Re-organize a drawer, not the whole house.)
- Do something you enjoy every day. Find ways to relax every day.
- Spend time with people who can support you.
- Keep medical appointments and take all medication as prescribed.
- Don't drink or use drugs. They can trigger, worsen, and prevent recovery from depression.

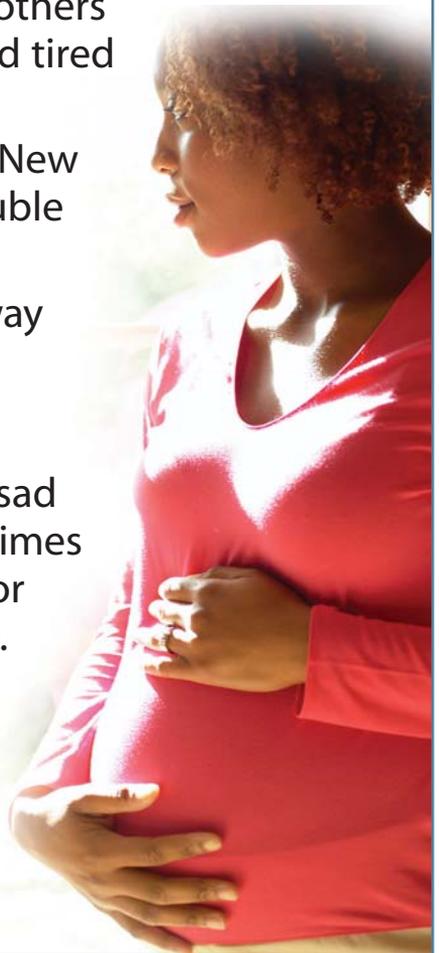
Problems in Pregnancy or After Childbirth

Shifting moods are normal.

- Pregnant women and new mothers can feel joyful one minute, and tired or anxious the next.
- “Baby blues” are also normal. New mothers sometimes have trouble sleeping or concentrating.
- Usually these problems go away in a couple of weeks.

Depression is not normal.

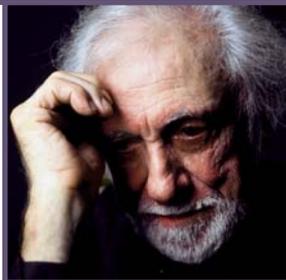
- If you feel guilty, hopeless, or sad much of the time — or sometimes think about hurting yourself or your baby — help is available.
- Talk to your doctor or a mental health professional, or call LifeNet (see **More Information**).



Common Symptoms Of Depression

Ask your doctor about a simple test for depression if for the past 2 weeks you have often been bothered by:

- Little interest or pleasure in things.
- Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless.
- Sleep problems (too much or too little).
- Fatigue, no energy.
- Appetite problems.
- Feeling bad about yourself, that you're a failure or are letting people down.
- Trouble concentrating.
- Feeling slowed down (or speeded up).
- Unexplained physical problems that won't go away, such as headaches, stomach aches, chronic pain.
- Thoughts about hurting yourself, dying, or suicide.



More Information and Help

- **Help with depression or alcohol or drug abuse: 1-800-LifeNet (800-543-3638) or call 311 and ask for LifeNet**
- **American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry: www.aacap.org or 212-966-7300**
- **Families Together in New York State, Inc.: www.ftnys.org or 888-326-8644**
- **National Institute of Mental Health: www.nimh.nih.gov or 866-615-6464**
- **National Mental Health Association: www.nmha.org or 800-969-6642**

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Prepared in Cooperation With:
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Special thanks to:
The New York City Coalition on Aging and Vision

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