

# Depression

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Depression may be the result of current strains or losses in life and it may last a few weeks or months. Also the use of intoxicants causes depression. Feelings of sorrow and grief are normal after a loss and should not be labelled as signs of depression.

Depression may also last for a long time. Common symptoms include sinking spirits, loss of feelings of delight, increased or decreased of appetite, problems with sleep, tiredness, lack of concentration, and feeling worthless and hopeless. Sometimes other mental symptoms may occur simultaneously, e.g. anxiety, phobias or panic attacks.

Sometimes the symptoms are so strong that you become incapable of working or functioning and you may contemplate suicide. These serious symptoms may last some weeks or months, after which your mood will return to normal. You may also have active periods during which you have feelings opposite to those you have when you are depressed.

Depression may manifest itself in many ways, for example as pain or other physical symptoms. Often friends and family notice the symptoms of depression before the depressed person himself becomes aware of them. Recognizing depression is important so that the appropriate treatment can be started.

Often depression is alleviated and passes with time without any particular treatment. Depression caused by the use of intoxicants abates after two or three weeks of intoxicant-free life. Talking with family members or friends is an important form of therapy, and it may also be a good idea to make new arrangements in those areas of life that aggravate depression. You should seek professional help if you suffer from more serious symptoms that have continued for some time. The most important forms of treatment are various discussion therapies and medication.

Discussion therapy may consist of a few consultations or of longer-term therapy. It may be either individual therapy or include also family members and friends. It may take place either in the field of general health care services, like a health centre, or at a special institution, like a mental health clinic, an A-Clinic or a youth centre. Sometimes treatment in a psychiatric hospital is justified.

The medicines used affect the central nervous system and normalize the mood, and they are usually taken for at least 3-6 months. Taking only sleeping pills or temporarily tranquillizing medicines is usually not sufficient; they may even prolong the depression. It also possible in some cases to use medicines to prevent the recurrence of the symptoms.

Depression, in other words, decreases your well-being and ability to function, and may lead to you to wish death and to suicidal thoughts. Therefore it is very important to recognize the symptoms of depression and start the appropriate treatment, especially as there are many good and effective methods of treatment available.

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