

May is Mental Health Month

Facts about Depressive Disorders

What is Depression?

Depression is a feeling we get when too many things go wrong, and we feel sad for a brief period of time.

What is Clinical Depression?

Clinical Depression is a serious mental illness. It is deeper and extremely intense feelings of sadness that can last for weeks or months. Symptoms can include:

- Intense feelings of sadness, despair, hopelessness, and worthlessness
- Feeling tired all of the time; problems concentrating, remembering or making decisions
- An increase or decrease in sleeping and/or eating; thoughts of death and/or suicide

What is Major Depression in adults?

With Major Depression, some or all of these symptoms are present a majority of the time, for two weeks or more.

Major Depression is a serious illness that:

- Interferes with your ability to live a normal life.
- Increases your risk for suicide.
- Is one of the most common mental illnesses in the United States.

About 10 percent of American adults are affected by Major Depression every year. The good news is that 80% can be successfully treated.

What are the myths about Depression?

Many people who suffer Clinical Depression never see a doctor to be diagnosed and treated. This is often due to the negative stigma that has surrounded depression for so long. It's important for everyone to know that Depression is **not**:

- A character flaw, weak personality, or something to be ashamed of
- A "mood" you can choose to control. It is not simply feeling "down" or "blue."

What causes Major Depression?

Major Depression tends to run in families and be associated with a chemical imbalance in the brain. It can be triggered by a life crisis, such as the death of someone close, a major life change such as childbirth, or an illness or serious accident. Major Depression may also occur without any obvious cause.

How is Major Depression diagnosed?

Many people talk to their primary care doctor first. Your doctor may help you, or refer you to a psychiatrist or psychologist. Major Depression can have other medical causes, which your doctor can check for.

How can Major Depression be treated?

Treatment often combines medications and talking therapies, including Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, which focuses on changing negative thoughts and uses techniques to change unhelpful behaviors. You will also learn coping skills and wellness tools. Beginning in January 2014, all medical insurance plans must cover mental health treatment as an essential benefit. State Medicaid insurance will also be expanded to cover more people who are low-income.

For more information, contact: The Office of Consumer Partnerships-dbhrconsumerpartnerships@dshs.wa.gov, the [Washington Recovery Help Line](#) at 1-866-789-1511, or the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#).

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